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The Application of Aspects of Resilience Theory to a Human Capacity Building Initiative for a Post-conflict country: The Case of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Fellowship for Afghanistan

James Daniel SHORT

This paper introduces the human capacity building initiative the Fellowship for Afghanistan which has been facilitated by the Hiroshima Office of the United Nations Institute of Training and Research (UNITAR) since 2003, and elucidates the potential benefits that it is held can be gained from locating this initiative within academic and practical discourses that are guided by specific aspects of resilience theory.

Section 1 – Linking UNITAR in Hiroshima with Afghanistan

During the late 1990s, a series of high-level discussions were held in Japan at both the national and regional levels about the possibility of opening an office of an agency of the United Nations in the city of Hiroshima. In the preceding two decades, several UN agencies had opened offices within the country of which the majority were located in Tokyo, including most notably United Nations University which opened in 1973. Four of Japan's other large cities - Osaka, Kobe, Yokohama and Fukuoka - had been selected as locations to host other UN agencies during the mid-1990s⁽¹⁾; however, there was no representation of the UN in the whole of the Chugoku region and therefore efforts were undertaken to bring a UN agency to the region's largest urban centre - the world's first A-bombed city. Shortly after the turn of the millennium, this process culminated in the

opening of an office of the UN's training arm UNITAR in Hiroshima. The specific training that the new UNITAR office was to provide focused on three distinct themes: the management and conservation of World Heritage Sites, sea and human security, and the theme most pertinent to this paper, *post-conflict reconstruction*. In line with this theme, since 2003 the UNITAR Hiroshima Office has facilitated an ongoing human capacity building programme specially designed for senior Afghan government officials, academics and practitioners entitled the Fellowship for Afghanistan. In the thirteen years since its inception, this programme has provided high-level training for a total of more than 550 Afghan officials which has contributed significantly towards the regeneration of a country that has been beset by war and conflict for more than three decades.

In the early stages of discussions held to decide what specific training activities would be appropriate for the new UNITAR office in Hiroshima to facilitate, due to the city's uniquely tragic history at the end of the Second World War followed by its remarkable reconstruction as a modern international centre during subsequent decades⁽²⁾, it was held that Hiroshima represented an eminently suitable location to facilitate training that focused on post-conflict reconstruction. Furthermore, with regard to the beneficiaries whom it was hoped would gain considerably from such training, in the aftermath of the fall of the oppressive Taliban regime in 2001 and the subsequent rapid influxes of international aid which began to pour into the war-torn country from several members of the international community including Japan, it was further held that governmental and other officials from Afghanistan represented highly appropriate candidates. Conse-

(1) The International Environmental Technology Centre of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) opened in Osaka in 1994. The World Health Organisation (WHO) Centre for Health Development opened in Kobe in 1995. The World Food Programme (WFP) Japan Relations Office opened in Yokohama in 1996. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific opened in Fukuoka in 1997.

(2) In a similar fashion of course to the city of Nagasaki during the second half of the 20th century.

quently, a long-term human capacity building programme specifically designed for citizens of a country that had suffered in innumerable ways from decades of conflict was instigated in a city which had succeeded in regenerating itself from little more than a radioactive ruin into a modern, thriving city in the space of little over half a century.

Seen from a number of viewpoints, both historically, educationally, architecturally and psychologically, this initiative was regarded as highly appropriate by the many actors who contributed significantly to the process that culminated in the opening of the UNITAR office in Hiroshima, and indeed also by its new Afghan partners⁽³⁾. The author holds a position that is entirely in keeping with this conviction; furthermore, it is clear that this conviction continues to be strongly held by the broad range of actors who are involved in the Fellowship for Afghanistan today. Emanating from this situation, that is to say a strong belief in the rectitude, the singular appropriateness of the geographical location for this training programme, is the intellectual foundation for the main argument presented in this paper: ergo, that the city of Hiroshima represents an ideal location for a human capacity building initiative that is created for the benefit of citizens of a country that has entered and continues to grapple with the many complex challenges which arise in post-conflict scenarios⁽⁴⁾. In the 2012 Executive Summary of an international training workshop co-organised by UNITAR and the Afghan Ministry of Finance, the unique position of the UNITAR Hiroshima Office vis-à-vis the facilitation of training for post-conflict reconstruction is described thus: “By virtue of the reso-

(3) For a more detailed explanation of the process leading up to the opening of the UNITAR office in Hiroshima see Short (2010) “Local authority initiatives to strengthen Japan’s international contribution: The Hiroshima Prefectural Government’s ‘Hiroshima Peace Contribution Plan’ and its relationship with the Hiroshima Office of the United Nations Institute of Training and Research (UNITAR)”.

