Naivasha Synthesis Report

SUMMARY OF KEY INSIGHTS FROM AN EXPERIENCE-SHARING AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP FOR UN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING PRACTITIONERS TO ENHANCE CONFLICT PREVENTION PROGRAMMING

Navaisha, Kenya

30 October – 2 November 2007

THE PURPOSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS ARE:

To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace" - Article 1, Charter of the United Nations

MESSAGES FROM PARTICIPANTS

"What we have in common is that there is no common vision on effective conflict prevention in the UN."

Participants described the experience as empowering and unique; "we engaged with open minds, open hearts and open will in an attempt to see with fresh eyes, to get a sense from the field of what is happening, to let go of unhelpful patterns, to allow new ideas to come, to develop a new vision of successful peacebuilding approaches, and "to co-create a peacebuilding 'ecosystem' that connects and coordinates through seeing from the whole."[1]

The challenges facing PDAs engaging in conflict prevention initiatives are numerous and diverse. They range from constraints within the UN Country Team operating environment to challenges working in highly polarized national situations. As the UN's work evolves and expands in this field, it behoves the UN to establish a support system for PDAs in-country and with Headquarters that can nurture their efforts with added knowledge, communication, training and peer support. The Naivasha workshop bonded this fledgling community and generated enthusiasm and commitment among all the participants to forge a system that will strengthen the UN's conflict prevention operational capacity in the field and support this community from UN Headquarters.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Experience-Sharing and Capacity Development Workshop to Enhance Conflict Prevention Programming held in Naivasha, Kenya (30 October – 2 November 2007), brought together 40+ UN staff and practitioners from UN Headquarters and the field, who contributed to a unique UN reflection process on enhancing support to Peace and Development Advisor (PDA) and improving the UN's work in conflict prevention/sensitive programming. This workshop emanates from the work of the UN's Framework Team for Coordination on Preventive Action (FT), an informal, multi-agency group which supports UN Resident Coordinators (RCs) and Country Teams (CTs) to formulate early, upstream prevention strategies and implement ensuing conflict-sensitive initiatives.

For the past two years, the Framework Team has had a three-tiered interactive structure of: (1) a principal-level plenary meeting bi-monthly, (2) country-specific supportive working groups, and (3) an Expert Reference Group composed of Headquarters staff, lending thematic and operational expertise in conflict prevention to the FT. This new configuration has had a positive, catalytic effect on both strengthening intra-UN coordination and building Member-State's national capacities and institutions to prevent and mitigate violent conflict.

The Naivasha gathering of conflict prevention practitioners examined and took stock of past and on-going work, discussed the current constraints and challenges to strengthen the conflict prevention capacities of UNCTs and Member States, and advised on how to improve our structures and processes to optimize the UN's delivery of these services in future. One of the main outcomes was the design of a comprehensive strategy to support current and future cadres of Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs). The gathering agreed on a process for the development of a comprehensive framework of support to PDA's and institutional coherence in

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[1] Otto Scharmer, *Theory U: Leading from the Emerging Future.*

recruitment and deployment; the formation of a Community of Learning and Practice to enhance knowledge sharing and learning; the key components of a new induction, mentoring and capacity building process for UN and partner peacebuilding practitioners. The Expert Reference Group of the FT was given a mandate by the participants to execute the recommendations arising from this process.

The review of conflict prevention processes and the reaffirmation of their value and impact, lead to the conclusion that the momentum for these new activities should be sustained and significantly more human and financial resources should be mobilized.   The practitioners emphasized that, compared to the human and material cost of violence, and given the potential of this relatively modest effort to contribute to the UN's overall effort to 'save succeeding generations from the scourge of war,' it will be worth it.

BACKGROUND

Despite the primacy of prevention in the UN's founding principles, the institution's response to the threat and occurrence of violent conflict has often been limited, uncoordinated and lacking in coherence and long-term sustainability. The fact that an estimated 0.1% of the UN's operational budget[2] and only 20% of UNDP/BCPR's budget is spent on prevention is a reflection that there has been insufficient attention and political will to prioritize and fund proactive efforts to achieve the purpose of the UN in this area. The unique strength of the UN is that, in contrast to the roles played by donor countries, neighbouring countries and lobby groups, it has no overt political self-interest. On the whole it enjoys credibility as an honest broker and as the representative of the shared values of the international community. The UN is therefore uniquely placed as an institution to be in the forefront of conflict prevention efforts.

