

PARTNERS IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

POST-CONFERENCE SEMINAR

“NETWORKING: A TOOL FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION”

**National Library Conference Room
Saturday, February 7, 2004**

INTRODUCTION

The Post Conference Seminar organized by several civil society organizations and NGO's including GuyberNet, Clerical and Commercial Workers Union, Youth Challenge Guyana and the University of Guyana in consultation with the ***Strengthening Democracy and Social Cohesion Project of the United Nations Development Programme***, got underway at the Conference Room of the National Library, Church Street, Georgetown, at 9.30 a.m. on Saturday, February 7, 2004.

The idea for this seminar originated at the Post Conference Opportunities Workshop organised by the United Nations Development Programme on Friday 9 January 2004 in the Conference room of Demerara Mutual life Insurance Company Building. Participants at the Workshop suggested several post-conference activities, among which was the Seminar on Networking.

Representatives of the NGO's and civil society organizations mentioned above subsequently met with the full support of UNDP and planned and implement the activity. Partners were very supportive of each other and worked collectively to ensure the success of the activity. Notwithstanding the absence of advertisement in the media, and the inadequate coverage of the activity by the print and electronic media, partners worked very hard throughout the international conference and at the level of their organisations to sensitise persons of the seminar. This resulted in a 75% attendance of the targeted number of participants.

Panel which was drawn mainly from representatives who attended the International Conference on Governance, Conflict Analysis and Conflict Resolution, which was organized by the Clark-Atlanta University and the University of Guyana, comprised Dr Naresh C. Singh of Canada, Dr

George Klay Kieh Jnr. of Liberia, Mr. Horace Levy of Jamaica and also included Mr. Lincoln Lewis of the Guyana Trades Union Congress. Dr. Mark Kirton of the University of Guyana was unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances.

WELCOME

Mr. Trevor Benn, Convenor of the Seminar and Chairman of the proceedings called the Seminar to order by inviting the audience to stand and to observe a minute of silence for all those persons who were killed, maimed, injured or affected in one way or the other around the world because of conflict of one sort or the other. The ***National Pledge*** was then recited by the gathering.

Mr. Benn then took the opportunity to welcome the panelists and participants. He observed that conflict is rife in the world today and particularly in Guyana and one of the ways people can resolve some of the conflicts is through networking and hence the Seminar. He noted that the ***'Partners in Conflict Resolution Group'*** had put together a highly skilled and experienced panel of academics and civil society representatives who are practitioners of networking in their own fields and who can bring to us a great deal of their experience and who could steer us to ways that can help to resolve the many conflict situations in Guyana. He further noted that it is felt that this Seminar was necessary and timely given the fact that the University of Guyana and Clark Atlanta University have just concluded their Conference dealing with issues revolving around conflict resolution and the fact that we have so many academics here from around the world. He declared that it is timely to benefit from their experiences. Mr. Benn encouraged participants to contribute fully in the discussion as the intention was to allow persons to leave with as much information as possible that can help individuals, groups and organizations to move forward in the process of nation building in a manageable conflict situation.

OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Benn introduced Mr. Jan Sand Sorensen United Nations Development Programme Resident Representative who declared the seminar open. Mr. Sorensen expressed his pleasure at being invited to declare the seminar open. He began by saying that the topic ***"Networking: A Tool for Conflict Resolution"***, was very close to his heart. He said he would take a personal approach to the topic and underscored how important it is for NGO's and civil society

organizations to be strengthened and networked. He noted how important it is in conflict resolution and strengthening the fabric of a democratic society. He referred to the previous meeting ahead of the International Conference, the **Post Conference Opportunities Workshop** which was held on January 9 and which generated several new ideas and energies among NGO's to get together, to network and to see how the NGO sector could be strengthened. The Seminar on Networking was one such idea. Mr. Sorensen said that since his arrival in Guyana in June 2003, he has been reflecting on this Guyanese society and the issues of the political system that is somewhat dysfunctional and how the UN can support processes that will help the system that is based upon fundamental democratic principles that are ascribed in the constitution. He also reflected on how it can become a system that is perceived by all citizens of this country as truly a democracy in the sense that it gives them a chance to participate, to influence issues that are of concern to them whether they feel represented by the people who are in power or in parliament and of course it is in parliament that allows different legitimate interests of citizens to engage in constructive dialogue to find solutions and where those in power are held accountable for what they do.

He pointed out that although he was not at the International Conference all the time one thing that struck a note with him in reflecting on these issues on the relationship between political processes and the historical development of society and the role of civil society and NGOs, were the comments made by Mr. Ravi Dev, Leader of the Rise Organise And Rally (ROAR) party who spoke on the topic **'Federalism: A framework for dealing with ethnic conflict in Guyana'**.

Mr. Sorensen said that Mr. Dev reflected on the way societies have evolved in Western Europe and the challenges facing countries such as Guyana; although not necessarily agreeing with everything Dev said, he supported the fact that Dev was relating something based upon historical facts when he said that in Europe which today can pride itself with very homogenous well-functioning democracies with quite legitimate and quite vibrant political and participatory processes. This was a process that evolved over centuries and he characterized three distinct social transformations that took place.

The first was in the 18th century at the formation of what is referred to as the nation state where what is today the known countries of Europe: Germany, England, France, Sweden were formed as people identified a particular spot, a mass of land with delineated borders

where people living within these borders identified with that as a national unity where you had the unity of language, geographical space, culture and of national identity.

The second transformation took place in the 19th century and was about the resources redistribution and wealth through the process of transformation of the means of production, the industrial revolution and the social upheavals sometimes of a violent nature, but sometimes more peaceful resulting in policies for redistribution of wealth in a more equitable manner so that you did not have this very very rigid and deeply divisive clefs between different classes of society.

The third was the process of forging political process that allowed the different groups of society to engage in a dialogue in a constructive way that would not lead to conflict and that would get legitimate avenues that would influence the process of decision making. That is a process that is contracted in the extreme but that took over 300 years and was in fact also often a bloody process with wars and violent revolutions and lots of human suffering. He advised that it is important to keep that in perspective when we compared with the challenge that Guyana is faced. He gave another example of his own country Denmark. He said that one thing that is striking is that the formation of NGOs predated constitutional democracy. It was when the people 90% of whom were mainly farmers when they decide that in order to compete on the world market, they needed to form cooperatives, they need to be better educated, they needed to form NGOs and organizations. This was before there was democracy, before they were political parties so that when you came to the political revolution that introduced a multi – party constitution. You had a population where the majority was very well organized, very well educated and therefore the political transformation was driven by people who had gained self – confidence and who had gained the means with which to assume power in a responsible way. He noted that this is a luxury that this is not available here. We have a Westminster constitution that follows the best text-book principles but it is in a way sort of parachuted down in a situation where it has not grown in step with the transformation of civil society. He said that it is in that perspective that is tremendously important that the formal constitutional process of democracy that is there on the books and inscribed in the constitution to be accompanied with this process of citizens getting together, forming groups NGOs about issues that concern them. He made the point that space occupied by political parties which is also when citizens get together about issues which are of concern to them whether it's environment, education, health, fighting HIV/AIDS or sports, it will often be means

that will cut across the divides that are sometimes making the formal political process very difficult and very divisive. He is struck by the fact in Denmark it is calculated, every citizen from cradle to grave, is a member of around 35 different organizations. What it means to democracy is that it is fundamentally almost more than the fact why have a democratic constitution, a multi – party based parliament. It means citizens are engaged in a multitude of activities, they take a direct interest, they assume responsibilities, they don't just delegate that responsibility to political parties and that creates a counterbalance to the formal political process that ensures a greater accountability and that provides avenues for engagement of the population, the civil society with the political processes. This can also be seen in the American Constitution which if you look at voter turn out you have an administration that is elected by maybe 17% of the voting age (adult population) that is not very democratic but in his mind it is the other elements in American society that you can say that America is a very democratic society. A society that is very advanced in terms of being completely permeated by various forms of institutions, interests groups, church, schools, judicial system and the role of the media and all of these elements make for a vibrant society where those in power are held accountable and provides avenues for engaging in the political discussion. He said that in Guyana it is fair to say that there is a great deal of mistrust between the formal political system and the civil society, not just the Government but it applies to major political parties. He said it was to him, who voted for these NGOs, no one voted for them so they have no legitimacy so he believed that NGOs are not something that needs to have legitimacy through parliamentary elections but these are groups that are formed by people who care about a subject and agree to work together to pursue these concerns and interests and it's very important for conflict resolution in Guyana that we support the strengthening of NGOs, that they become larger, they become more capable and that through that process they will become recognized as legitimate partners, participants in the process of transforming society. He pointed out that the UN is interested in working with NGOs and are also pursuing a policy dialogue with government and parliament about the legitimate role of NGOs. He hoped that a seminar such as this one hopefully one of many events that will contribute to that process.

Thanks To Mr. Jan Sand Sorensen

In expressing thanks to Mr. Sorensen, Mr. Benn noted that one of the issues that we face here in Guyana and the Caribbean is the issue of legitimacy of NGOs. He said that politicians have always questioned

the legitimacy of NGOs and the need for consulting with NGOs, but at the end of the day, whatever is done by the politicians, affect in one way or the other the NGOs and he believes the UN have discovered the need and goodness of many of the NGOs working around the world and have led in terms of inclusion of NGOs in all of its branches and its work and its activities. He expressed thanks to Mr. Sorensen for his intervention which he described as wide-ranging and timely. He then introduced the Moderator of the programme, Dr. Desrey Fox, Head of the Department of Amerindian Affairs of the University of Guyana.

REMARKS BY MODERATOR Dr. Desrey Fox

Dr. Fox described the Post-Conference Seminar as very timely and represents a serious discourse on addressing the issues pertaining to governance, conflict and conflict resolution because the presentations represented work on the theme at the global level. She said it is probably one of the most important attempts made to muster data, lessons and examples from which everyone can learn. She said the University of Guyana it seems is very lucky to host such a conference as there is a serious need now for this beloved institution to rise to the occasion and contribute to the existing conflict issues in Guyana.

She said that participants are also very lucky to have among us scholarly presenters and a person who has had hands on experiences in one of the public sectors dealing with a specific type of conflict. Each panelist was then given 20 minutes to make their presentations. The first presenter was then introduced.

Dr. Naresh C. Singh is currently the Director General of Governance and Social Development Directorate at CIDA Policy Branch in Canada and was Principal Advisor, Poverty and Sustainable Livelihood in the Bureau for Development Policy UNDP, New York 1996- 2001 and Director of the Poverty and Empowerment Programme 1993 – 1996 at the International Institute for Sustainable Development in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He worked in more than 40 countries at the village and policy level. He is also Adjunct Professor at Boston University School of Health and visiting scholar at Mc Gill University. He was visiting fellow at the University of Guelph and School of Rural Development 1999-2000 and the Canada Trust visiting Professor at the University of Waterloo Faculty of environmental Studies 2000 – 2001. From 1999 – 1993, Dr. Singh was Executive Director of the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute based in Castries, St. Lucia. In this capacity he advised ministers and senior policy makers on Environment and Development matters in 16 Caribbean countries. He

has served as an advisor to several organizations including the Commonwealth Secretariat, London, the Pan American Health Organisation, Washington, DC, the Consortium of Caribbean Universities for Natural Resource Management, the Foundation of International Environmental Law and Development, in the United Kingdom and the Alliance of Small Island States. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Centre for International Sustainable Development Law at Mc Gill University. He is the author of over 100 contributions (journal articles, conference papers and books) on technical and policy issues related to the environment, poverty, natural resources and sustainable livelihoods.