(4) In offering this argument, the author does not seek to suggest that since the fall of the Taliban in 2001 there has been no further significant conflict in Afghanistan; the subsequent historical record reveals that that is clearly not the case. However, he does suggest that post-2001 the country has striven and continues to strive to bring peace and stability to its citizens and thereby realise the conditions which are understood by the moniker a *post-conflict society*.

nance of its location, the UNITAR Hiroshima Office has an inherent strength in the areas of post-conflict reconstruction as well as the broader themes of international peace and security.”⁽⁵⁾

In the following sections an argument is presented that elucidates why it is held that this initiative can be meaningfully conceived in terms of specific aspects of resilience theory, and further, how the adoption of this conceptual framework can offer tangible benefits to both the facilitators and the beneficiaries of the Fellowship for Afghanistan. The discussion elucidates the following topics: Section 2 - the personnel structure, content and educational methodology of the Fellowship for Afghanistan; Section 3 - the aspects of resilience theory that it is held are of particular relevance to the Fellowship; Section 4 - the tangible benefits that can potentially accrue to the Fellowship by means of locating its activities within the conceptual framework of these aspects of resilience theory.

Section 2 – The UNITAR Fellowship for Afghanistan: its personnel structure, content and educational methodology⁽⁶⁾

Initially launched in 2003 to coincide with the opening of the UNITAR Office in Hiroshima and subsequently held every year since, the Fellowship for Afghanistan is a seven-month long human capacity building programme which aims to develop the leadership, management and professional skills of a group of senior Afghan government

(5) “2012 Post-Conflict Reconstruction Programme: Building Capacity for a Brighter Future, UNITAR Mustofi Fellowship for Afghanistan Executive Summary”, p. 3 .

<http://www.unitar.org/hiroshima/sites/unitar.org.hiroshima/files/UNITAR%20Mustofi%20Programme%20-%20Executive%20Report.pdf>

(6) The following section draws upon explanatory material provided about the Fellowship for Afghanistan by the UNITAR Hiroshima Office, and in particular the Project Completion Report for the 2014-2015 Cycle, to be found at the following html: http://www.unitar.org/hiroshima/sites/unitar.org.hiroshima/files/uploads/unitar_afghanistan_fellowship_programme_-_2014_cycle_-_project_completion_report.pdf

officials, academics and practitioners. Representing in many ways a unique training endeavour which incorporates multiple learning locations, specifically-designed educational content, innovative training methodologies and the expertise of a wide range of professional advisers located in different parts of the globe, it can be argued that the Fellowship stands at the leading edge of dynamic professional training programmes that are delivered for the benefit of citizens of developing countries that are emerging from conflict. In a speech presented in 2008, one of the original architects and subsequent lead facilitators of the programme, Dr. Sharapiya Kakimova, described the process leading up to its initial launch in the following way:

The idea to conduct a long-term initiative for Afghanistan started in 2002. UNITAR undertook a mission to Afghanistan and the idea was to understand what UNITAR, as a training institution, could do [in this particular context] . To simply conduct a one week workshop [in the manner of standard UNITAR training programmes] was not the answer, so we came up with a long-term initiative aimed at building leadership and management skills, and providing technical and institutional support to a core group of Afghan professionals. The long-term objective of the Fellowship is to build a committed and capable community in Afghanistan which can become a reference for planning and implementing capacity-building and training activities at the local and national levels. This will therefore lessen the present dependency of Afghanistan on the human resources and expertise provided by the international community..... Currently most of the [human capacity building] programmes are designed and implemented by international experts as the national expertise within Afghanistan is weak⁽⁷⁾.

(7) Kakimova, Sharapiya, "The UNITAR Fellowship for Afghanistan - An Original Approach to Strengthening Local Capacity", published in "The Donors' Role in Furthering Indigenous Initiatives for Peacebuilding", Proceedings of the Second HiPec Follow Up Seminar, Hiroshima University, February 20th, 2008, p. 14-15. http://www.academia.edu/1855822/UNITAR_Hiroshima_Fellowship_for_Afghanistan_an_Original_Approach_to_Strengthening_Local_Capacity

In essence, the principal goal of the programme was to provide professional training to a core group of Afghan officials who could then pass on what they had learned to colleagues in their own ministries and other institutions, as well as to participants of subsequent cycles of the programme in what would develop into a dynamic ongoing training process. As a result, this process would serve to create a steadily expanding circle of professional expertise which could contribute towards the reconstruction of Afghanistan across a variety of sectors. With respect to this goal, considering that the number of Afghan officials who have participated in the programme, that is to say individuals who became *Fellows* of the Fellowship, has grown from 25 during its initial cycle in 2003-4 to a total of over 550 in 2015, it can be argued that a large degree of success has been achieved in this regard⁽⁸⁾. The Project Completion Report for the 2014-2015 Fellowship cycle defines the programme's two main objectives as follows: "The Fellowship's two long-term objectives are: 1. To support an Afghan cadre in the application of their increased knowledge and confidence in the transformation of their respective departments and ministries; 2. To build a committed and highly capable Fellowship community in Afghanistan which can serve as a resource base for planning and implementing capacity-building and training activities at the local and national levels."⁽⁹⁾

