



## **The Role of Psychosocial Support in Peacebuilding and Reconciliation**

Friday 21 September 2018, at 8:30am – 4pm

Venue: Bulevardin seurakuntasali (Parish Hall), Bulevardi 16b Helsinki

The objective of this seminar is to deepen the understanding of how the approaches and methods that constitute psychosocial support (PSS), could be integrated in a more systematic and comprehensive way into peace and dialogue processes and post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation.

Integrating PSS into peacebuilding is not a new concept: there are a number of good examples, which document how practitioners around the world have integrated PSS into peacebuilding work. However, there is still insufficient knowledge amongst practitioners about the right tools, vocabulary, theory and practice of how to effectively integrate PSS in different peacebuilding situations. More attention should be paid to the ways in which PSS interventions could potentially influence long-term collective social processes of peacebuilding, reconciliation and other forms of social transformation or the benefits of using PSS more systematically in peace and dialogue processes<sup>1</sup>. As such, it is imperative to ask the questions: Can sustainable peace be achieved in contexts where people feel unsafe, where people do not trust each other and where people are afraid of expressing their feelings and opinions? Can sustainable peace be achieved if the losses and emotional impact of the conflict remain unaddressed?

Unlike conventional inter-state warfare, intra-state conflicts today target social structures and networks. People's political, economic, social, cultural and health structures are often destroyed during conflicts. Complex political emergencies create problems experienced at the individual, family, community and societal levels. The social rules, ties and bonds between people and within communities that strengthen everyday coping and resilience are broken. Restoring the social fabric and building trust among people and communities is essential for lasting peace.

---

<sup>1</sup> See for example the recent publication by the IJR and War Trauma Foundation: Mapping Global Practice: Healing Communities, Transforming Society: [http://www.ijr.org.za/home/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Mapping-MHPSS-and-PB\\_IJR-and-WTF\\_June-2017.pdf](http://www.ijr.org.za/home/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Mapping-MHPSS-and-PB_IJR-and-WTF_June-2017.pdf)

Psychosocial support aims at protecting and promoting psychosocial well-being so that individuals, families and communities can develop cognitive, emotional, and spiritual strengths that enable the building of positive social relationships. Effective psychosocial support enhances competencies and resilience and positively influences both the individual and the social environment in which people live. From this perspective, both PSS and peacebuilding are transformative: the aim of PSS interventions is to build healthy, peaceful and stable societies. The key is to support the social, political, historical, cultural and economic transformation in society and pay attention to the linkages between individual, communal and societal well-being and change. Addressing the structural and relational causes and consequences of conflicts requires a long-term commitment and inclusive approaches that involve the participation of the affected populations or communities at all levels.

Therefore, the focus of dialogue processes and peacebuilding should be on creating an environment that is conducive to effective and sustainable social change, cohesion and transformation after a conflict.

Felm commissioned research on Psychosocial support, peacebuilding and reconciliation in three different settings to generate data and knowledge on how best to address the questions raised above. The research will be published during the seminar and key findings presented by two senior experts and researchers of Felm, Dr. Anne Kubai and Ms. Kathy Angi. The presentation will be followed by an expert panel discussion that will comment and reflect on the findings of the research and contemplate on how this work can be carried forward. The seminar is co-organised with the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR).