Presentation by Dr. Naresh Singh

“Those of you who were not at the conference would not know that this gathering is much more generous with time than the Conference was. The first thing I might do is to share with you how I think of Networks. After that I will talk a little bit about how these networks manifest themselves in practice and how is it that networks can help in conflict resolution in my own view and then try to give you a few examples from different parts of the world and finally we will talk a little bit about obstacles, what are the challenges to making this work and then my favorite subject of course is how do you bring it all together in a comprehensive way and how you might apply this to Guyana. First of all on the idea of networks, I believe all that is required for networks is two people, that’s where networks begin. You need at least more than one person and so the first unit is perhaps the household and networks within the household. And from there one can get networks in neighborhoods, in villages in which we live or towns for that matter, in communities although the word community is a little bit fluffy and by that I mean you can have a community which is not in a fixed location. For example, you can have a community of engineers. Some of them might live in Berbice, some might live in Essequibo, they need not be in a village so there is a difference between a community of people and a village, a community merely has common concerns, common interests and take common action and you can have a network of that kind as well. But then we start to get into one of the interesting aspects for me. Well two things: one is **networks of networks** and that’s very important because you can have anyone of these networks, networking with a bunch of others and that is the way the world is going.

The internet is a classic example of a network of networks. A company may have its own **Local Area Network (LAN)** or a village, a Community Bulletin Board and that is networked to a whole range and that makes networks extremely powerful. Both as a communication tool and a tool for doing a range of things that, I will quickly mention. So how do these networks manifest themselves; they manifest themselves as NGOs for example, the organization in which many of you work. They manifest themselves or grows from NGOs, from schools, from trade unions, from churches, from political parties and from a range of others and of course these days electronic networks are bringing people together in large numbers and from very distant places is asking the most recent and most powerful of networking systems that we have although not always utilized to its fullest in the developing parts of the world. So that's my broad take on Networks excepting perhaps for one challenge and that is – I like to refer to networks as a nested hierarchy. That is to say – if you have a group, you still have the individual; acting in that group and that individual has his or her personal interest. While the group might have some common interest, each individual in the group has a range of different interests. And so you have the individual with all his or her human rights as a citizen, as a human being and yet they work together as groups and sometimes it is necessary to have a trade of some of the individual interests in the interest of the group. So it is not an easy thing to do. People have to give up some of their own self-interest in order to participate sometimes effectively in a group. At other times it is quite possible for that person to be able to further their self-interest within the group and you get a win-win situation in which the group's interest and the individual's interest work together and so they can have a win-win. It is what I call making power appositive sum game. The power issue is perhaps at the heart of conflict and disputes in addition to other things. Networks are complex systems. There is a whole body of literature now growing on how to manage complex systems. One of these problems that we have when we work with networks is that we try to use traditional organizational tools in which these tools are designed for single organizations, governments or private sector organizations and we apply the same management tools to the management of Networks and we get a lot of problems. So the use of these newer management tools for networks it's important that we provide training, capacity building, for the use of the newer management tools rather than replying intuitively no the only tools.

How can networks help?

1. As we all know the theory tells us and we all know intuitively, the first one is **building trust**. We know how important that is in conflict resolution and in our own country Guyana. So trust building is one way.
2. The other one is **shared values**. Each of us has our own value system and perfectly legitimate but in order to work in a group we have to learn to share values.
3. The third one I would argue is **developing common vision**. Having a common idea of a destiny. Our motto: One people, one nation, one destiny, used to be a popular statement in Guyana. But there are not easy things to achieve.
4. The fourth one is **dispute settlements**. Networks can be very helpful in dispute settlements and they work in different parts of the world in different ways. Closely related to that is a reduction of violent conflict. I use the word violent conflict because when I think of conflict myself and in my field, we work on conflict because conflict hinders development processes and I really work in the area of international development broadly speaking and our concern of how governance facilitates the development process. I think conflict is a normal part of society. Conflict can be channeled to creative energies and the resolution of conflict sometimes can produce very positive results in many ways. But the real issue for me is how we prevent violent conflict and there is a thin line between the two but I'm sure our colleagues will address that. I tend to think of how do you resolve conflicts that are likely to lead to violent conflict. There are a bunch of other kinds of disputes that will always occur and that a normal part of human living.
5. The fifth one is **enhancing understanding**. It helps us to understand problems in a common way and therefore helps us to address those problems broadly speaking.

So I believe that those are some of the ways in which networks can help and contribute to conflict resolution. Many of us here, you are practical people, you work everyday with people and you do these stuff these days I don't get as much chance as I would like to be on the ground but I've spent much of my life working in the field. Let me draw a few examples to illustrate these theoretical concepts I've just presented. One is Italy. Some of the literature on 'social capital' and that is a phrase you will hear very often, I'm sure many of you are familiar with it already. But the phrase 'social capital' is used to talk about networks. Networking is one example of building social capital if you like. It is the same thing of trust, of common vision, of shared values and all the other things I referred to. The literature uses this

phrase 'social capital'. So where there are high levels of trust, where people have common values, shared vision and that kind of thing. We tend to say you have high social capital and are finding more and more that social capital is just as important as economics capital or natural capital in the developing process. Well the literature on social capital really started by research done in Italy. Now what is interesting is that the same country, Southern Italy was not or still is not as economically prosperous as Northern Italy and Robert Putnam asked the question why and he investigated that story and he concluded and I think the world accepts that conclusion that it is because of the higher levels of trust and shared values, the networks that existed in Northern Italy were much stronger than those in Southern Italy and one part of the country prospered much more than the other. Just to give you a practical example that these things are not just theoretical that they in fact work in practice.]

The other thing of course is that in Italy (I guess this government is probably there now for 2/3 years) but Italy used to change its government every year and a half or two years not because its constitution says it must do that. The government will collapse. They collapse every two or three years. Yet Italy remains a pretty stable economy. Its still one of the richer countries of the world, without that government being there unstable. And the reason again is that the democratic institutions could hold, they held together. So the networks work in practice. Let's take the country in which I live, Canada. The issues of employment equity, there are very clear and strict laws in Canada which try to ensure that minorities get some kind of special privilege in a way so that there can be a national reflection of different colour, of different groups and so on within the work force both ethnic in the private sector and in the government sector.

I joined CIDA in March 2002 after working for UNDP and a lot of my time recently has been spent learning French. I had to get my French up to a very fluent level. I am doing this at the cost of tax-payers money. The government of Canada, if you are at the executive level of government, you have to be fluent in both languages. It is important, five million people roughly of Canada's thirty million total population are French speaking but public servants must serve both groups, all the groups in the language of their choice. That's the kind of institution that shows us how these kinds of demands can be made and if the French did not have a powerful representation, if they were not a cohesive body with lobbying power, they would not have been able to get that sort of respect. These networks and social institutions both

formal and informal and one should recognize that there are formal institutions as well in Scandinavian countries.

I have worked in many countries in Africa and many economists and development specialists fail to understand how people survive. They appear to be so poor and at one time of course we defined poverty as people who don't have money. You go to Africa in Burkina Faso for example, find somebody with 10 head of cattle and the farmer will tell you, what are you talking about? I'm not poor; I'm one of the richest guys here. He survives; he does well, his family does well, he has a little bit of cattle, but he has networks. If his daughter is going to be married, the whole village might come together and organize the weddings. If there is a death in the family, the village gets together, the community gets together and it works although people don't have much money. The networks there are strong and in those villages where you don't have those kinds of networks, people are suffering much more although the amount of material wealth might be the same. And I've seen it over and over again. That is why I've stopped working with that idea of income so much and UNDP as you might know brought a lot of thinking into what we call 'human poverty' rather than 'income poverty'. A lot of it relates back to various forms of capital, not only financial and economic but social capital and natural capital and so on.

What are some of the obstacles?

What are some of the obstacles that prevent networks from working? One of it is the challenge of power. People love power. Everybody wants more power than the other person. When that happens whether you are a political party or an individual, we have conflict because we are struggling to get more power for ourselves.

I will argue that a 'fundamental conceptual shift' is required in the way we approach the need not to be a zero-sum game. That is to say, for me to get more power, you have to lose power. We have to find scenarios in which I can get more power at the same time and I will argue that that's possible. Let us do that in the discussion.

The other thing that causes conflict of course is limited resources – financial, economic, natural and the third thing is the range of what famous economist and development thinker, Amarki, had said, has called the freedoms, when people's freedoms get limited. Those freedoms include political freedoms, economic freedoms, to participate in the market, to have access to resources which are productive.

Social freedoms gather and to talk and the freedom of the media and the press and cultural freedoms to be what you want to be and then the freedom from physical insecurity so that you can walk the street and not be afraid of being killed. These for me are some of the obstacles to networks doing their jobs but also at the same time, the flip side is that it is the source of so much conflict.

Finally, if I were to apply all of these ideas in Guyana, what would I do? I would do a crazy thing. I would work in about 4 or 5 pilot villages with these ideas. I would work with some NGOs. We would take a few villages, Afro- Guyanese dominated villages, a few Indo- Guyanese dominated villages, a few in the Hinterland but whatever they are, make sure that they we have a coverage of our major ethnic groups. We would start working with finding out what are the assets in that community, what do they have not what they need. It is very important to begin with what they have. Next thing I would do is to get them to generate their vision. Where do they want to go in life? Somebody has to get people to talk about their own vision rather than some visions imposed by some politician or somebody else, or an NGO for that matter. So you get their own vision and then you see what is the gap between what they have and where they are and where they want to go. There will be a gap. The next thing you do is, you figure out what can you do that the villagers, on your own, to move from where you are to where you want to go. And then only, what you need from outsiders. Then we get some action plans and then we get involved with outsiders if necessary – The government, the donors and others and move towards that and see how that sort of generic process is hopefully going to help resolve conflict.

I will not even start to look to the source of conflict. It should emerge naturally from that conversation and then take priority. I have worked in almost desert areas where people never talk of water as a problem. It's a very strange thing. Very dry areas – in Madagascar, women who fetch the water. I was working with the UNDP then and the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative and I went down and we had a meeting with about 200 women and we were chatting for an hour and there was no water. The water problem was so bad you had to dig a hole in the sand and then they would dip with a little cup and fill a bucket. It took almost an hour to fill a bucket. Yet they did not talk about water as their number one problem. So when the Deputy Resident Representative asked me 'well something is wrong with your methodology?' I said, 'well I have no methodology, I'm just talking to the people.' And she said 'well can I ask them why aren't they not talking about water' and they said, 'well if we get enough fish we are

going to be able to buy water from the next door province and get water tankers to bring it in'. They saw the problem very differently and perhaps we need to take that fundamental reversal of the way we approach problems.

Thank you very much.