Personnel Structure

Fundamental to the achievement of the two stated objectives is the personnel structure of the Fellowship, which consists of four main groups: Fellows, Coaches, Afghan Resource Persons and Mentors. To elucidate, Fellows are first-time participants in the programme and represent its principal beneficiaries. These individuals are selected from various ministries of the Afghan government and also from large organisations

(8) UNITAR Fellowship for Afghanistan Programme 2015: <http://www.unitar.org/hiroshima/unitar-afghanistan-fellowship-programme-2015>

(9) UNITAR Fellowship for Afghanistan Project Completion Report for the 2014-2015 Cycle, op. cit. p. 2.

working within the country such as the Aga Khan Foundation⁽¹⁰⁾. At the beginning of the Fellowship they are divided into teams depending on their professional interest and specific learning orientation. Coaches have the task of providing unity and guidance to the teams of Fellows and are selected from the most outstanding Fellows who have completed previous cycles. Coaches are responsible for coordinating communication with the Fellowship's external advisers, the Mentors (described below). Afghan Resource Persons (ARPs) are selected from the most outstanding Coaches from previous cycles and act as additional teaching faculty members who serve to contextualize the training being offered during the programme to the changing realities to be found within Afghanistan. ARPs are provided additional training in Social Entrepreneurship by UNITAR in a specially designed supplementary module⁽¹¹⁾. Mentors are the external advisers to the Fellowship who are experts, practitioners or academics in a variety of disciplines and who are located in various parts of the globe. They are individuals who volunteer their knowledge and expertise, and who guide and advise both Fellows and Coaches where necessary throughout the course of the programme⁽¹²⁾.

With UNITAR providing administrative coordination for the programme, in addition to these four groups are other leading Resource Persons who coordinate the overall in-

(10) The 45 Fellows for the 2015 cycle were drawn from the following organisations: The Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock, Culture and Information, Higher Education, Public Health, Public Works, Rural Rehabilitation. Other organisations: French Medical Institute for Children, Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC), National Procurement Authority, Office of the President, OXUS Consulting Group, Pashtani Bank, Rokyan Management Consultancy, SPNA-KFW, Tabesh University, The Aga Khan Foundation, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), University Support and Workforce Development Program (USWDP), USAID.

<http://www.unitar.org/hiroshima/unitar-afghanistan-fellowship-programme-2015>

(11) Coaches and Afghan Resource Persons were incorporated as key elements of the Fellowship from its third cycle in 2006.

(12) As a staff member of the UNITAR Hiroshima Office from 2005-2008, the author was involved in a variety of activities relating to the Fellowship for Afghanistan; since April 2014 he has been a Mentor for the Group 1 team of Fellows.

structional design and thematic direction of the Fellowship. These Resource Persons deliver the main substantive presentations during the programme and lead its four training workshops, either in person or via electronic media.

A pictorial representation of the personnel structure of the Fellowship is shown below⁽¹³⁾.



Content

In terms of the substantive content of the programme, this is designed to provide Fellows with the professional knowledge and skills which will enable them to function more effectively both within their respective organisations and the wider national and international communities, and also the communicative tools to pass on their newly-acquired knowledge and skills to their colleagues and professional contacts. In Kakimova's words: "The Fellowship uses a holistic approach to capacity building, trying to provide participants with hard core skills such as making needs assessments, project management and strategic planning..... Soft core skills are [also emphasised] and include leadership, team-building, teamwork and networking, which all lead to capacity building through leading organisations' reform processes and transformations."⁽¹⁴⁾ A degree

(13) Adapted from the 2014-2015 Project Completion Report, see note 6.

(14) Kakimova (2008) op. cit., p.15.

of flexibility is built into the curriculum of each programme cycle in order to address the specific needs of the Fellows within that cycle; however, a number of core learning themes are present throughout. For example, focusing on Hiroshima's unique experience in post-conflict reconstruction, the programme addresses the themes of organisational development and change, project design and management, and human resource development. In addition, other commonly addressed themes are social capital, leading and mentoring teams for development and change, accounting and budgeting, proposal writing, team-building and team work, and communication skills.

In order to graduate from the programme, the Fellows are required to submit three written assignments, the first of which is written individually and the second and third are created collaboratively together with the members of their team. In order to complete Assignment One, each Fellow carries out a needs assessment within his or her organisation. This exercise can focus on a wide variety of aspects including organisational structure, overall strategy or day-to-day task management, manpower or physical resources both in terms of hardware and software, the professional capacities of staff and specific training needs - in effect any relevant area which in the Fellow's opinion is in need of reform and improvement in order for the organisation to fulfil its various functions more effectively. For Assignment Two, following discussion within the team of the findings of each members' individual needs assessment, the Fellows select one which they would like to see developed into an actual organisational development project and then collaborate to produce a concept paper for how this may be achieved. For Assignment Three the Fellows present a detailed plan for their selected project containing a number of key elements including an estimated budget, a breakdown of the various resources that will be required, a clear timeline and specific benchmarks by which its successful implementation can be measured. The ultimate goal of this assignment is that once the Fellowship cycle has been completed, the plan can be submitted to an actual funding agency, can hopefully secure funding and then be put into effect.

