

Partners in Conflict Resolution

Debriefing Meeting – Post Conference Seminar

Wednesday, February 25, 2004

GuyberNet Boardroom

Present were:

Trevor Benn	-	Convenor
Stanhope Williams	-	GuyberNet
Jennifer Thomside	-	Youth Challenge Guyana
Bevon Currie	-	Guyana Youth & Student Movement
Rayon Pyle	-	Youth Peace Council Youth Volunteers Corp
Lateef Lisimba	-	Guyana Co-operative Credit Union League

Absent were: Kim Halley – Clerical & Commercial Workers Unions
Rep of University of Guyana

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6.00 p.m by Mr. Trevor L. Benn who informed those present that the meeting was called to de-brief partners as well as to inform them that the report of the post - conference Seminar under the theme **“Networking-A Tool for Conflict Resolution”**, was complete and ready for submission to the United Nations Development Program.

Feedback

Mr. Benn conveyed his thanks to all partners for making the seminar the success it was. He noted that from feedback he received from the UNDP and University of Guyana representatives as well as from other sources, that the seminar was a success.

Seminar Report

The convener noted that the report is a verbatim compilation of all the presentations by panelists and of the general question and answer session. The

report is sixty (60) pages long and consists of digital photographs of the activity. He said that the intention is to add more photographs as an annexe which could bring the document to approximately seventy (70) pages long. Mr. Benn also indicated that the report does not contain any analysis or recommendation since the intention is to have the report circulated to partners with the hope that they would contribute to such analysis and recommendations.

It was suggested that the report could be sent to partners by e-mails for review but due to its bulk it may be necessary to convert it to Adobe/PDF file. It was also suggested that it could be sent minus the photographs.

The Way Forward

- Mr. Benn asked the question “where do we go from here?” What can we do to build on the process and to keep the momentum going? We have to decide whether we must continue or not.
- Mrs. Thomside opined that there is need for us to decide on a common goal and this must be clearly stated. She noted that one of the things that the UNDP look forward to is inclusiveness and balance, so every effort should be made to involve other groups.
- Mr. Currie noted that the process could be stifled if we try to invite other organization. He suggested that we look at the current organization involved in civil activities, identify the core organization with similar aims and objectives and work together with them.
- Mr. Williams questioned how do we achieve this balance and inclusiveness when it was clear that for the planning of the International Conference as well as the Post- Conference Seminar, invitation were issued to organizations such as P.Y.O, GAWU etc and they did not respond positively. They viewed everything with suspicion.
- Ms. Thomside opined that this is a very sensitive issue we are dealing with since there is a perception that the government sees these activities as anti-Government, with UNDP funding. They see many NGOs as anti-Government when this is not necessarily so. Mr. Benn agreed with this view and declared that we must never-the-less broaden the partners group to include groups like the P.Y.O. Mr. Currie also concurred.

To this end, Ms. Thomside suggested that we send letters to all groups including P.Y.O, inviting them to a Networking meeting. This letter should

be carbon copied to Mr. Chris Spies at the UNDP so that he is aware of our efforts to have all invited to join in the important process towards improved Social Cohesion in Guyana.

Mr. Benn interjected that there seems to be consensus that we need to move forward with the process towards greater social cohesion and summarized that the steps we should take are as follows:

- Start by sending letters to groups that invite them to participate in future planning meetings.
- Keep networking partners group to a manageable size of approximately 15 organizations.

Mr. Rayonne Pyle inquired what is meant by balance and inclusively. He was informed that it was mainly ethnic balance of the representatives on the committee. He then stated that the Peace Pilgrim group which is headed by Mrs. I Singh, wife of the current Attorney General Mr. Doodnauth Singh would be good group to work with. Her group was recently involved in planting peace poles around Georgetown; the last was planted in the City Hall compound. He undertook to make contact with them for the partners.

Organizations to be contacted

Mr. Benn strongly suggested that letters of invitations be sent to heads of organizations so that they can be made aware of the process from the beginning. He suggested that letters be sent via three modes of communication; e-mail, registered mail/snail mail, and fax where possible. The following groups were identified:

- i. Friends Of Peace Pilgrims
- ii. Love Outreach International
- iii. University Of Guyana
- iv. Trade Union Congress
- v. Brama Kumari Spiritual University
- vi. The Bahai Faith
- vii. The Guyana Youth And Student Movement
- viii. Central Islamic Organization Of Guyana
- ix. Progress Youth Organization
- x. Youth Peace Council Volunteers Corp.
- xi. Human Rights Organization

- xii. Guyana Hindu Dhamic Saba
- xiii. GuyberNet
- xiv. Youth Challenge Guyana
- xv. Amerindian Umbrella Organization
- xvi. G.C.U.L.L
- xvii. St. Francis Xavier/Carter Centre(Berbice Group)

There was some concern over the correct umbrella organizations for the Hindus, Muslims and the Amerindians. It was therefore agreed that guidance be sought from the relevant authority as to which of the national groups should be communicated with.

The governor stressed that it is important that it be made known that the Partners in Conflict Resolution is not an organisation but rather a group of organisations working on common projects and that the group will not have a president, secretary, treasurer, e.t.c as is common in organisation. There shall be a convenor of the meetings, this role may be rotated as well as the meeting place.

Start-up Funding

Ms. Thomside suggested that it may be useful for us to approach UNDP in the planning stages for funding, to reimburse representatives who attend meetings. She suggested a small start-up grant of approximately \$60,000, to assist with incidentals for traveling and snacks. Mr. Benn agreed and said that it may be a good thing to even ask UNDP to have our meeting in their Boardroom. In that way this would help to ensure that UNDP is an integral part of the process.

Things to be done

- I. Standhope Williams and Bevon Currie to draft text of letter of invitation
- II. Mr. Benn to contact Groups
- III. Rayonne Pyle to contact Peace Pilgrim
- IV. Mr. Benn to meet with Chris Spies to discuss proposal for the use of the boardroom and the provision of the small start-up grant. UNDP should have the opinion of reimbursing out of town representatives. It is hoped that we can encourage groups from outside of Georgetown to be part of the process.

Any other business

Mr. Williams suggested that we bring onboard the Moderator of the seminar Dr. Desiree Fox of the University of Guyana. Mr. Benn agreed with this suggestion since Dr. Fox had indicated her interest to support if she was called upon.

Date of next meeting

The date for the next meeting was fixed for March 12, 2004 at GuyberNet boardroom.

Standhope Williams

Respectfully submitted by,
Standhope Williams.
GuyberNet.