Presentation by Dr. Kieh's

The second presenter Dr. George Klay Kieh Jnr was introduced by Dr. Fox. Dr. George Klay Kieh Jnr is current chair and Professor of Political Science at the Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia and served as the Dean of International Studies at Grand Valley State University in Michigan, USA.

Good morning. Where I live in the USA, I acquire temporarily. I am originally from Liberia myself so the stay in the USA is quite temporary in the sense that I would relocate to Liberia in July. I don't know whether to call it the fortune or the curse. My political party in Liberia will be nominating me in two months for the 2005, October Presidential elections so that's another story. So clearly I am going to have the challenges of dealing with a lot of these issues if things work out but I think Dr. Singh has laid the foundations very well so I'm not going to repeat the things he said, I'm going to try to be as brief as possible because you know, for those of us who are in the various diasporas in the United States, some of us have remained engaged at home and have been quite involved from that distance if you will. In NGO work at home, we have an NGO in Liberia called the National Forum for Public Policy and Development that have been engaged in a number of projects but of recent in the whole area of Constitutional education. So, when Dr. Singh was making his brief remarks about networks, one could see the practical application because networking was so critical, I believe to the success of that project. Let me move from that point to then suggest that I believe that networks to be effective have to take into consideration I think three levels:

1. National level
2. Regional level
3. Global level

We were able to forge partnership with other NGOs and other groups, including community based organizations in Liberia who had an interest in the broad area of civic education. So, we worked with the folks in the Labour Unions with schools with community development

organizations, in carrying out that particular project. Then at the sub-regional and regional levels we also worked with various groups in the West Africa sub-region particularly in Nigeria and Ghana who were also engaged in similar efforts. At the global level, we worked with a number of groups in the USA as well. Two of the major benefits that we derived from looking at networking at those three levels were:

- (1) we were able to engage in information sharing
- (2) more importantly, we were able to draw from the experiences of other areas outside of the Liberian theatre.

So we learnt from the experiences from similar groups that were working in Ghana, in Nigeria and we also learnt from the experiences of groups working in the USA and of course the interesting realization was that these groups were faced with some of the same challenges that we were faced with in the context of Liberia.

Let me come back then to the whole question of internal networking or national networking to suggest that from our experiences, this has implications for both conflict and conflict resolution, that networks have to be broad based, I think that this is very critical. If networks are treated as parochial clusters in which you can only join on the basis of certain kinds of very limited requirements that really have nothing to do with the broad agenda or broad vision that you are trying to prosecute and not only would that stymie the work of the network itself but it could then have negative consequences particularly in a society that has serious conflicts. It could have negative consequences for those conflicts in the sense that the networks themselves would be demonstrating their incapacity to basically not only work together but to incorporate folks who may come from divergent backgrounds that really have nothing to do with the vision that the network is trying to put forward. I agonize that is quite important at the network level and at the level of conflict resolution at work. So in my own mind I think networks as Dr. Singh has suggested have to be built around specific kinds of agendas. What is it that the network wants to achieve and what if someone comes from a particular racial, ethnic, class or whatever background, I think that should be irrelevant as long as that person is committed to the agenda or objectives that the network is seeking to implement. I think that is very, very critical because again as he said, if the network is designed for people of a particular ethnic group or a particular racial group or a particular region or a particular religion or a particular class, you're certainly going to run into very serious problems. Let me end by suggesting that although I do not know the specifics of Guyana situation, I've learnt about bits and pieces since I've been here a few

days, so I'm thinking in my own mind what I would talk about networks and their impact on conflict and conflict resolution. I think a major organizing principle whether at that level or at the brother level of the society has to be the commitment to the fact that Guyana is bigger than any one individual or any one group or any one particular network. I think if that is the sort of guiding principle, then I think the problems that Guyana is confronted with as heckled-in as those problems may seem, I those problems certainly can be addressed. I think it is when the interest of the nation, the interest of the state is subordinated to individual and group interest that we have these various intransigent positions that may not necessarily have anything to do with the so-called groups that these advocates claim to be representing. But then, it gives the appearance (well both in appearance and in fact) that the interest of the state, instead of being subordinated to these very narrow individual group interest, I think that if that is the guiding principle, I think it helps networking, it helps the whole business of resolving conflicts because as was suggested yesterday elsewhere what we've learnt from the Liberian experience and which I hope Guyana would never experience, is that these intransigent positions, the refusal to dialogue and dialogue honestly led us to two catastrophic civil wars that have completely devastated our country. So, a few days ago I was at a donors conference in New York, the international community is trying to raise about a half a billion dollars to rebuild Liberia. If we didn't go through those two wars and we had half a billion dollars at least it would build on whatever we had there because development, clearly as we all know is achieved basically in stages. You build on successes here and there and that's how you move forward. So I hope and I trust that whether its in the NGO community or in other communities at the level of politicians, that folks would dialogue, they would talk, differences would be put on the table, they would be honestly discussed, resolution to those differences would be found and that Guyanese society clearly, would be spared what we experienced in Liberia because to tell you the truths, nobody wins, everyone loses. And then you would say as the Americans call it "If I had known". So let me then close finally by saying that as you build your networks whether internally or at the two levels that I spoke about, it is very important to remember that those networks have to be broad based and ethnicity, race and other kinds of considerations should not be inhibiting factors. As you construct those networks, it is always very important to hold discussions, to dialogue and to form coalitions because ethnic and racial groups are not monolithic. Even the individuals within those groups have their own different interests. So let us not allow those kinds of differences

to be used as instruments to divide our society and ultimately destroy them. I thank you.

Dr. Fox

Thank you so much Dr. Kieh for your presentation. The next presenter is Mr. Horace Levy. Horace is from our sister Caribbean country, the most interesting country, Jamaica. He is the former Director of NGOs Social Action Center and is current lecturer at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, in the Department of Sociology, Psychology and Social Work. We welcome you Mr. Levy to do your presentation.

Presentation by Mr. Horace Levy

Good morning. I hope to be more successful than Dr. Singh in keeping my talk to you brief. But Dr. Singh has done both Dr. Singh and me a great favor because he has laid the groundwork and that's what is enabling us to keep shorter than 20 minutes. But he tried hard. Briefly let me just say that I had some 35 years of work with and in NGOs and civil society. Over the past 5 years I've been a bit more involved in academic work though I'm still in civil society activity. So I'm not as intimately knowledgeable of the goings on in Jamaica as I used to be. But having said that there are two points I want to make.

The first one is about NGOs and then the second one is a more general point. The NGOs in Jamaica have had some serious ups and downs over the past 20 years. They have a reasonably long and good history. In the inner-city where I got involved about 9 years ago after being more into the rural areas. What I've seen when I first went in, the scene was very dismaying but over the last 9 years NGOs have gotten more and more involved in trying to grapple with the problems of the inner-city. NGOs connected with religious denominations, churches, mosques and so on and other secular organizations have as well gotten involved and this is a very positive thing that I have seen in Jamaica. The thing is some of the organizations, the umbrella organizations, the networks, have run into some serious difficulty over the last 5 years or so. Developmental umbrella groups, women's umbrella groups that were thriving have run into some serious problems. I'm not able to give you the ins and outs of it but I want to record that and yet at the same time that happened, civil society has been much stronger, for example, there is one called Jamaicans for Justice fighting for rights of citizens against vigilante police action for example which has become a very powerful voice in Jamaica. So civil

society broadly speaking in Jamaica is stronger today than it was 10 years ago in spite of the foundering, the problems some of the formal networks have had. Along with that just let me record two events of the past decade one in particular over the past two years, both stemming actually from state action but which have actually strengthened civil society.

One is the work of the social development commission, which is a government agency and which had set itself the task of strengthening community based organizations and building community development councils and district councils and parish councils, it's a whole hierarchy, each one building on the other in order to influence the local government authorities. From 10 years ago, the state put in place a reform process for local government and the intent was to take local government and try to turn it away from being focused on central government where it was focused and focus on the community, try to get the community and community based organizations involved in the local government process. And what the social development commission has been doing, has been trying to strengthen these networks at the local level and then to build on those a wider network until you have what we have in Jamaica, a parish. We have 14 parishes. The island is divided in 14 parishes. This has been the intent and it had some setbacks because for about 5 years - 98 to 2002 we had a particular minister who wasn't pushing the local government very much and so things sort of foundered but now it's picked up again and has resumed. So I'm saying that even though it comes from the state actually because they have learned from their mistakes in the '70s. In the 70's the state tried to dominate community councils and extreme polarity developed along political lines and along ideological lines. The state today in Jamaica is more sensitive to the need to allow community based organizations and civil society to do its own thing and to be so intrusive.

The other thing which the state has done which I have been more involved in personally is that 2 years ago they have set up something called the Peace Management Initiative (PMI). It's a group of 12 people/ citizens led by a very high profile evangelical bishop to go into communities where there have been all sorts of violence, three, five, seven people slaughtered overnight in one location and this is happening particularly in the urban areas on a very heavy scale. Jamaica as you know has had an extremely high homicide rate, ranking it 7th or 8th in the world.

So this group on a voluntary basis, and of the 12, it really boil down to about 5 or 6 have been going into communities and doing this kind of thing. It had a positive effect actually in lowering the temperature, reducing the violence and really contributing to networking which brings me to the second and the more general point which I want to make but using that as an illusion. Dr. Singh talked about social capital which is something that I wanted to talk about too. I just want to make one addition if you would allow me, to what he was saying. They make a distinction between bonding social capital which is the links and the connections, the networks have a sort of horizontal level among people to form a CBO or between this community based organization and that one. Horizontal networking – horizontal thrust and linkages. They make a distinction between that and another kind which is more vertical. Between the organizations at one level and the organizations at another level, the organizations at one level can be NGOs within the society. It can be state agencies. It can be international NGOs or bodies like the UNDP of Amnesty International or Greenpeace or any international body. So there's that kind of linkage and one of the things we have done in the PMI into going into communities, we start off by mediating, talking to one community or one section of the community and listening to their cries of injustice. The other set is victimizing them, there is this history; they are hostile, they are a set of devils. Then we listen to the other side and we hear the same thing from the other side. And then we try to bring them face to face and then they are confronted, each side is confronted with the same story that they are saying coming from the other side. There is the mediation, and then we've been involved in some welfare activities, trying to deal with the victims of some of the violence and pointing them in the direction of victim support and witness, protection and trauma care, counseling for victims of some of the violence. But we've also gone into developmental work which is what is the answer obviously to many of the problems which create this violence. Other agencies have come in and State agencies are involved and we've tried to put the community in touch and enable them to make their own contact with these other agencies. So it is another kind of networking and this is what many groups on the ground need to develop themselves; to make computer and networking and so on; to get on-line and link with other bodies. So that sort of vertical, that sort of bridging social capital is very key I think. We found it helpful in the Peace Management Initiative and I recommend it highly to you. I don't know enough about Guyana to preach to you but since this is my second visit, like Dr Kieh, I've learnt a few things but not enough. I think you know enough and my reason for wanting not to be so long is to enable you to be able to share your

views. I'm a great believer in participation because I believe people have their own insights; they know they have analysed. They don't need people like me to come and tell them what to do and that's what I practice in communities. One of the things is that I use a lot of diagrams in community work and one of the diagrams that we use is what is called a triple- roti. Three are circles,

- the innermost circle represents what the community can do for itself.
- The outer- most circle is what the community needs perhaps the state to do. To bring telephones or to fix the roads. Something major but they don't have the resources. Then there is the
- in-between circles- these are the things that the community can do jointly with an outside agency.