Educational methodology

The innovative educational methodology utilised within the Fellowship for Afghanistan represents one of its most notable elements and is arguably one of the keys to its longevity and success since the inception of the programme in 2003. It incorporates a combination of training methods and physical locations where training is facilitated. In terms of locations, the three main sites are Kabul Afghanistan, Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates and Hiroshima Japan. However, the Fellowship also makes considerable use of an additional non-physical location to facilitate training and that is cyberspace, as will be explained below.

The main face-to-face meetings of the Fellowship take place in the physical locations listed above and take the form of four week-long workshops that are held in either the Afghan Civil Service Institute in Kabul or the conference facilities of large hotels in the cases of Abu Dhabi and Hiroshima. The attendees at these workshops consist of the teams of Fellows, each team's Coach, a number of Afghan Resource Persons, additional leading Resource Persons and representatives of UNITAR; occasionally a number of external observers are also present⁽¹⁵⁾. Each workshop represents a milestone in the programme and incorporates a detailed review of the assignment previously submitted by the Fellows. In addition, it represents a platform for the lead Resource Persons to deliver a series of lectures which impart new knowledge in preparation for the next stage in the Fellowship. The cycle of the four workshops proceeds in the following order: Workshop One - Kabul, Workshop Two - Abu Dhabi, Workshop Three - Kabul, Workshop Four - Hiroshima. Additional meetings held between Fellows, Coaches and Afghan Resource Persons to discuss the progress of assignments and other team-related matters take place on an ad hoc basis in various locations in Kabul where required.

(15) On a number of occasions the total number of attendees at these workshops has exceeded 80 people.

With regard to training that is conducted in cyberspace, this firstly refers to regular monthly audio-conferences that are held via Skype between teams of Fellows, their Coach and most importantly their Mentors who are often located in different parts of the world. In preparation for the submission of each assignment, following advice received from the Coach, the Fellows send their draft assignments to the Mentors by e-mail for review and comments; on reception of these comments, they participate in an online meeting with the Mentors where various matters pertaining to the progress of the Fellowship are discussed. A second usage of cyberspace is in the holding of periodic video-conferences which are held throughout the course of the programme, and which take place at a time deemed by the lead Resource Persons and UNITAR to be appropriate to the Fellows' progress through the cycle. Developed and delivered by Mentors who are very familiar with the approach, process and objectives of the Fellowship and lasting for a half-day or one whole day, these sessions are delivered online to all Fellows, Coaches and ARPs who gather together in Kabul⁽¹⁶⁾.

Two other notable features of the educational methodology of the Fellowship are as follows: i) In order to assist the Coaches in the task of guiding their Fellows effectively through the course of the programme, since 2007 prior to the start of each new cycle the Coaches have received online training specially designed for this purpose entitled 'Coaching for Coaches'. The careful selection of committed and competent Fellowship alumni as Coaches and the provision of appropriate training and preparation to them in order that they can serve effectively in this role represents a key part in ensuring the ongoing success of the programme⁽¹⁷⁾.

ii) At the end of the final workshop in Hiroshima, the Fellows who have successfully

(16) The video-conferences for the 2014 Cycle addressed the following topics: Organisational Needs Assessment; Understanding Qualitative Data; Gender at Work; Results-Based Management; Managing Conflict in the Work Place; Risk Mitigation. UNITAR Fellowship for Afghanistan Project Completion Report for the 2014-2015 Cycle, op. cit. p. 4.

(17) UNITAR Fellowship for Afghanistan Project Completion Report for the 2014-2015 Cycle, op. cit. p. 5.

submitted and then publicly presented Assignment Three - thereby fulfilling the academic requirements of the programme, are awarded a Certificate of Completion in a formal graduation ceremony in the presence of the Director of the UNITAR Hiroshima Office and other dignitaries including senior representatives of the Hiroshima Prefectural and Municipal Governments. Since 2006 this Certificate has been granted official academic accreditation by the University of Texas, Austin to the value of three graduate academic credits.

Section 3 – Linking the UNITAR Fellowship for Afghanistan with specific aspects of resilience theory

The main argument presented in this paper states that tangible benefits can be gained from conceiving of the capacity building training activities of the Fellowship for Afghanistan in terms of specific aspects of resilience theory. The following discussion elucidates the intellectual basis for this contention.