By 'conflict prevention' is actually meant the prevention of armed conflict or mass violence. Violent conflict is prevented both by dealing with surface triggers that could ignite violence; and by pro-actively addressing the root causes of conflict in a society. Much of the latter is intertwined with developmental work and the building of capacity of democratic institutions. However, based on the premise that local actors and communities are the primary agents of sustainable peace, the fundamental premise to the UN's approach is to enable local actors to engage in dialogue and joint conflict transformation processes. It further assumes that all the different agencies of the UN do contribute to conflict prevention, and that the UN's impact can be enhanced by improved coordination among the agencies analysing and working together through a conflict prevention lens.

In an effort to fill this gap, the UN, through the inter-agency UN Framework Team, has in recent years pioneered field-based conflict prevention strategies involving the development, political, human rights and humanitarian arms of the UN which aim to assist countries facing social tensions or threatened by the prospect of instability or violent conflict. These prevention strategies require effective coordination between headquarters and the field, in order to ensure effective collaboration and optimal results. Experience in recent years has shown that the

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[2] Jan Egeland, presentation to DPA at a Folke Bernadotte Academy training session in mediation and dialogue skills, in Sandö, Sweden. November 2007.

deployment of Peace and Development Advisers (PDAs) can be an effective instrument for UN preventive action – essentially to strengthen the capacity of UN Country Teams to create the necessary conditions for sustainable peace and development in those countries.   The first deployment of PDAs started in 2001 and, thus, far, the UN has deployed PDAs and other conflict prevention practitioners in 19 countries.[3]

"Peace and Development Advisor" or "PDA" is used as a generic term to describe UN staff working with UNCT members and national counterparts on dedicated programming initiatives aiming for the prevention of violent conflicts.   The PDA is essentially an 'integrator', who works with the relevant UN agencies and national counterparts to identify the specific priorities for conflict prevention and facilitate the best possible synergy.   The generic job description of PDAs[4] and the skills set required[5] emphazise the strong 'integrator' and 'facilitator' role of PDAs.

At this juncture, it became clear that the professional category of PDAs and their functions needed to be consolidated and institutionalized in the UN system, as the work of PDAs, as an integral part of the Country Team, is emerging as a key interface between the UN system, local counterparts (both government and civil society) and the international community in their efforts to build/strengthen national capacities in conflict prevention and conflict-sensitive development.

To better understand, support and enhance the work of these conflict prevention and development practitioners, the Expert Reference Group of the UN Framework Team convened a global workshop in Naivasha, Kenya in November 2007.   The primary aims of the workshop were to: (1) share experiences in the design and implementation of UN initiatives to improve future practice, (2) develop a systematic way to collect and disseminate knowledge and guidance on preventive action, and (3) develop a coherent framework for recruitment, deployment, induction and continuous learning.   This document provides a synthesis of the main themes, insights and plans of action emerging from the Naivasha process. Background documents, the

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[3] Current and past conflict prevention initiatives considered to be part of this initiative include: Bangladesh, Bolivia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, Chad, Colombia, Ecuador, Fiji, FYR Macedonia, Ghana, Guyana, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Indonesia, Nepal, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Sri Lanka, and Zimbabwe. New conflict preventions initiatives are starting soon in Guinea-Bissau and Sudan.

[4] Generic job description of PDAs: support the implementation of conflict prevention initiatives and strategies in the field; assist in the development and strengthening of national institutions and processes for conflict management; provide strategic analyses and recommendations for the UN RC and UN headquarters, so that the UN system can best assist national and local initiatives; support multi-stakeholder dialogue and reconciliation processes; support the mainstreaming of conflict prevention into UN and national development plans and programmes, including through targeted training and capacity building of UN staff and national partners on conflict sensitive approaches ; support specific, targeted initiatives, as requested by national counterparts and under the direction of the RC, such as electoral violence prevention, political party dialogue, and the development of conflict-sensitive reporting by the media, etc.