And when we do this in a community and we get them to say well this is what we can do for ourselves, lets get going on it, these are the things we need state to do, these are some other things that we can initiate and get help on. Take care!

Dr. Fox

Our next presenter is a son of the soil, Lincoln Lewis, I've heard this name a lot and I know everybody here would know who he is. He is a Trade Unionist, a very strong man with very wide shoulders. His position, General Secretary Guyana Trade Union Congress; President, Caribbean Congress of Labour and Vice President of the ORIT and it means Trade Union Federation of the Americas.

Mr. Lincoln Lewis:

Madam chairperson, comrades, we come to talk about networking and what it can do to resolve this whole issue of conflict in the society. Hard task, a lot of people, a lot of work. When I recognized the panel couple days ago, I sent an email around and I asked who guy Naresh Singh is. Twenty-three persons I sent the email to and this morning when I checked my email about 1:30a.m.; nine persons responded. Among them is one of my friends who is the General Secretary of the Canadian Labour Congress who is a Guyanese from East Coast of Demerara. All of them were positive and said he is a good man. You can use him for the work of networking in Guyana. You have proven it this morning. Naresh, thank you for that contribution. But its not only thanks, you'll have to pay dues. Let me say to you this morning, whatever I say at anytime, I don't want to analyse it, whether its

offensive or not, ask yourself if it's the truth and let the truth guide you. When I was a little boy, I had to go to church three times a week: Wednesday afternoon, Sunday morning and Sunday night. And they used to tell me about the ten (10) commandments. And I had a grandmother, she was about 109, she use to tell me somethings. She said don't lie boy, speak the truth and the truth shall set you free. Why all of you are here this morning is because you have an interest in making sure that we resolve this perpetual conflict in the society. The only way we can do it, is to take back our communities from the politicians.

I listened to the Resident Representative, a little while ago and he talked about the perception politicians have about NGOs. It is not only a perception, I've had that experience. I remember going to a donor community meeting with the political parties of this country. I represented labour, George Jardim represented the private sector and we sat there.

The Secretary General for the People's Progressive Party said when were talking about elections, he said, look, in the machinery we don't believe in kitchen place, we need to address that before we talk about elections and he said to us, he said none of you here have a right to talk about elections and what ought to happen. The only persons who have that right is the PNC and the PPP. The PNC is represented by Oscar Clarke and together they represent 96% of the electorate. And the PNC sat there and said nothing about it. That's my concern. That's my concern about this society. I'm saying that we have a task in front of us, not a Herculean task, but you people got to make a difference. While I went to church, I don't go any longer; I don't go any longer because I'm going to tell about the ills of this society.

The Church can't tell me they go to Buxton railway line to keep service and pray for criminal activities to stop in this country and say the criminals must come out of Buxton and when the State is accused of killing people, they stand idly by and says nothing about. Hypocrisy!! Why should I go to church? Jesus Christ is a revolutionary. He challenged the Status quo, that's why he was killed. So don't worry with this thing what they are trying to tell you. I will be challenging them. They must say something about what's happening in the society.

Madam chairperson, Naresh set the tone, I'm going to deal with the labour issues because there are somethings that are germane, that are important to us. But I'll tell you about the divisions in this society. You

know I'm the next person after Keane Gibson schedule to appear in front of the Ethnic Relations Commission, because they said I'm fermenting race hate and race divisions in my society- when you talk the truth.

I'm waiting for my day to come, I'll be happy for that day. Let me say to you, why I'm saying take back your communities, it's against the backdrop that these that we call Parliamentary Commissions and what have you, they do not work. This thing is not about resolving the differences; this thing is about telling you that you have your constitutional right. It is not what the Constitution says. It is how it is being applied in the society. This is what is important.

Can you imagine, we have an Ethnic Relations Commission that has the private sector represented, the labour union represented, the youth represented, the church in the form of Christians, Muslims and Hindus; and women. Can you imagine that of all the percentage of youths in this country that the youth representatives both of them, come out of the Progressive Youth Organisation (PYO). Both of them come out of the PYO. You get the titular and the alternate member coming out of the PYO.

Everything that we do and we talk about Constitution and what have you, it is control. We say we have these commissions but what they do? They don't do anything for us. Can you imagine an academic put out a book, it arouse so much of discussion, rather than send it back to the academic community for them to make a pronouncement. We go to the Ethnic Relations Commission and one of the Commissioners who represent the Hindu religion, he turned up leading the delegation to make charges on an academic piece of work. We are not going to get anywhere in this society! Can't happen! But we are going to tell you and tell you we have an Ethnic Relations Commission! What I'm saying to you, take back your community, take back your work, forget these people, these people don't have your interest at heart.

Naresh made the point, you get nothing from them, and this is about power and absolute power. When they kill a man in the street, rather than we carry out what is called an inquest, we say the man was a criminal. What was wrong under the PNC, and is conducted now, has to be wrong under the PPP. Understand that! To do otherwise is to abrogate your responsibility. To make a contribution and a valid contribution. I believe in life after death, but I don't believe that I'm going to a Heaven. I believe that my works on earth, I shall be judged and my children and my grandchildren shall be judged based upon

what I have done. That is what I believe about life after death. So for the Christians who say on Sunday that they are going and clap, you can challenge me, but they are strong views I hold and we have to make a contribution, its our tasks. We have serious imbalances in our society.

That is why we recognize the importance of accepting your invitation to come here. I have prepared a paper, but as I listened to Naresh I say let me throw this paper aside. But I'll tell you what, if I gave everybody this paper, I know with all due respect to my colleagues in the media, those who from GTV or GBC or so on, they have to send it to Office of the President before they print anything. But if I don't give them is that I am discriminating against them in favour of another person. I can't do that. I have to give everybody because the charter under which I operate says that there shall be no discrimination against race, creed, political persuasion, or your views or ethnicity, or gender: no discrimination, so I can't discriminate. But I know that you will not be able to print it but at least in the process of networking, even the journalist that read it and can't print it, he will have a view on what I say, and I may have one more person on my side. That is networking and I believe in networking like that. Let me make two more comments before I get into this paper. Let me say to you that the problem which confronts us is one where we have little to share among us. The problem is that we don't want to speak the truth and many of us have said that the truth have always set us free. The little that we have need to be built upon. Our colleague from the US who was speaking about Liberia, he made the point about donor conference, there was something there but it was not destroyed. If it was not for the war it would have been there and it would have been something for you to build upon rather than starting all over again. We can't allow this thing to go further down, we have to stop it now, we have to do that. And that is why we see the need to set out clearly as possible the position of labour.

Beside those narrow labour demands we come here as representatives of Guyanese people fully conscious of the prevailing economic circumstances in this country which are characterized primarily by the vulnerability of small states, the fragility of the post-colonial and mini-economies and mini states which fail the minimum test of viability in the present world in which we live.

"I'm telling you we fail it and even as we talk...I have my Caricom brother here from Jamaica, and Naresh will know as we talk about this region. The brother Naresh made the point, about networking. This is

not even an island that has to network with another island and the networking in this region. That is the only way we can build and sustain an economy that can minimize this level of conflict.

We are only a part of the whole. Like when I talk in the region about...when my colleagues raise up about banana, and I say banana is dead, we have to look for something else. But we still beat the banana issue. These are things that we need to address.

Labour, we are aware of widespread poverty, massive unemployment which is structured, systemic and sustained, Poor wages and living conditions, pervasive corruption and disease, poor health and educational standards.

"Let me tell you what happened to me this morning. I came out early and I said let me just spin around and I went into...I say let me go into this place and take a coffee...so I went in and I bought a coffee...so I met two young ladies...I walked over...You know, you may want to know why I walk over. I born at a time when you didn't have mid-husbands, you had mid-wives, so is pure women bring me into this world. So I prefer to go where the women are than sit where the men are. So I go where the two women are and the ladies start to talk and they discussing this whole question of extra-judicial killings. One is 23 and one is 34. The one 23, she just finish UG and she was saying, 'They right to kill.' They did the same discipline you know. Here the other one, 'I don't believe in it. It's wrong.' So I sit there listening to them. So as the discussion go on. The elder one said, 'You know, I can't understand. I am a product of free education. You know why they put it in place? Is to teach me to question what they do. That was the purpose of free education', but now you paying, like you paying just to go through the school."

But lest we question things, we are going to fail the people we have elected.

"We got to question them. Don't mind they get vex. President Jagdeo don't talk to me but the issue is that I'm a human being and if I meet him I'll be civil to him but until such time that he change his conduct and understand that he is not a yard fowl he's a president, I am going to treat him the same way every where I go."

Massive outflow of capital, criminal exploitation of our natural resources in the region, growing crime and uncontrollable narco-trafficking; they don't want to accept that these things exist and we

have to address them. Because those things permeate the society within which all of us live. In this bleak environment one would therefore have to talk about all these things and how these ills can be remedied rather than the narrow problem of conflict. We can't only talk about the conflict. The world is ideologically fixated on the tenets of traded unionization, globalization and all the new buzz words coming from the North.

There is a new buzz word 'governance' making the rounds and more and more workshops and seminars are now being organised on this subject. Simply put, it's a North American concept of running things that [is] being standardized and God will have to help us if we don't fall in line. "You see what happen to Iraq? If you do not fall in line, they will come after you. That is the story."

But coming back to the new ideology which is being rammed down everybody's throat mercilessly. This ideology seemed to reduce development of private sector led [growth], privatization, foreign domination of the economy, concentration of capital in the hands of a few, enormous wealth and the arrogance that it brings in the midst of widespread poverty and despair.

We in Guyana have come from a long tradition of struggle and progressive men with radical views of the pre and post- colonial movement. This is a country that produced a Nathaniel Critchlow, a Cheddi Jagan, a Burnham, a Pollydore and many others. Our ideology is a progressive one that is centred around core labour principles and values and our development goals must, of necessity, be people centred and driven and that is why you need to take back the power and you people determine what you would like to have.

It is clear that the model of development which the government is pursuing and which is essentially predicated [by] the dominance of private capital has not worked since independence and is not likely to succeed in the future.

"We break up the co-operative movement which involved people and we telling you that Yesu Persaud and Clifford Reis can do everything for us but how many people they can employ?"

It is too selfish a model at variants with our people's co-operative spirit and traditions. In this regard therefore, a serious rethink has to be carried out on this model. It is not a model that put people at the centre of development. It extols the virtue of private capital in a

ferocious and ecclesiastical manner. We in labour have no problem if investors seek to make fair return on their investment.

“Let me give you an example. You know we sell co-op Bank? Well we gotta pay NBIC \$400 million dollars. Go back to the accounts at the Central Bank. The Central Bank statement, you’ll see it inside there. We got to pay for that. We selling something but we got to pay the people who taking it. Rather than invest that money to make the bank viable. Well you know how I see it? I see it as a set of black people working inside there and this government who decide that they’re going to protect the interest of East Indians; make sure they get jobs, who seem to be their supporters and forget the black people. If you get something there and you do nothing to make it better then it is a programme that you have to destroy it.”

