Mediation and Facilitation in Peace Processes

A pilot project implemented by swisspeace and the Center for Security Studies

The main goal of the Mediation Support Project (MSP) is to support the Swiss Foreign Ministry in its mediation and facilitation engagements. After the completion of its one year pilot phase, MSP is expanding its mediation and facilitation activities in peace processes. The joint venture project between swisspeace and the Center for Security Studies (CSS-ETH) has been financed by the Political Affairs Division IV of the Swiss Federal Department for Foreign Affairs (PDIV).

A holistic approach

Mediation is often reduced to the short spotlight moments when conflict parties (with the assistance of a third party) are eventually signing a peace or ceasefire agreement. MSP takes the broader picture into account and does not focus solely on such track 1 processes, but also on the various uses and forms of mediations and facilitations before, during and after the negotiation of an agreement. In its holistic approach, MSP also focuses on the various actors (external and internal) and key topics (e.g. resource sharing, gender, religion, business, constitutionalism, Dealing with the Past) relevant to a functioning peace process.

Activities in the first year (summer 2005 – summer 2006)

MSP has supported PDIV and its practicing mediators in the three following working areas:

1. Applied Research
   There is a richness of experience in the field of mediation and facilitation. Yet this experience often stays with the respective mediators and is not made institutional or general knowledge. MSP has therefore supported PDIV to assess the various Swiss mediation and facilitation engagements in order to draw lessons learnt for future engagements. MSP has also carried out one in-depth research on the Swiss engagement in the Sudan.

2. Training
   MSP organizes workshops and trainings on mediation-specific skills for up-and-coming mediators and facilitators. Amongst other training activities, MSP has co-organised a Retraite for Swiss Ambassadors to discuss the specific challenges senior diplomats encounter when they engage in mediation and facilitation processes. MSP has also established an overview of existing training opportunities for mediators.
3. **Networking**
Successful mediators must be able to draw on different contacts and resources. MSP has participated in various forums in the wider mediation community. By doing so, MSP has started to become a transmission belt that transports knowledge and experiences from and to practicing mediators. Amongst other activities, MSP has organized various roundtable discussions on specific mediation cases and selected mediators. Is has also brought together Swiss mediators and those involved in peace processes in order to enhance the mutual learning process.

**Looking ahead**
The pilot and pioneer phase of MSP has come to an end. The future challenge for MSP is to focus on the most promising trails and niches identified during the first year:

1. **Research:** MSP is developing methodological and topical expertise that is crucial for addressing the various challenges in mediation processes (knowledge capitalization, topical research such as gender or human rights).

2. **Training:** MSP is offering tailor-made training activities for selected (future) mediators and facilitators (diplomats and members of SDC; Peacebuilding Advisors; SEF members; and other institutions and Organisations).

3. **Process Support:** MSP is supporting selected Swiss mediators and facilitators in specific areas of their mandate ("Mediator’s Toolbox", issues brief, process design, evaluation, logistics…).

4. **Networking:** MSP is running platform activities that bring together experts in the field of mediation & facilitation in peace processes (mediators, NGO, academia, PDIV …).

**The organisational set-up of MSP**
MSP seeks to draw upon a broad variety of existing peace building expertise in general, and mediation / facilitation resources in particular. For that reason, MSP is in itself a joint venture between two organisations of complementary competencies in this field (swisspeace and the CSS) and is connected to various other organisations and stakeholders that are competent in this field. The planned activities are carried out by a Project Coordinator, a Senior Program Officer and a Trainee. They are supported by special experts on an ad-hoc basis.

Throughout, MSP will remain a small and flexible project that is closely linked to the Swiss Foreign Ministry, as well as to the wider peacebuilding and academic communities. If successful, MSP could come closer its vision: to become a centre of competence for mediation & facilitation in peace processes.

*MSP, end of August 2006*