[5] The skills sets for PDAs vary depending upon the needs of the UN Country Office and the particular circumstances of the country. They generally include the following: well-developed skills and demonstrated experience in facilitation, consensus-building, multi-stakeholder dialogue processes, mediation, negotiation, dispute resolution, experiential training methodologies, and ideally, the ability to impart these methodologies to national mediators and trainers. In addition, PDAs must have experience in strategy and programme development, proficient analytical and writing skills, a high degree of political and cross-cultural sensitivity, and in-depth experience working in conflict environments. Experience in enhancing women's participation as stakeholders in dialogue and reconciliation processes is also a highly desirable skill.

methodology for and agenda of the meeting, the participant list and reports of past regional experience sharing workshops are available from the Secretariat of the Framework Team.[6]

COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK FOR INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING
"What we have in common is that there is no common vision on effective conflict prevention in the UN."

Participants recognized that comprehensive framework for institutional strengthening of the UN to better support conflict prevention is necessary because the lack of a common vision, strategy, support structures, standards and practice is impeding the optimal effectiveness and impact of the work. Reflecting on numerous strengths and weaknesses in the system, participants tasked the ERG to develop a framework with practitioners in the field that would facilitate *improved administrative arrangements; enhanced intra-UN coordination; continuous mentoring and learning*; *empowerment of national counterparts, and the development of conflict prevention and peacebuilding as a core UN function.* The vision is that the four pillars of the Framework will lead to nine concrete improvements in the UN's institutional strengthening as regards to conflict prevention:

A. Improved Administrative Arrangements by

1. providing information on conflict prevention activities that would enable the to UN develop criteria to recruit and place PDAs strategically and in a systematic manner that promotes greater consistency and coherence in the work;

2. providing guidelines for the development of generic and specific TORs, recruitment procedures; appropriate standardized contractual arrangements;

3. guiding the proactive expansion of the funding base for PDA deployments;

B. Enhanced Intra-UN Coordination by

4. enhancing intra-HQ and HQ-field coordination to facilitate multi-directional flow of information;

5. guiding the establishment of appropriate guidance and support mechanisms at HQ (such as country specific working groups and core groups) for PDA teams;

6. enhancing intra-UNCT collaboration and synergies between RCs, PDAs, country teams and other UNCT staff in the field;

C. Continuous Mentoring and Learning by

7. developing the effective induction, mentoring, and ongoing training of PDAs;

8. promoting learning in the organisation through the formation of a Community of Learning and Practice;

D. Empowerment of National Counterparts by

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[6] Contact Louise Agersnap (louise.agersnap@undp.org) or Keith Wright (keith.wright@undp.org).

9. promoting partnerships that prioritise local ownership and sustainability of locally led conflict prevention responses and mechanisms.

Recommendations from the working groups on concrete outputs are summarised below:

A. Improved Administrative Arrangements

1. **Information on conflict prevention activities that would enable the UN to develop system-wide criteria to recruit and deploy PDAs systematically and strategically.**

There is currently no comprehensive database of who is doing what in terms of the prevention of violent conflict within the UN system. Such a database, including a roster of PDA deployment status, is needed to ensure that informed decisions can be made regarding the optimal recruitment and placement of PDAs in the field. Furthermore, access to such a database will also enhance inter-agency collaboration, prevent duplication, and facilitate information sharing on lessons learned. The Framework Team will lead the exercise to compile such a database.

2. **Guidelines for the development of generic and specific TORs, recruitment procedures; appropriate standardized contractual arrangements.**

While it is understood that each PDA position needs to be crafted carefully and tailored to the specific country and UN requirements, standardising and professionalizing recruitment with widely accepted core competencies and multi-year and renewable L contractual arrangements would help stabilize and enlarge the pool of qualified practitioners available to the UN. Based on the information gleaned from a comprehensive database, the FT can begin to facilitate agreement on a generic, but adaptable profile for the role of the PDA that enables PDAs to operate creatively, tactically and strategically. Such an agreement should be reached as part of a participatory analysis and planning exercise by a team that includes a core group at HQ, the hosting agency, the UNCT, the RC and national partners. TORs should be very specific about the key roles of the PDA, and the relationship with the RC, CT, HQ and non-UN actors.