But the destinies of a nation cannot be reduced to a single imperative. There is more to life than just an investor making a fair return on his investment and in any event, [an] investor cannot be burdened with the challenge of providing for the welfare of citizens – their education, their health and their social needs, the need for social security.

“What I’m saying really, that is not the investor job, is de state. We elect them, they got to look after those kind of things and to give away everything and to do all kind of things is not in our interest.”

There is no way of bridging this gap and therefore it is incumbent on the government to ameliorate the negative consequences of this disconnect. Labour supports the core international labour standards which all of us walk around this world and talk. The government walk around this world and talk. That is why labour, unambiguously restates our ideas and priorities. In Guyana at large, we have to carefully identify the priorities and deal with them. Priorities that affect people that threaten this country, that address serious issues. Labour wishes to list a few of them in random order – widespread poverty, unacceptable level of illiteracy, rampant crime and anti-social behaviour, poor wages and working conditions, massive unemployment, refusal of employers to accept unions in the workplace, disease of all kinds spreading ferociously and cancerously, great inequality in wealth, terrible misery in the midst of affluence, flaunting of wealth and the power it brings with it. Challenge to our agriculture commodities and domestic manufacturing, poor governance, inadequate judicial system, lack of professionalism in [the] public service and wanton discrimination and state executions of

our citizens. Foreign capital, penetrating of the strategic heights of the economy.

Guyana, for example still exports raw gold, raw bauxite, raw lumber, raw sugar, raw rice and everything raw. We still cannot produce and market Rice Crispsies, sugar cubes, manufactured jewels and finished furniture to just name a few. This is nothing short of an indictment on the post-colonial leaders and the failure to do value-added goods; everybody talk incessantly about the need to do this. We have all the finest foods in the world and we still import Pepsi, 7up, Coca Cola...all these things we do until we even import Florida orange juice and we have oranges right here! What I'm really pointing out to you is that our post-independence political and business leaders have failed us and we have to deal with them and we must hold ourselves responsible that we have contributed to them. Labour is prepared to support any initiative that satisfies the minimum demands and the general aspirations of the people. We have set our minimum position and our views and our priorities. Thank you.

DISCUSSIONS ON PRESENTATIONS

Participants were asked by the moderator Dr. Fox, to raise their hands if they wanted to ask a question. Once acknowledged, they can state briefly who they are then raise their question (s) or comments.

Question - Glennis Alonzo-Beaton: General Secretary, YWCA

I first of all must say thanks very much to Mr. Trevor Benn for putting together such a wonderful panel. I think it was excellent. (Applause) Though my question might offend a few I really don't mean to do that.

Networking, even though it is good, it can be very bad. It has its advantages and disadvantages. Secondly, our racial barriers are so wide, we can't get a chance to come together. Even though it is women I would represent because we are [a] women organization, we try to draw in our Indian sisters, indigenous women (not necessarily Christians) and we have a very, very hard time partnering with Indian or the indigenous people.

Mr. Singh, **how can you bridge those gaps?** (being you're a Guyanese so you have a fair idea)

Our prospective president [*Dr. Kieh, candidate for Liberian Presidency*], seeing you would have had some of these conflicts... **How do you see the Guyanese NGOs getting to come together because of these serious barriers we have?**

Response - Dr. Singh:

It's not that the network itself is a bad thing. It's like any other form of capital. Money is probably the commonest form and money can be put to good and bad use. Human capital - you might get a very bright guy, very bright people... human capital put to the wrong use. Similarly, the networks themselves are not necessarily bad. The people behind them put them to bad use and is therefore a choice that we must make. The question is how do we use these forms of capital? So that's my reaction, but I take your point. Yes social capital can be put to bad use. It's not always used positively.

The second thing is the more practical question and it is difficult to give generalized solutions to specific situations. If I were to come back here and try to rebuild social capital, I would go to my village first and look for the guys who are still my friends, both Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese and begin to build with one friend, use the proverb 'one one dutty build dam.' I think that's perhaps the most practical way.

The other way to do it might be to find people of respect in the village for example a school teacher that is respected by both sides. Use that person as a natural leader. So you use the idea of local, natural leaders to begin to build confidence among people. Sometimes an outsider can be positive or negative.

Thirdly, begin with what people have.

Dr. Naresh then spoke of an example where he was working on an oasis in Egypt and conflict arose among three groups of people - new graduates with degrees from the university sent by the government, squatters who wanted to be close to the water and the local residents. They were all competing for the resources of the oasis. Dr. Singh offered this suggestion at the town hall meeting where the mayor was blamed for the conflict:

Why don't we stop and see whether each one of us doesn't have something important about us before we start to talk about the needs. We wouldn't neglect them but let's start talking about what we have. The graduates have a lot of human capital, the local people own land, the other people bring a range of vocational skills like carpentry. And

when we started to talk about what people have, there was complete co-operation and silence and that's what we call the Assets Approach.

These are generalized solutions but when you talk to people one of them might work, one thing might not work and then you proceed like that. But those are some ideas that I have on how practically to begin to rebuild that trust.

Response – Dr. Klay Kieh Jr.

Well the question has basically been answered but let me add my two cents. As I said briefly in my presentation, my general operating principle of a life now in a political arena is that politics has to be about offering complete illusions about the direction in which a society should go and NGO activities when put in the context of networks or otherwise also have to be about galvanizing the energies of groups in their constituent elements around and agree on an agenda in terms of how that agenda moves the country forward. I suggest those two again because I think that's how you build a network and if you are in a political arena I think that's how you build a political party at least from my own experience. That's how we've been able to build a political party that is only four years old but even under Taylor (the authoritarian rule of the Taylor regime) was the only opposition party that stood up to Taylor. By all accounts has been the most viable, the most organised political party in the country and people would say to me, you know George, what's the strength of the party? It's not that we have any armies anyway. It's basically in people's power. We've been able to galvanize Liberians across the broad ethnic spectrum.

Every ethnic group in Liberia is represented in the new movement, there are 16 ethnic groups in a country of about 3 million people. The question I would pose to them is not what ethnic group are you from or what religion are you from, the question basically is do you share this vision about where the country ought to go and I think that same principle can be applied to networks. Because if the networks are treated simply as representing particular race or particular ethnicity or whatever the identity might be you're really not going to make much progress and what you are going to have is that you going to be held up in a sort of conflicting situation which then clearly will have the potential of degenerating into needless violence because if people take intransigent positions and those positions in my experience usually, even when people claim... particularly politicians...when they claim that they represent particular ethnicities or [a] particular race, is simply an instrumental use of those identities. Those identities are being used to

foster their own narrow political agendas and it has nothing to do with the race or ethnicity that they are talking about. I've learnt that from experience and I have found that to be a very useful experience. That's why you should ask the question ... use the narrowest example of ... you focus on the assets. The question has to be – What is it that we agree on? What is it that we can work around? What is it that we disagree on?

How can we use our agreement (in this case our assets) to overcome our deficit or whatever agreement it is we have. So generally that would be my suggestion in terms of an approach.

Comment - Dr Fox, Moderator:

I think in the Guyanese society, from my own observations, I've always wanted to know what does YWCA really do. First of all, I mean as an Amerindian I've always...you know... but I see people have negative definitions of what it is for...oh it's for young people who go after they're failures or something like that...so it is a school that is supposed to be a reform school or whatever and in terms of that I think we've really bashed the YWCA. It really should be playing a very important role and it is playing a very important role but we need to place it within that definition that it is doing a very useful and interesting work for people, young people, young women whether it is for reform purposes or for teaching and leading you on to achieve your goals as a woman and I don't think we are recognizing that and I don't know how young women in this society feel about taking the suggestion about going to the YWCA. But maybe you need to advertise, maybe you need to have more radio programmes, maybe you need the media to highlight what you are working entails.

Response - Glennis Alonzo-Beaton: General Secretary, YWCA:

I'm just about 8 months old in the YWCA. I myself might have had the same view but I think the YWCA is 77 years old and it has a very good track record with women; would have done so much for [the] community but I myself thought it was just young old women and not young young women but the Y has done so much for indigenous persons. We had ...indigenous young girls graduated with honours in typing and Pitman's English so the Y has done a lot, it's just that I figure...there's so much NGOs coming and going that people fail to recognise the Y. but we have groups in West Coast Berbice that like Dr. Singh had said, they wanted to do the normal skills – sewing, cooking, but West Coast was rice. So I said to them, "ok...rice is dead

according to you, what can you do with the soil? Can you do cash crop[s], can you do something other than the ordinary”

There are lots of things they can do but could I partner with somebody to assist in that area. Could I ask the Indian village to go with them to help them with the cash crop because they do most of it. That is my difficulty right now.

Response – Mr. Lewis

The point that has been made by Glennis... What we need to do is to put it in context of what is happening and how we can deal with the situation here. Let me give you an example – If for some reason a grouping...Ituni, decided that they are going to come together to do something for themselves, what the government does, (the moment they recognise that that group is going to come together to do something) is to pull out maybe two or three people from it and whisper to them, “Look here, we are going to do A.B.C”

So that group goes back ...those two or three people go back and they sit down... “You know we talked with the Prime Minister, this person – and people quick to tell you that...The next thing they’re [the government] going to say is, “well let’s bring the person in” and what they do after that, they begin to stage manage the affairs and shift the focus of the group to a direction that they would like to have them go. What is taking place is a total political infiltration of community based groups with a view of controlling them for electoral purposes at the end of the day. That is what is happening in this society. You have CDC’s. These CDC’s, they are managed by maybe one or two people in it and you have this lady, Philomena Sahoye, she goes down and she carries goods, some ration and she distribute and she handpicks some people and she share that out. It’s state machinery that is used in destroying the community based groups and I believe that is your concern.

While you may start with very good intentions, before you get very far those intentions are disintegrating because people show them different direction. You got to begin to take back your communities from these people. You’re talking our local government elections. In the communities, in the NDC’s, the PPP run the NDC’s, they run as a party. The PNC don’t run as a party, the WPA don’t run as a party, ROAR don’t run as a party, what they do is to support the community groups but they run as a party. So this whole question of political dominance is what is destroying the work down on the ground.

Question – Ruel Johnson, Rapporteur

I have two questions Dr. Singh.

1. You spoke about helping villagers articulate their own vision. The argument may be made that any articulated community or communal vision may be highly influenced by a sort of material based lifestyle promulgated by ironical type of network which is the mass media and hence the Burkina Faso situation is sort of eroded.

2. You advocated giving everybody power but the argument may be made also that power is relative, i.e. is relative control over resources and other people. The more people that are given power the more that power dissipates and perhaps in the interest of those who possess power not to let that power dissipate. If you see power as having a set value within a specific society then the more people who have access to that power, the less centralised it becomes and it's not in the interest of those...Perhaps Mr. Lewis's analogy, (whether true or not) with the CDC is a prime example of that.

The moderator asked that all questions should be put forward then answered by the respective persons in the interest of time.

Question – Lorraine Nestor, GYSM PNC/R

I want to borrow from Dr. Singh when he said that there must be a fundamental conceptual shift of the concept power.