First and foremost it is necessary to delineate the field of resilience theory in order to focus on the specific aspects in question. However, as the author explained in an article published in July 2015, this does not represent a straightforward task⁽¹⁸⁾. In current academic and practical discourses the concept of resilience is utilised within a number of widely differing fields, including the fields of Engineering, Economics, Psychology and Ecology, and is in possession of different definitions within these fields. Therefore a common definition of resilience that is applicable across all of these diverse fields does not in fact exist. However, in the 2015 article the author presented the case that *within* particular fields as opposed to across several fields the specific conceptualizations of resilience represent valuable lenses through which both academic and practical

(18) Short, J. D. (2015). Towards the enhancement of resilience in diverse communities under threat: A synthesis of the multi-disciplinary conceptualizations of resilience and its applicability in three distinct and contrasting cases. *Toyo University Journal of Law*, Volume 59, No. 1, 77–111.

endeavours can be meaningfully analysed. With regard to the current discussion, it is held that the conceptualizations of resilience utilised within the fields of Peacebuilding and Psychology are of particular relevance to the activities of the Fellowship for Afghanistan. The conceptualizations utilised within these fields are as follows: i) Peacebuilding: resilience is defined as the ability of individuals and communities to anticipate, prevent, withstand, adapt to and recover from the stresses and shocks caused by violent conflict⁽¹⁹⁾; ii) Psychology: resilience is defined as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress; it means "bouncing back" from difficult experiences⁽²⁰⁾.

With regard to these conceptualizations, the following discussion explains why it is held that they are of particular relevance to the case of the Fellowship for Afghanistan. Firstly we address the conceptualization of resilience utilised in field of Peacebuilding.

Peacebuilding

Due to the fact that during the course of the last three decades Afghanistan has endured almost continuous conflict against a succession of military forces including the Soviet military, regional warlords and more recently a Taliban insurgency, the country has and is continuing to face enormous challenges in its long-running struggle to bring peace and stability to its people. The great efforts made by Afghans themselves and their partners from different parts of the world in recent years and especially since the aforementioned fall of the Taliban regime, have succeeded in improving the lives of millions of citizens across the country. However, as a continuing saga of deadly terrorist attacks in many of its urban centres illustrates, the country remains far from bringing an end to frequent outbreaks of violence and thereby developing into a more peaceful society. Within this context, in other words during the course of an ongoing struggle within Af-

(19) Menkhaus, K. (2012), quoted in Short (2015), p. 88.

(20) American Psychological Association, *The Road to Resilience* (n.d.), quoted in Short (2015), p.82.

ghanistan to move from a nation that has been beset by war for over 30 years towards a *post-conflict society*⁽²¹⁾, it is held that the conceptualization of resilience utilised within the field of Peacebuilding provides a valuable unifying frame of reference for the many and multi-sectoral efforts that are taking place both within the country and in cooperation with its external partners which have the shared aim of aiding the country in achieving this goal. It goes without saying that the author is of the opinion that the Fellowship for Afghanistan represents a highly significant initiative that is dedicated towards achieving this goal.

The intrinsic value of applying the conceptualization of resilience utilised within the field of Peacebuilding to activities that are designed to facilitate post-conflict reconstruction is described by the Director of Grants Strategy and Applied Research on Conflict at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) Dr. Lauren van Metre in the following manner:

The concept of resilience has been adopted extensively by colleagues in the fields of humanitarian and development assistance to better integrate their work and to make it more sustainable. More recently, researchers and practitioners in the fields of Peacebuilding and conflict resolution have begun to test the utility of the concept for their work. With an emphasis on the strength and capabilities of local communities, prevention planning and early warning, and focus on risk and community response, the concept of resilience is gaining sway in the Peacebuilding community. There is a growing sense that strengthening communities' capacity to overcome violent shocks opens up new possibilities both for conflict prevention and for more sustainable post-conflict community recovery. Resilience offers a results based evaluative framework where the end result — the ability of a community to opt out of or prevent the escalation of violence — is the most effective

(21) See note 4 above.

measure of Peacebuilding work⁽²²⁾.

It is held that the Fellowship for Afghanistan represents an important Peacebuilding initiative that is aiding Afghanistan in its drive to achieve post-conflict reconstruction. Furthermore, it is also held that the specific capacity building objectives which lie at the heart of the programme fall squarely within the conceptual framework described by Van Metre. The Fellowship seeks to develop the professional capacities of the Fellows in a variety of ways in order for them initially to perform their professional duties in a more effective manner. As a result of this process, or in other words by means of this acquisition of increased professional capacity, in a broader sense they are thereby able to contribute more effectively to the overall development and reconstruction of their nation. Consequently, this increased capacity can be conceived in terms of the first conceptualization of resilience described above: ergo, the Fellows' increased professional capacities enable them to become more *resilient* people, and as a result and in keeping with the wording of the Peacebuilding definition, they become better equipped both as individuals and members of communities throughout Afghanistan "to anticipate, prevent, withstand, adapt to and recover from the stresses and shocks caused by violent conflict".