The recruitment of women PDAs is a priority and more needs to be done to link the recruitment process to networks of women's organisations. End of assignment reports need to be a mandatory requirement in the PDA contact and overlapping handovers should be arranged wherever possible.

3. **Proactive stabilization and expansion of the funding base for PDA deployments;**

In the past, PDA positions have been funded in an ad hoc manner through the FT, the DPA/UNDP Joint Programme, and by individual agencies where circumstances were less conducive to broader interagency collaboration. As the work expands and becomes a core concern for more UNCTs, it is necessary to ensure consistent future funding so that PDA deployments and the conflict prevention programming that catalyze are secure and not undermined by gaps and uncertainties. Innovative ways of funding should be

considered, including the mobilization of funds when rapid deployments are needed; the new UNDP/DPA Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Prevention, and possible assistance from the new Peacebuilding Fund.

B. Enhanced Intra-UN Coordination

Conflict prevention is by its nature a highly complex undertaking that has to deal simultaneously with opposing interests and contradictions with both external interlocutors and internal counterparts. Some of these dilemmas are well-known, such as the tension between human rights and a peacebuilding approach; the conundrum of providing humanitarian aid in ways that do not exacerbate the conflict; the priorities of development aid versus political considerations; etc. The departments and agencies of the UN represent and replicate these tensions in the development of conflict prevention initiatives. . There is no avoiding these dilemmas, but there is potential for facilitating better inter-agency dialogue and collaboration to ensure a greater conflict prevention impact.

4. **Enhanced intra-HQ and HQ-field coordination to facilitate multi-directional flow of information**

   Effective mutual sharing of vital information between HQ and the field has been mentioned repeatedly as one of the most important improvements that need to be made urgently. The challenge is to ensure that core group members at HQ level, and DPA in particular, receive from and share with PDAs sufficient information to enable all the actors to jointly analyse the situation and agree on the best strategies to enhance sustainable conflict prevention in the countries. This can be accomplished by frequent core group/PDA tele-conferences, bi-lateral phone exchanges and periodic reports when key events transpire. The reporting requirements as well as the programmatic focus of the PDA needs to be carefully defined and balanced in the PDA TORs, to avoid that PDAs become overburdened with written reporting requirements or with administrative responsibilities that may hamper the PDA role as strategic adviser and leader of conflict prevention programming.

5. **Appropriate guidance and support mechanisms at HQ for PDA teams**

   Given the limited capacity of and daunting demand for conflict prevention support from HQ staff, it is imperative that small, agile, informal, bureaucratic-free and effective support mechanisms are in place for each situation where PDAs are engaged. A mechanism proposed in Naivasha is the designation of an individual focal point in each working group (WG) or core group (CG) at HQ that a PDA can refer to concerning all substantive and administrative issues; and the more effective use of existing mechanisms such as the Senior Advisory Group on UNDP/DPA Cooperation and the Framework Team. The focal point would usually be drawn from the WG/CG and could also be helpful in servicing that group's functioning.

6. **Enhanced intra-UNCT collaboration and synergies between RCs, PDAs, country teams and other UNCT staff in the field**

There is broad consensus that, in most cases, the PDA should be located in the office of the RC, or linked to the RC if hosted by a UN agency other than that where the RC is located. It is very important that the RC is knowledgeable about CP in order to be comfortable implementing strategies that deal sensitive issues usually involved in conflict prevention programming.

PDAs can be most effective when RCs view conflict prevention as a priority and stay involved in strategy development and implementation. The RC/PDA relationship needs open communication and full trust in order to provide mutual strategic guidance and support to conflict prevention programmes and staff. Similarly, in order to ensure that RC's understand and are confident that they have inter-agency support from Headquarters, more needs to be done to enhance communication between RCs and WG/CGs and key Headquarters leadership, especially DPA. RCs should be rewarded—not punished—for taking risks . Erica Jong said: "If you don't risk anything, you risk even more!"[7] Managers' support of conflict prevention staff should be evaluated as part of the Global Staff Survey (GSS) and Results and Competency Assessment (RCA) process.

As a rule, PDAs should provide overall strategic guidance and advice on a conflict prevention programme, rather than acting as programme managers. Every PDA should therefore be assisted by a support team at the country-level.   The day-to-day management of programme implementation should be the responsibility of the support team, rather than the PDA.