Now, we're talking networking and my colleague over there raised the question of participation of different people but I want to speak to organisations. Guyana is a highly politicised country whether you're NGO, civil society...there is some link. So when we attempt to have a network on maybe a particular issue which is of national interest to all of us, we arrive at a round table discussion and we are in a process of arriving at a mission statement or a single objective to deal with the issue. Before people commit themselves to the objective they look around the room and then they say "Oh, I have to go back to hear what my party people say." Though they might be a Rep. From an NGO group. I am siding with this party or that party so they are not ready and willing to commit, despite the fact the objective is to deal with this issue which is threatening Guyanese. So I think that is a major hurdle.

My question is **How do we ...** with our people from different organisations, trying to deal with one issue which is of national interest ...**put aside our own partisan mission statement to come up with one single mission to deal with that problem?** So that for me is a major challenge for any networking system.

The other issue I want to deal with briefly is the concept of politics in Guyana.

This is not only for Guyana. We've learnt over the years that politics is bad and therefore people may not want to really be associated because the concept of politics here in Guyana is bad. I would want to believe that in trying to network maybe we should also try to have a fundamental conceptual shift of the concept of politics as well so that we can have a clearer idea...well this thing is also good so that people will be able to participate more in the process in order to bring about change and to have effective networking.

Finally, I've been to many conferences and sessions where people from different groups...even to members of the other party where we come around and we talk on one issue but the problem is always **nobody is willing to commit because they are looking to see whether it will look good for the party** and all these things because their ideological perspective and all of that comes into play. So I think that's a major challenge for us in this room. **How could we network effectively with all those differences?**

Question:

Bevon Currie, Guyana Youth and Student Movement

This morning a number of the presenters talked about lack of confidence in groups and we're dealing with networking. I want to know **how can we get these groups that are prepared to network to stand up for what they believe in?**

Because many of these groups come together when political pressure come to bear. Many of them buckle and one of the typical examples of resilience was the organisers of this conference, the UG conference. They stood up to the political pressure thus the success of the UG conference. But you find in our society today, many NGOs when they criticise be it the PNC, the WPA or any organisation that is doing something wrong in our society, they do not get the kind of political pressure on them when it comes to the government. But when they do criticise, (rightfully so) something that the government does they are

being maligned and targeted and you would find those organisation buckle to the political pressure and most of you who are in Guyana for over the few days you can see the private sector is now going under the same political pressure because of some statement made previously by on of the individuals in the private sector. So I would want our panellist to share some ideas. How can we strengthen these NGOs during their process of networking so that they can show their resolve in what they believe in. so that at the end of the day we put Guyana foremost in our endeavours. Also, to restore the kind of confidence in these NGOs by the society at large because the main fact that these organisations waiver in their position on issues make citizens like me feel that these people cannot be trusted. If for example, the politicians themselves don't get control over a particular activity, then those persons who are in the forefront for promoting those activities are seen [as] anti-government, anti-PNC or anti-PPP. They bring a lot of conflict among these NGOs so that they can get their own political objective.

What experiences any member of the panel could share with us so that we can work towards creating a network that stands for principle; that could command the respect of the society and to be steadfast in their resolve to stand up to any form of pressure be it from the government or political parties or even interest groups in our society.

The Moderator asked that questions be a little shorter.

Question – Pat Persaud, UG, technically based Home Economist, Educator.

We keep promoting all these networks but finances seem to be a major problem. The example my colleagues over there gave. *[from YWCA]* Her concern is about diverting persons interests in to things that she wants them to do *[cash crops]* but to my mind she could have encouraged them to do what they want to do *[sewing, typing]* and let them form a group where they can have a small factory or something to develop themselves but then the bottom line is most of these people we are networking with they are poor people. **Where do we get the resources, the finances [and] the machinery to get them involved?**

Response - Dr. Singh. Answer to question posed by Ruel Johnson, Rapportuer.

He was talking about vision and how the vision that people will generate can be clouded or modelled by the presence of the politics of

the situation and how we might handle that situation. The vision that comes out a visioning process...the first thing is that you have to get very highly skilled facilitators when you're doing the visioning process otherwise you would not be able to get real genuine shared vision coming out. In some groups the vision of the person with the loudest mouth will end up being the vision that everybody has to accept. Sometimes you end up in a situation in which you have a genuinely sound vision coming out from a quiet individual but 10 people who haven't thought about the matter they come up and all 10 say the same thing. So that 10 cancel out this 1 and that vision doesn't get expression at all. That is where the skill of the facilitator comes in, to be able to weave these things together and control things in a way that you get a genuine sharing that comes out of it. The outside influences, the political influences and other influences like money can influence what people say in a group. The facilitator has to be skilled in handling all of that. He/she has to know that these things affect visioning and we have learned over the years, the skills and techniques, how to train the facilitators to do that. That may be one area in which some assistance might...NGOs might seek assistance from the donor agencies to build that kind of capacity for facilitation if that's necessary. You might have skilled facilitators already.

The other question was from our friend from the PNC/R

Everything is politicised in this country, and I think you're right. Everything is polarised in the country. Although I am Guyanese I have to be careful because what I say can still be interpreted (because I am a senior civil servant) as implicating the policy of the government of Canada. I had to be very watchful and I decided at the last moment that I would come to the conference because I have to be watchful of those things. So I understand what you are saying and I think you're right. The society is highly polarised. As soon as you look at me...if I don't say a word...and I'm walking down the street, everybody knows he's PPP because I'm Indian and I was never a member of the PPP and I have no plans of ever joining the PPP nor the PNC for that matter because I gave up my political ambitions in 1990 when I approached a certain political party and offered to join and become a politician in Guyana, run for office. I was told, "Oh, we welcome you, you're a great guy but don't look to become a minister because you have not been in the party as long as the other guys have been." Well that was the end of my political career. I backed out right away and I said I'll serve my country in other ways.

We have to re-conceptualise politics in this country. We have to move from the politics of the party and the politics of the personality to the politics of issues and the politics of people. We are only going to be able to do that when you have people who are prepared to walk the middle ground and to be able to treat issues as they are as Guyanese.

The issues about **NGO leadership and funding**. How do you get NGOs to network in this type of political situation? For me the success...the resilience of an NGO is if you are united around an issue and people genuinely believe in that issue, they're probably going to continue to work on that issue in the face of pressure. But if they are jumping on the bandwagon just because the **soup** is leaking there they're going to buckle much more easily and sometimes people do that. Some NGOs are formed just to collect donor money and as soon as the pressure hits them they back down. So one is a genuine belief in the interest and the NGO[s] really are mobilising around that issue.

The other one is **leadership**. Leadership of the NGO is critical to its success. What we have found in analyzing hundreds of NGOs around the world unfortunately is that strong NGO leadership which makes the NGO successful is not usually democratic leadership. The biggest, most successful NGOs is done by a charismatic leader whose instructions are obeyed without question. It's not that he forces it but because he/she has such standing, people implicitly follow them and they succeed. If you get that kind of leadership he's not going to buckle under pressure and I guess you have to look for that kind of leadership. Then you talk about the democratic leadership. Well it's a contradiction but that's the reality of what we have found.

The final thing is independent sources of funding. The big international NGOs made it because they have been able to establish all kinds of things like revolving trust funds and they live off the interest. So the money is always there. In this country that might be difficult. But is there a possibility of getting involved in economic activity from which the NGO derives its funding base? About 50% of it, you might not get all. That would help a lot. The other source of funding, if you're talking general projects...from what I heard I think you misinterpreted our colleague who in fact was saying she was trying to get them to do what they wanted but she was raising possibilities... in any event, to get the money to do that if people want to do something to make a better living I would imagine there are lots of sources of funding but I don't know the real situation. If you approach the donor agencies here, they're all rich. They have a lot of money in this country. I guess the

problem would be that most of these agencies work a lot with the government and not so much with NGOs. The government has to approve an NGO for a donor to give them money? You have to people... connections in the system and get a lobby. You get a few people who can raise it at the right levels and that's how you might get change.

Response - Mr. Lewis:

The point that was made about the whole question of funding and another point was made about how we are politically charged in this society.

Our problem is simple. All we have to do is stand up for what we believe in and don't buckle under [a] little bit of pressure. I get the impression that people believe that unless they have the support or blessings of the government they're not going to proceed or everything that you have...if you have the 'turning of the sod' to put down an office for a credit union you have to call the President of the Prime Minister or one of them to come and turn it when there are people in the community who can do even a better job than those persons.

We have to start recognising our leaders in our communities with a view of trusting certain responsibility on them. I've seen many colleagues ...I come from the Labour Movement...and I tell you I've seen many colleagues who fell by the wayside because they seek to dance to the tune of the politicians. The longest serving ...while there may be older men than us in the movement...but two of the longest serving persons on the TUC Executive Council is Andrew Garnett and I because we have never taken a political line behind a party on issues. We stood up for the question of principle. We stood up against Burnham regime, Hoyte regime, Jagan, Sam Hinds, Janet and we still going.

You have to understand that you people have to take positions and you have to support your leaders from your communities and the leaders must be accountable to you. To do otherwise is to abrogate you responsibilities so you can't come here and ask us what can be done you have to develop the strength to stand up to fight these people.

Resources: This government of Guyana signed an agreement with the Guyana Trade Union Congress on the 8th March 2000 to provide land for workers' housing and they said they would provide the land on the

condition that we prepare a project document to give to them. We presented that project document in July 2000. They said to Lands and Survey let us identify the land and start doing the required things to release the land to us. We spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to find 1700 acres of land on the Linden-Soesdyke Highway. That was done since 2000. Because of strained relations we went to the IDB with our document supported by the Canadian Labour Congress and the American Federation for Labour and Congress of Industrial Organisations and the British TUC, supporting our position to get money. They said what we need is the approval for the land. This is 2004. The government has not released it so if they doing that to Labour, I [can] guess what they would do to smaller people. These are the type of problems that confront this country. But this should not stop us from continuing our march to de-politicise our communities. Take them back, all we have to do is stand up...stand up.

Response – Horace Levy:

Our situation is not as polarised as yours but there is still a lot of polarity eg. Jamaicans for Justice. When they came into existence about four years ago they were regarded by the government which is the People's National Party as just fronting for the opposition (Jamaica Labour Party) Jamaicans for Justice was criticising the police force for the murders they were perpetrating. The police for the last ten or twelve years annually had been killing about 140 - 150 people. Of that 140 - 150, perhaps 100 were murders for which they have not been taken to task. You can add up what that means over a 10 - 12 year period. Jamaicans for Justice have criticised the police, have taken them to task. We've had demonstrations out on the road, candlelight vigils...peaceful demonstrations right under the window of the Ministry of National Security. The government felt that this was being anti-government. That was 3 – 4 years ago. Simply by persevering and sticking with it the government has finally come around to inviting Jamaicans for Justice to sit on consultative committees on crime. That anti-government stance has now been mitigated considerably. They now recognise that they are a neutral and political body but not a partisan political body. Political in the sense that they are concerned about the policies of the government but they have taken up positions on a number of issues and simply by sticking it out and persevering ...I agree with Lincoln here...that you just have to continue. Not only to stand up for your NGO but to be prepared to criticise the government openly.