The value of this conceptualization of resilience is echoed by Jennifer Milliken, Programme Director of the Women's Forum for the Economy and Society: "Resilience thinking is attractive to peacebuilders for the emphasis it gives to the systematic self-help mechanisms of local communities and institutions. The focus on sub-state actors and processes resonates with Peacebuilding's experience of the importance of local conflict prevention and of bottom-up social and political change."⁽²³⁾ The mechanisms

(22) Van Metre, L. (2014), State of the Art - Resilience as a Peacebuilding Practice: To Realism from Idealism. Insights, United States Institute for Peace, Summer 2014, p. 1. http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Insights_Spring_2014.pdf

and capacities which Milliken emphasizes here are precisely the educational focus and modus operandi extant within the Fellowship for Afghanistan.

An additional important factor which supports the application of this conceptualization to the Fellowship is highlighted in the first sentence of Van Metre's quotation above, that referring to the integration and sustainability of humanitarian and development efforts. It is held that this represents a highly significant observation. As has been the case across many sectors of the development and humanitarian assistance field⁽²⁴⁾ for a number of decades, a wide variety of actors including government agencies, international agencies, non-governmental organisations, charities and community groups, have been involved in a similarly wide variety of development or relief-related activities in many parts of the globe. This very crowded 'field' if it can be described as such of different actors and activities has on many occasions shown itself to be rather chaotic, lacking in coordination and thematic focus, and perhaps in some cases of questionable overall effectiveness⁽²⁵⁾. In such circumstances, a growing body of evidence is revealing that the application of unifying definitions, terminology, frames of reference and concomitant priorities for action is significantly increasing the effectiveness of multi-actor interventions. In view of this and as Van Metre emphasizes, with regard to Peacebuilding efforts underway in many parts of the globe in recent years, the conceptualization of resilience has proved itself to be a highly useful objective marker around which a variety of development and humanitarian actors can focus their efforts. Therefore within the multi-actor context of such activities that are taking place within Afghanistan, it is held that the Fellowship can meaningfully locate and integrate its activi-

(23) Milliken, J. (2013). Resilience: From Metaphor to an Action Plan for Use in the Peacebuilding Field. Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, Paper No. 7, p. 1.

(24) This broad 'field' is deliberately loosely defined here.

(25) In saying this the author by no means wishes to impugn the almost universally admirable motives and intentions of the many actors involved in such activities.

ties with those of other actors which are seeking by different means to promote the resilience of Afghan people, and hence thereby contribute more effectively to the broader effort of promoting post-conflict reconstruction within the country.

Psychology

With regard to the conceptualization of resilience utilised within the field of Psychology, it is held that conceiving of the activities of the Fellowship for Afghanistan in this way can provide additional intellectual weight to the theoretical foundations that underlie the programme⁽²⁶⁾. In this case the intention is not to seek to locate the programme's activities within a conceptual framework provided by another different field; this would be unnecessary since the framework provided by the field of Peacebuilding is held to be sufficient. In contrast, viewing the activities of the Fellowship through the lens of the Psychological conceptualization can potentially add a valuable additional dimension which is focused on the promotion of healing.

As elucidated in Section 2 above, the primary objectives of the Fellowship are to enhance the professional capacities of the Fellows in order that they may perform their official duties more effectively and then pass on their new knowledge and experience to their colleagues, so as to create an ever-expanding circle of expertise within the country. This represents a highly laudable overall utilitarian aim which was clearly understood by the original architects of the programme prior to its inception in 2003 and similarly by the variety of actors involved in it during subsequent years. What is being proposed here, and what can be meaningfully drawn from the conceptualization of resilience utilised in Psychology, is that over and above the acquisition of specific skills and knowledge that is facilitated during the Fellowship, the fact that people from a na-

(26) The author's intention here is not to suggest that the intellectual foundations of the Fellowship for Afghanistan are in any way weak — he believes that the opposite is the case. Rather, that the addition of this specific mode of thinking can provide valuable additional theoretical justification.

tion that has suffered from over three decades of war are participating in such a training programme represents a significant opportunity to attempt to address emotional and physical scars that may have arisen amongst them as a result of living through many long and bitter years of conflict.

It is abundantly clear that the long saga of conflict and severe social disruption that Afghanistan has endured since the Soviet invasion of 1979 has had a very grave impact on people throughout the country in a number of ways. In addition to causing great damage to the country's infrastructure, especially to both material and human assets within the health, education and transport sectors, the protracted cycle of violence and overall climate of fear and instability that has pervaded the country has had a severe effect on both the mental and physical health of a significant percentage of the population. In responses to a questionnaire posed by the author to a number of Fellows and Coaches during 2014-15 in respect of their personal experiences of conflict within the country, without exception all of the respondents reported how they themselves or their close acquaintances had suffered cruelly as a result of this situation, and especially during the period of Taliban rule between 1996-2001. The responses described a litany of shocking experiences such as receiving beatings in the street or within their own homes by members of militia groups, witnessing bombings and shootings first hand, living in a state of constant fear, and suffering major hardships on a daily basis just to secure the basic necessities of life. Other responses recounted the deaths or disappearances of friends or family members during particularly violent periods, and severe social and economic privations caused by having to flee Afghanistan altogether and live as refugees in the neighbouring countries of Iran or Pakistan⁽²⁷⁾.