C. Continuous Mentoring and Learning

The empowerment of PDAs is designed around four essential elements: Effective induction; mentoring and peer support; ongoing training; and continuous learning in a community of practice.

7. **The provision of guidelines for the effective induction, mentoring, and ongoing training of PDAs**

New PDAs will benefit from a comprehensive **induction programme**, which includes a two-day minimum briefing at HQ.   The ERG membership will coordinate the development of such a briefing and pre-deployment package that could possibly be connected to curriculum development.

As PDAs all agree that learning by doing is the most effective form of learning, it was agreed that **mentoring** would be a vital component of the empowerment of PDA-types. Visits to and in-service training with experienced peers, and **structured training** and

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[7] Erika Jong, http://www.quotedb.com/quotes/1848

reflection with a vertical representation in the UN (e.g. HQ, UNCT, RC, PDA, programme staff) will form part of the overall capacity building process.

PDAs need to be knowledgeable about a wide range of content and process issues and skilled in basic conflict transformation capacities.[8] In particular, PDA-types need to actively engage in analysing new emerging types of conflicts, e.g. organised crime, terrorism, pressure on the earth's resources, etc., and developing creative conflict transformational responses to these new threats.[9]

The ERG was tasked to compile notes relating to skills and knowledge in the form of a manual; a basic electronic bibliography; and a UN-integrated electronic platform that is accessible to the wider UN community. A core group that will include PDAs in the field will develop the comprehensive capacity building programme for, but not limited to, current and future PDA-type staff. There was consensus that the programme should also benefit others, such as UN strategic planners, RC offices, missions in post conflict situations and programme staff.

8. **The promotion of continuous learning in the organisation through the formation of a Community of Practice**

The fourth element of the capacity building process for PDAs is the formation of a vibrant Community of Practice (CoP) that will facilitate continuous interaction, support, coaching, mentoring, learning and sharing between practitioners, UN officials and non-UN resource persons. The CoP needs to be inclusive across agencies and small at first, but always accessible to others. Its purpose is to benefit the whole UN system and those working closely with the UN. The CoP hopes to stimulate change and have a multiplier effect on the field of conflict prevention and throughout the UN system as a result of the quality of technical guidance and combined wisdom.

Participants uniformly felt that the CoP needs to expand its own knowledge base by sharing and disseminating information in a number of forms – in written documentation, as reference material on an on-line platform, through e-discussions, e-mail and other dissemination. Key needs were expressed for practitioner-oriented information and guidance both on subject-specific issues such as: land and natural resources conflicts, human rights and conflict prevention, and on process issues such as: finding strategic entry points to engage in conflict prevention programming in difficult circumstances and how to work on conflict prevention with RC's and UN Country Teams. The ERG was tasked to pursue the development of guidance notes and more content-based literature for PDAs and the wider community of practice working on conflict prevention and to utilize the deep expertise residing within current PDAs to compose, edit or add to these knowledge pieces as much as possible.

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[8] See the detailed Naivasha process report *UN Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Practitioners: Supported Supporters?* p 34-44, 49.
[9] See *UN Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Practitioners: Supported Supporters?* p 41-42.