The second point is...I agree with Naresh that good leadership is essential. In the case of Jamaicans for Justice the leader was a white

woman, a doctor and they used this against Jamaicans for Justice saying its just an upper class/middle class group and so on. The group in fact has many lower class and black people in it. They've had to drop that attack on them.

I don't agree with Naresh ...I don't think that having good charismatic...she is a charismatic person...that good leadership necessarily ...that there's any opposition between that and being democratic. Jamaicans for Justice (and I've been a part of it) has had an extremely democratic organisation. Nonetheless, good leadership, perseverance, willingness to stand up to the government – if you stick it our, you'll get there. This nonsense that's gone on in trying to get the papers of the conference is just ridiculous. Fight that and within another 3 or 4 years, that thing would be dead.

Question – Megan Thomas, Rupunnuni

Mr. Lewis, so many times you have NGOs, you have your programme, you start networking but then what happens. Mr. Levy gave us an example of the circles – the small one, the other one and the other one. The NGO is the smallest one and then he [went] on to say what we can do in this small community, what assets we have, etc., and we start doing our thing here. Then we go...he left the middle circle and he went to the outer one – the state. What can they do for us? For me, I see the conflict starts right there on the outer circle. For example the community group – you might want to fence a playground or you may want to have a building or something – the hurdle starts. Who's going to approve the land? Who's going to approve all the other things? You shift back and you come into the middle, you look for a donor to build the building. There are some questions that the donors ask. Should this organisation break up, who owns this building? How many of us can answer that. **How can we take back the community when the state is the larger ring and the donor agency has to filter through the state?**

These are some of the concerns. We have examples – if you can look at the President Youth Choices, where it fell and how etc. we know it and the conclusion of that is that we all know that we have a very famous...well I don't know if he's a guy or female or what...but when you leave something there and you come back and it gets disturbed and you ask, "Who interfere with this?" ...[the answer is] it's not me. So the blame is "Not Me" and we all know that this guy or whatever he is goes all around.

Question – Mr. Hussain:

The question I have relates to the efficient functioning of a network and more so to the functioning of NGOs. I go back to the statement that Trevor made earlier that politicians question the legitimacy of NGOs.

I think not only politicians question NGOs, there are other entities as well that question the functioning of NGOs more than the legitimacy. I want to ask the question – **Whether NGOs should be subject to the same kind of public scrutiny and standards of transparency, accountability and so forth as public institutions?**

If we are going to advance to the stage of networking which is desirable, in Guyana we don't have legislation governing NGOs. I know in the press there was a recent statement that the new NGO Forum was going to look at that. In the case of legislation, creating a framework within which NGOs can operate to meet certain standards – **Who do you think that responsibility should fall on?** That's my question.

I want to make one other statement as well. I'm a little bit concerned about the composition of the previous NGO forum and the present NGO forum because it appears to me that they don't have geographic spread. It appears to me but I may be wrong, that the NGO forum that will take on this responsibility of fashioning this framework within which NGOs will operate in Guyana is largely a Demerara based entity if not (or at worst), Georgetown based. But that's not a question, that's just a comment.

Question – Trevor Benn, Guybernet:

First, I would like to make a comment then I have three questions directed to Dr. Kieh, Dr. Singh and Mr. Levy and then Mr. Lewis.

The previous speaker mentioned the NGO forum and I just wanted to say in passing that there are serious concerns as it relates to the composition of the NGO forum but it's beyond the NGO body to deal with it because of the difficulties as it relates to geographical spread of the NGOs in the country. The cost of getting people into Georgetown and issues of that nature and so it's always difficult at the election time to have people who come from the interior and all of the places. For example, yesterday in the conference we were told about the amount of money spent on bringing people from the interior to come

to this conference, so it's a legitimate issue but it's a difficult one to deal with.

My first question is to Dr. Kieh – Do you think that the collapse of the Charles Taylor government had anything to do with networking and if so, what form of networking was undertaken?

Secondly, Dr Singh and Mr. Levy – Networking in the Guyana context is a difficult activity. Groups are reluctant to work with each other. Right now there are only two really good examples of networking. One which is being financed more or less by USAID – a very successful group of NGOs working on AIDS, and the second one which was tried during the course of last year by UNICEF bringing together groups and working with them, again, really good funding. There are many questions that come up as it relates to networking. The question of turf, suspicion and of course politics always seems to get in the way of people whenever we seem to sit to talk about networking.

The question therefore is – **What can be done to overcome the challenges and is it better for vertical networking, as Mr. Levy referred to earlier, to take place in this context basically to work with groups at different levels that are willing to support your cause?**

In my own case, my organisation GuyberNet, we have decided that we're not going to bother with groups who don't want to work with us here locally. But we have been talking with people through the internet, through the telephone, meeting people at meetings internationally and getting their support to achieve our ends. But many groups don't have the 'where-it-all' to do that so **how in the context of Guyana can the groups who don't have the where-it-all to do that, be able to? How can we really get them involved?**

Lastly, to Mr. Lewis – Labour is perhaps the oldest civil society organisation globally. It has flourished on its ability to mobilize people at every level. In the context of Guyana however, **why is it so difficult for Labour to mobilize its constituency and what can be done to improve networking vertically and horizontally?**

Comment – Jennifer Thomside, Youth Challenge Guyana:

Our government does not have a history of working with NGOs hence the whole question of legitimacy and acceptance and embracing. I

know that NGOs are doing a fundamental job in this country. They are filling a lot of gaps that the government cannot fill and if we remove these NGOs today or tomorrow, this country would literally crumble. That's my comment.

Secondly, Mr. Naresh you spoke about [the fact that] the traditional approaches to this whole concept of networking is not working and you mentioned also about the new tools that we can use as a new approach to networking so could you expand on that.

Comment - Dr. Fox, Moderator

Just a comment as it relates to Amerindian communities and NGOs and other organisations. I think the communities because we are so small, are bombarded with not just NGOs but with every single...from politics to church organisations. You are grilling the same people 100 times, fighting for the turf of the people that you want to support whatever it is you are going to do in the communities. They are so weary of this and in terms of that kind of mixture, I don't know how the panellists would want to deal with this, the whole idea of networking becomes a really complex issue in Amerindian communities. You have the Amerindian advocacy groups, you have the NGOs, you have the political organisations and we are all so very much polarised in these communities. Families don't talk to each other. In fact I know of one community where the families up on the hill are PPP as opposed to downhill who are PNC as opposed to TAMOG. Instead of working together, we have been unable to deal with these kinds of problems. We have a serious problem of disunity in some communities because of this. I don't know what's the way forward.

Comment – Representative from UNICEF

I would just like to respond to some of things I've been hearing. First of all I think when we're networking and this is something that UNICEF tries to encourage, that we network together. Definitely it's a difficult thing. I think what really came out of the conference for me is the idea that we need to have mediators. This is something in this country that we don't have. I think for UNICEF I've been hearing it's a way forward of – How do we resolve these kinds of conflicts that we have when we are networking? One of these things may be training people to become good mediators. That they are not seen as from this group [or] that group but that we have neutral people in the community. That we don't need a UNICEF or a USAID to keep the network going but that we can keep it going within the country.

One thing I really wanted to address was the question that we work with the government so we can't work with NGOs which is definitely not true. We do work with NGOs. I've sat in some meetings with ministers who are saying, "Why are you working with that one or that one?" but we work with them anyway because our issue is children, protecting children – this is our goal. Whoever is working with children on the ground, in the communities, the government... these are the people that we want to work with and that's what we work on – an issue. I think we need to remember that when we work together and network that we're working on an issue.

The Moderator, Dr. Fox commented on the fact that a number of things bothered her regarding the conference 3 days before and that she will discuss them with the panellists. She felt that apart from the fact that so much money was spent to bring out Amerindians, they were only from Region 9 and Region 8. Everyone was not represented. She recognised that it would be impossible to bring out everyone but she felt that Amerindian representation was poor, even with regard to the presenters. She stated,

"There are people out there with great minds in our communities. We are probably in this country...Amerindians are the most educated as it relates to South American countries. We have a level of education that is really commendable"

RESPONSES

Dr Kieh:

The question of networking and the collapse of the Taylor regime. I think we all do realise that simply because you have a network does not mean that it would succeed every time. There are times when networks succeed, there are times when they fail but I think the strength of a network is how it learns from its failures and take corrective steps to move forward. Being a human project every network is bound to have difficulties including failures at some point. Again it's how you address those failures as a network. That was clear in the Taylor case.

Networking in the West African region at the governmental level has clearly had its own peaks and valleys. But this is one case at which networking at the sub-regional, the regional and the global level really worked. It worked because again one of the major requirements for

success is that the members of that particular network got to be committed to some general common good. The West African leaders came to the realization that the continuation of the second round of violence in Liberia was not only detrimental to Liberia as a member of that sub-region but was detrimental to their respective countries as well because you had influx of refugees and all of the associated problems that you have with armed violence. So they were prepared to step to the plate and make it clear to Mr. Taylor that in fact he was part of the problem and that one way in which that problem could be solved i.e. the violence could be stopped, because as you know in these civil wars it is really ordinary citizens, defenceless men, women and children who get killed it's not the combatants. Taylor was told, "You're part of the problem you have to step aside and save your country this sort of a tragedy." Going to the whole point again about persistence in networking. The regional leaders in collaboration with other global actors were quite determined that Taylor had to leave and in fact he posed a problem so that persistence paid off. Then of course Taylor was comfortable going to a number of countries and Nigeria was said to have [been] pawned as the option and that's how he basically left. There are a lot of people who argue that Taylor should have been immediately handed over to the special court in Sierra Leon and put on trial but my but my belief is that Rome was not built in a night, you have to move in stages. You got to end the violence first and then the question of sending Mr. Taylor over to the court in Sierra Leon would be another issue that you can deal with at another point. In that case, in short networking did work and it basically spared Liberia what would have been a very sustained period of violence because Taylor had brought in more arms.

Response Dr. Naresh:

I am reassured by the comment made by my friend at UNICEF that there is direct work between international agencies and NGOs. If there was a situation in which the government of Guyana was controlling the situation such that you could not have a direct relationship between the UN and an NGO or a donor agency such as mine and an NGO, that would be really sad but I'm reassured that that is not the case.

The second issue is the NGO public scrutiny. I think I would have to say that the answer is a clear yes. I think NGO bodies should be publicly scrutinised. They should have a set of clear objective criteria by which they operate. They should have audits of their accounts and so forth. That means therefore that the next question is a good one. Who does that? You don't want a situation in which a government

body probably does that because and therefore then clamps down on the NGOs that they don't like. So who follows the objective criteria? I believe just like in any other democratic principle it has to be by your peers. It would have to be a review by your peers. I think other countries probably have experience in doing this already. My recollection was when I lived in Jamaica they had an umbrella body of some kind that did that so Horace might be able to share that experience. But some kind of an umbrella body that is truly respected by the members will act as a peer. The doctors have a peer group that review the performance of doctors and professional groups and so on so that would be my reaction to that.