(27) Forthcoming research conducted by the author and Professor Chieko Kato focusing on the personal experiences of conflict of Afghan civilians.

It is unarguable that experiences such as these would have a seriously detrimental effect on the health of the people who lived through them, leading in many cases to subsequent psychological trauma. It is in this context that it is held that the conceptualization of resilience utilised within the field of Psychology can provide additional valuable insight into the activities of the Fellowship for Afghanistan.

In circumstances where people's normal lives are profoundly disturbed by traumatic events, be they caused by serious illness, personal bereavement, natural or man-made disasters or other causes, depending on a number of factors people respond to such events in many different ways. Responses to trauma frequently include drawing upon near-to-hand sources of emotional support from families, friends and other social networks. They can also include experiencing a sense of shock or numbness which can last for a protracted time, entering into a state of denial that such an event has actually taken place, withdrawing from normal social contact and retreating into oneself, or seeking solace from emotional pain through the consumption of drink or drugs. Other people may respond to tragedies by crowding painful thoughts and emotions from their minds and directing their energies wholeheartedly into work, leisure pursuits or physical activity. In the majority of cases however, following an initial period of profound sadness, by means of taking advantage of support provided by surrounding social networks and in some cases additional support provided by medical professionals, over time most people are able to recover from traumatic experiences and eventually regain their former vitality (Werner, E., 1995).

With regard to the Fellowship for Afghanistan, while clearly recognising that the programme's principal aim is to facilitate capacity building amongst its Afghan beneficiaries, it is also held that the programme represents a valuable platform for social interaction in which both Fellows, Coaches and Afghan Resource Persons can engage with each other in highly productive activity, and that this endeavour may indirectly serve as

a means to alleviate trauma that they have experienced as a result of living through years of conflict in Afghanistan. Therefore in this sense the Fellowship is considered as providing the Afghan participants with a stimulating professional challenge in an environment which can contribute towards both professional development and at the same time channel personal energies in a positive way which can serve to promote individual healing. In the words of the conceptualization of resilience utilised in Psychology quoted above, this can therefore be seen as aiding Afghan participants in adapting themselves 'in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress' which they may have previously experienced, and following on from this to 'bounce back from difficult experiences'. This process can be described as the promotion of psychological resilience in order to achieve *post-traumatic growth*⁽²⁸⁾ :

Resilience is the capacity to withstand stress and catastrophe. Psychologists have long recognized the capabilities of humans to adapt and overcome risk and adversity. Individuals and communities are able to rebuild their lives even after devastating tragedies. Being resilient doesn't mean going through life without experiencing stress and pain. People feel grief, sadness, and a range of other emotions after adversity and loss. The road to resilience lies in working through the emotions and effects of stress and painful events. Resilience is also not something that you are either born with or not. Resilience develops as people grow up and gain better thinking and self-management skills and more knowledge. Resilience also comes from supportive relationships with family members, peers, colleagues and others, as well as cultural beliefs and traditions that help people cope with the inevitable bumps in life. Resilience is found in a variety of behaviors, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed across the life span⁽²⁹⁾ .

(28) Van Slyke, J (2014). Post-traumatic Growth. United States Naval Center for Combat & Operational Stress Control. http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcsc/nccosc/healthProfessionalsV2/reports/Documents/PTG_WhitePaperFinal.pdf

In a nutshell it is held that the activities of the Fellowship for Afghanistan provide all of its Afghan participants with valuable opportunities to contribute towards both their professional development and also come to terms with past trauma that they may have experienced and thereby promote emotional healing.

Section 4 – Tangible benefits that can accrue to the Fellowship for Afghanistan by the application of aspects of resilience theory

The discussion in Section 3 outlined why it is held that the application of specific aspects of resilience theory to the Fellowship for Afghanistan represents a valuable exercise. In this section the tangible benefits that can potentially accrue to the Fellowship as a result of this exercise will be elucidated. Firstly however, the author holds that it is necessary to expound further on the particular significance of the location from which the Fellowship is administered and in which its final workshop takes place - the city of Hiroshima.

The significance of Hiroshima

In the opening section the author described the discussions that took place between a number of senior officials prior to the opening of the new UNITAR office in Hiroshima in relation to the training activities that it was held would be appropriate for the office to deliver. The fact that training designed to promote post-conflict reconstruction was and continues to be regarded as a highly appropriate endeavour relates closely to the argument presented in this paper about the importance of specific conceptualizations of resilience.