Figure 1: Community of Practice

Indicates the continuous multi-directional interaction and flow of knowledge.
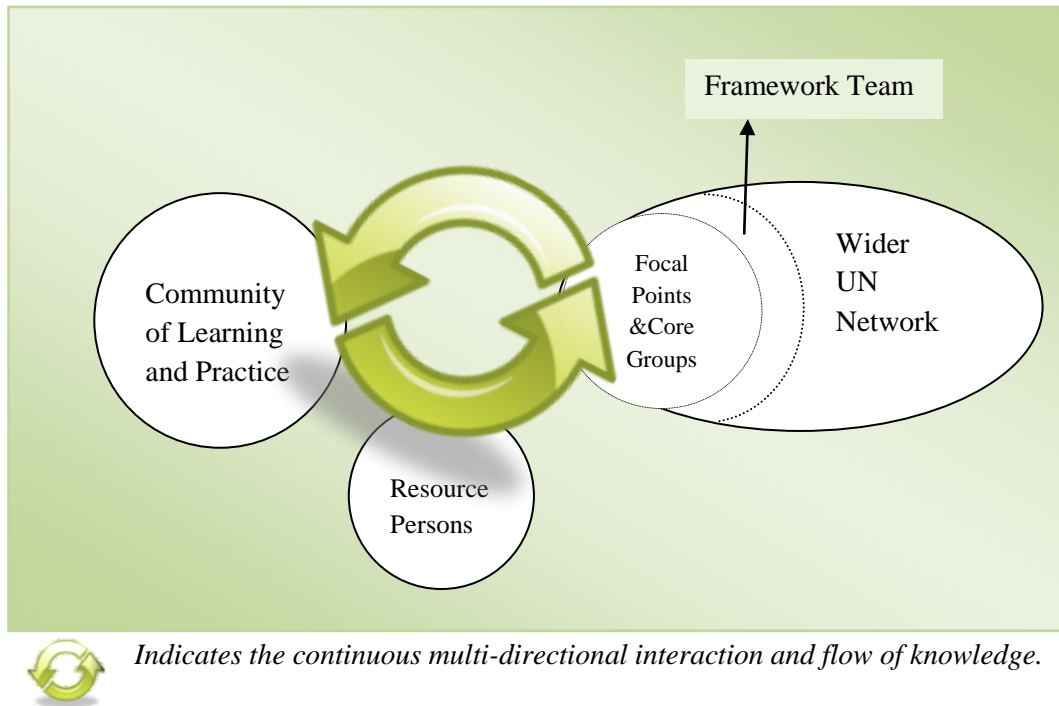
D. Empowerment of National Counterparts

9. Promote partnerships that prioritize local ownership and sustainable locally led conflict prevention responses and mechanisms.

In keeping with the first report of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Armed Conflict (A/55/985-S/2001/574), primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests with Member States and their civil societies and that conflict prevention must have national ownership. The role of the UN is to support national efforts for conflict prevention and assist them in building national capacity in this area. As such, the UN remains a facilitator, not an owner of CP processes. It remains an invited guest whose responsibility it is to affirm and build the capacity of the hosts in mutually respectful and empowering partnerships. The UN needs to support local initiatives instead of expecting local counterparts to support UN programmes. The work will be stronger and grow deep roots only when politicians, governance officials, civil society and business are fully invested in and take responsibility for the design and implementation of processes that are intended to overcome threats of violence, insecurity and underdevelopment.

In addition to national ownership of initiatives, a primary part of a PDA's work is to multiply and replicate their own skill set among individuals in partner and host government institutions. The skill to build relationships of trust, to inspire, energise and train others is both an art and a science. It requires presence, creativity and intuition as well as thorough knowledge of the conflict prevention field and the abilities to methodically practice basic and develop new cutting edge conflict transformation skills.

The wisdom to know whether to do anything, what to do, and when to step aside can be acquired through careful listening and learning from those who are building peace in their own countries and communities. Naivasha participants shared precious advice on how to achieve that.[10]

MESSAGES FROM PARTICIPANTS

- It was an overwhelming rich experience.
- Conflict prevention is definitely not sinking – it's surging. We are in fact doing CP. The lesson is that we can learn a lot about our interaction between core staff and those in the field. I have worked outside of the UN system for long and had lots of critique. Now I'm looking forward to engaging the UN in future.
- This workshop represents those situations that we want PDAs to recreate on the ground.
- This workshop came at the right time for me after being one month on the job. I was a bit isolated and unclear, but now I feel very energised.
- This was the highlight of the year.
- We came together as a family.
- It was important to get information on what people were doing. I feel re-energised for the work back home.
- I've learned a tremendous amount of information and hope all other UN agencies can benefit from this.
- The facilitation was fantastic – it was like a ballet.

Participants described the experience as empowering and unique; "we engaged with open minds, open hearts and open will in an attempt to see with fresh eyes, to get a sense from the field of what is happening, to let go of unhelpful patterns, to allow new ideas to come, to develop a new vision of successful peacebuilding approaches, and "to co-create a peacebuilding 'ecosystem' that connects and coordinates through seeing from the whole."[11]

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[10] See the detailed Naivasha process report *UN Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Practitioners: Supported Supporters? p 71*
[11] Otto Scharmer, *Theory U: Leading from the Emerging Future.*