The reason for this, and which was in all likelihood clearly appreciated by both the ar-

(29) Introduction to a documentary programme on psychological resilience entitled "This Emotional Life" broadcast on the PBS channel. <http://www.pbs.org/thisemotionallife/topic/resilience/what-resilience>

chitects of the new office itself and the Fellowship for Afghanistan programme, is that the modern city of Hiroshima represents an almost uniquely inspiring example of how a large community can regenerate itself following the ravages of war. In this respect it is held that the city of Hiroshima and its inhabitants actually *epitomise resilience*. It can be argued that the experiences of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during August 1945 represent the ultimate examples of the terrible destruction that human beings can inflict upon other members of their species. However, in the aftermath of these catastrophes, the successful reconstruction of both cities also represent examples of the great abilities that humans possess to rebuild their communities and create new thriving metropolises in locations which were little more than expanses of radioactive rubble in the space of just over a generation. Therefore with regard to participants of a capacity building training programme who come from a country that has suffered and continues to suffer from more than three decades of violent conflict, it can be argued that the city of Hiroshima represents an almost ideal location in which to host such training.

An integral element of the training activities carried out by the Fellows during the final workshop of the cycle that takes place in Hiroshima is a visit to the Peace Museum and Peace Memorial Park. In these locations the Fellows can see the enormous damage that the atomic bomb inflicted upon the city of Hiroshima and its inhabitants. Following this visit and during the subsequent days, they have opportunities to walk around the rebuilt city and appreciate how it has managed to recover from such levels of destruction. In this way the combined historical context and modern manifestation of the city of Hiroshima provide an inspiring example of successful post-conflict reconstruction for people who in some respects are living through a comparable period in the history of their own nation. As a result of this experience, during the course of Workshop Four on several occasions Fellows have remarked how they have been highly impressed by the reconstruction of Hiroshima, and have made comments to the effect that "if reconstruction can be achieved here following the atomic bombing, it can also be achieved

in our own country.”⁽³⁰⁾

An additional factor that underlines the significance of Hiroshima relates to the personal experiences of atomic bombing survivors, the Hibakusha. Despite the fact that the majority of Hibakusha are now in their 70s or 80s, many continue to regularly recount their experiences of the atomic bombing and its aftermath to groups of students who visit the city on school excursions and to adults and young people who visit the city from within Japan and from overseas. During Workshop Four the Fellows have the opportunity to meet with an English-speaking Hibakusha and hear her personal account of the atomic bombing and the way it affected her life during subsequent months and years. With regard to the aforementioned opportunities that the Fellowship provides for the promotion of personal healing and post-traumatic growth, it is held this experience represents a highly significant example of this. The Fellows are able to both listen to and then interact with an individual who has lived through dreadful trauma and hardship, but who has managed to find a way to overcome this experience in order to rebuild her own life, and thereby in a broader sense contribute towards the reconstruction of Hiroshima. Furthermore, due to the fact that messages of peace, reconciliation and a rejection of violence lie at the heart of Hibakusha testimonies, it is held that hearing these messages will provide encouragement to the Afghan participants in relation to the promotion of peace and reconciliation within their own country.

Tangible benefits

The author holds that the application of specific aspects of resilience theory, that is to say the conceptualizations of resilience utilised within the fields of Peacebuilding and Psychology, to the Fellowship for Afghanistan can provide tangible benefits to the programme in the following three ways:

(30) Comments of this nature have been written in the evaluation forms submitted by several Fellows following the end of Workshop Four.

Firstly, on a fundamental level it is held that the capacity building training activities of the Fellowship can contribute towards the development of people who can be described as resilient⁽³¹⁾ : in other words people who are in possession of enhanced professional abilities, who are strongly motivated vis-à-vis their individual professional responsibilities, and who are in the process of overcoming their own personal trauma. This condition represents a noteworthy example of post-traumatic growth which is contributing to the overall reconstruction of Afghan society, and beyond that ultimately to the realisation of a *resilient nation* which possesses outstanding individuals and professional cohorts who can serve to prevent the country from sliding back into large scale violence and social disorder.

Secondly on an individual level, gaining inspiration from the example of both the reconstructed city of Hiroshima and more particularly the experiences of the atomic bombing survivors the Hibakusha, providing encouragement to the Fellows in their efforts to overcome personal trauma, and thereby enabling them to contribute more effectively both personally and professionally to their own healing at the same time as the reconstruction of their nation. In this sense, as a result of their participation in this capacity building training programme, it is envisaged that the Fellows develop into more resilient individuals who experience post-traumatic growth in a very meaningful, tangible manner.

Thirdly, on a group level, as a result of the experience of visiting Hiroshima and participating in capacity building activities that are organised within the city, the Fellows can gain a clear appreciation of what a resilient population can potentially achieve through sustained, cooperative effort. In other words, the physical manifestation of the reconstructed city of Hiroshima from what had been little more than a radioactive wasteland

(31) Conceived in this case in terms of the conceptualizations utilised within *both* Peacebuilding and Psychology.

provides an inspirational example to a group of Afghans *en masse*: it provides them with an inspirational vision for their own future cooperative action. In essence, the modern city of Hiroshima represents what resilient people can achieve when their energies are combined over time, and therefore provides a model for how a comparable result can potentially be achieved in a different post-conflict context.

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