The question about vertical and horizontal networking and how to improve it. I think both of these, like Horace said, would have to operate together and in the approach I was outlining – you start with the assets of a people, a community or a village. You have a facilitated vision, there's a gap between where people are and where they want to be. When you start trying to fill that gap...I just quickly said that you first get people to articulate what they can do on their own to move from where they are to where they want to go and then you look at what outsiders can do. What we find is on the outside circle you get four major categories of actions that people ask for assistance with. Some of it is investment – money and there the answer is for me is micro-credit, access to loans, smaller loans without collateral and a whole range of financial instruments that are being developed internationally through which poor people can get access to money.

They also talk about technology and appropriate technology to their circumstances which is sometimes advanced. But the most interesting ones for me are when they talk about policy changes and governance changes. What that leads us to do is what we call a micro/macro link. The micro reality requires a change at the macro policy level otherwise the micro activity will not succeed. Then you need an interaction with the policy process and building the capacity for the NGOs to work with the policy process becomes an important issue. Sometimes an NGO is not good at getting policy change. We have used the UNDP in many cases. In Malawi for example, because the UNDP had very good relationships with the political machinery of the country and they had access to the political directorate and you get it changed that way. So if you can't do it directly you use a credible body with the government to get your policy change and you make the macro/micro linkages. We have a lot of experience in doing that and I hope that at some point there would be the opportunity for me to work with interested people

in Guyana and try to advance this way of working so that we can build some both horizontal and vertical linkages.

Response - Horace Levy:

It varies from country to country but normally in Jamaica an NGO can be registered as a company or you can register as a co-operative or benevolent society. These are standard ways of being recognised as a legal entity. You can still be legal without any of this of course. There are state institutions that exercise these things so it's not politicians doing it and that's all that is needed. When that happens there is no need for another body, whether NGO or non- NGO to decide whether you're an NGO or not. It's simply a state entity which decides you fulfil the requirements to be a company by limited liability or by guarantee. In Jamaica a company by guarantee then has the status of a charity and doesn't have to pay income taxes. These are regulations not peculiar to Jamaica but nonetheless they vary from country to country. I don't know what they are here but it doesn't require approval by the political arm of the state.

I only want to say to Trevor about how to get groups involved in networking. I don't know...it's only when they see the benefits being induced...you can't force anybody. It takes time but there's no way of compelling people. It just takes time.

Response - Mr. Lewis:

This Trade Union Movement broke up in 1953 [for] political and ideological positions and it was re-established later in 1953. The Trade Union Movement preceded the political movement in this region and so the movement in Guyana preceded politicians. The Trade Union Movement has always been at the forefront fighting for the working class. Burnham, Jagan, JP Latchmarsingh and those guys, they came onboard in the Trade Union Movement, to get into politics. So when these guys went their different ways, trade unions went their different ways supporting these strong leaders...you don't run away from it...Cheddi and Forbes were strong leaders and the movement carried trade unions in different directions. There is no secret – there are unions that are supportive of the PNC and there are unions that are supportive of the PPP. Where the problem comes in, [is] when a decision [is] to be made. Every decision that the national movement has to make is predicated on people's political persuasion and political loyalty. That is the greatest hurdle that faces the trade union movement in this country.

We had a split in 1988. Seven unions walked out from the national centre for the TUC. We walked out because we felt that it was political interference by the PNC. We walked out on the crusade, the Caribbean and the world on it against the PNC. You would still have a split now. It was around '95 – '96 when the GAWU said they [were] walking out because they feel that the TUC is not democratic. It's not that the TUC is not democratic, it's that the TUC is not prepared to conform to the decisions of the majority which says that if the government is wrong tell them they're wrong. The GAWU is the industrial arm of the PPP, you have to understand that – they're not going to do anything. The president of the GAWU is a member of the central committee of the PPP. He's not going to make any decision that's going to rock the boat.

When the FITUG was formed in 1988, the whole manifesto of FITUG when the return took place in 1993, we took the manifesto of FITUG into TUC. But strange enough the new leaders of the TUC at that time, while they may have come out of FITUG who got back into the TUC and were elected leaders said, "Look here, this is the manifesto and this is what we said when we were in FITUG so we're going to honour it while we are here," and GAWU could not of taken that.

We're not going to get anywhere because it's political. The movement is divided [and] fractured straight down on political positions. There are three positions in the movement:

1. The PPP saying this is what shall happen.
2. The PNC group saying when the PNC was in power we used to say these types of things. If they're happening under the PPP now, if they happened under the PNC and we said they are wrong now the PPP in government, if the PPP do them they are wrong.
3. And you have the Independent group which takes a position.

Regardless of the circumstances whosoever is in government, these are going to be the rules and this is the objective of the movement. This is what it was established for and we will go down the line with it.

Response - Horace Levy:

The Jamaican Trade Union Movement has had a very similar history. It started before the parties...the parties came along... trade unions were affiliated. Up to 1985 a government could have fallen but for the fact that the trade union that was affiliated with it did not side with the rest of the trade unions that were on strike. But today and over the last 5 - 10 years, the unions have become increasingly separated from the

parties and have come together to form a federation. I suspect this is what will happen here in Guyana as well. It takes time.

Comment - Moderator:

We realise that our country is polarized. The thing that is really amazing and is a big experience for me is the fact that we as the people who have the power never seem to understand that we have such a great role to play in the sense that we cannot perpetuate this polarization. In fact the young generation coming up, we the women, are the cultural bearers of this society and we have got to start thinking very seriously about a different way of bringing up our children. For example, our educational systems have failed...I'm sorry. I mean they have done a great job that's why I stand up here but at the same in terms of these very crucial issues, even the literature in school is racist in a lot of ways.

If your children read books about Amerindian people what do they read? They never seem to say anything grand about Amerindian people in a lot of ways apart from saying Arawaks were peace-loving and Caribs were cannibals. Those things should be out of the book. In a school system I don't think we are teaching our children a lot about each other and we don't know a lot about each other. I wish at some point we could have some kind of forum and a big international conference of mothers of the world or something like this or mothers of the country. We need to take that initiative at this point to be able to sit down and take back our role as the nurturers and the socializers of this society.

Conflict as it is right now, as we discuss it where did it all start? It started with us, the people. Too many times, as Dr. Singh was saying, we must be prepared to walk in the middle in a lot of ways the strength with that comes with if we only let go. Sometimes we are too extremist in a lot of ways – I am PNC/R, I'm PPP, therefore I am not going to help. Hey, you are not hurting anybody else but our country and ourselves. We've got to learn to do that.

It's been very interesting coming back after studying to this country and people see me stand up maybe too close to the President or to the Minister of Amerindian Affairs or on the other hand I heard people say things to me when I was going to do a chant at the memorial service of this very great lady that I admire a lot, Comrade Vi and so I here are people saying, "where are you?" I never said where I was going to be. Why do you think you own me and you can define me as being

whatever. I'm a professional too, I'm a Guyanese and I have to work towards the good of this country and that should be the first priority. Stop being too extremist.

Comment - Pat Persaud, English Lecturer, University of Guyana

In relation to the biased textbook writing, I think that people on the coastland do not know enough about what happens in the Amerindian society. This could only be corrected if a team of writers will also contain people from the Amerindian areas who would be able to make an effective contribution to the material that the students would be using otherwise the bias and the imbalance will continue. We therefore need to encourage the teachers and others to take an active part where the production of textbooks is concerned.

Response Moderator:

I think this whole thing about textbooks go beyond even...we did not write our history we all know that. We embraced a colonial educational system and all those textbooks that were written then are still...I think we are allowing it to be still relevant. The ideas were transferred. Although we had local writers nothing new has come out in those textbooks. It remains the same. That's what I'm trying to say.

I'm appalled even at the CXC level e.g. the history syllabus. We have kids come to do SBAs and they have some misconceptions about who Amerindian people are and they have no sense of direction. Luckily enough I must say that we do have an Amerindian studies department at the University of Guyana. It's not a very big department but it has been a joy sharing from my own experience growing up in a community and having done the cross-cultural Amerindian research throughout this country. We have been able to create a database that can kind of erase some of these misconceptions and in a very personal way I've been able to interact with my own students that I teach.

Comment – Trevor Benn

As it relates to sanctions by the government for projects of NGOs. I think it's to the credit of the UN agencies, in particular UNDP & UNICEF that today many of our groups are able to get funding directly from these agencies.

The most recent UNICEF Representative was very bold and she was a champion for the local people and she was able to say to the government, "listen, this is how I'm going to do it" and hence the support which NGOs now enjoy.

Like I said it is to the credit of the most recent UNICEF Representative in particular and the one just before her that that barrier at that organisation was broken. Also because of the push at the UN headquarters in New York to really foster camaraderie with NGOs and to allow them into the system that the United Nations is now embracing and governments are being forced to embrace.

Comment

Particularly regarding the point you were making about being nurturers. I was thinking that while we were looking at conflict we probably should have a conference here in Guyana on a national level on diversity so that we can understand the differences of our ethnic groups. Because I may be living next door to a Hindu or Muslim and I really don't understand their culture. So how do we begin to address conflict when we don't even understand each others differences in our cultures?

Moderator

In my class where I teach I always say to my students that this is the time for you to get to know each other. In fact it's a rule in my class that you don't use words like Buck, Coolie, Negro. I say negro is outlawed, don't use it, it is not a good concept to call other people. It has been interesting just working with them in the course of teaching.

The other thing I talk about is have some strong sense of identity about who you are because if you respect your own identity, who you are and where you come from then it's very easy to respect other people's cultural differences. We are Guyanese, we have differences, it has to be there because for some reason our Creator has made us with different colours, different hair but we are all human beings. They really do not get this within our society. We don't even stop to think about that. It's really important.

Conflict as far as I am concerned could be academic but at the same time the core is right down there where you came from. When your mother gave birth to you and you breathe the air of life is when you

start to contribute to this world and it's really important that you start from that standpoint.

As a linguist too I know I have a PhD in Structural Linguistics but I've always had to argue with my professors because I don't want to look at models to say I should fit languages into these models. I don't want to hear that. It comes from somewhere. Somebody has spoken this language. There are people and communities who started to speak this language. In a lot of ways I just did not embrace structural linguistics without fighting to say that I must have an interest in anthropological linguistics, socio-linguists and all aspects of the ways of speaking in the human society. So it's really important that we look at problems like conflict, issues far beyond what you read and what you want to hear other people say.

Our esteemed panelists and examples of this kind – these are the people who will guide us, these are the people who will give us the skill, these are the people who will light the torchlight and lead us through.

Comment Mr. Hussain

This is a bit of information. Six months ago the Carter Centre initiated two interventions among its partners who are grassroots level operatives across the three counties of Guyana. The two initiatives are as follows:

1. There was a series of workshops in consensus building and conflict resolution.
2. There was another intervention in mediation which targeted only people in the legal profession.

Six months is a milestone now and according to plan later in this month the group of 50 or more grassroots level operatives will come together and discuss the experiences they have been having in intervening in conflicts, building capacity at the local level.

Secondly, they will discuss the modalities of networking as a group of committee level entities. I thought that at a forum like this that information would be helpful to pass on.

The situation that Trevor related just now, I am in deep sympathy with him. I believe I was in a situation where I saw something like that happen. I don't know the basis on which the decision was made but I felt a little bit unfortunate as well.

I made point earlier about NGOs as well and I asked the question whether NGOs should be subject to the same standards as public institutions and I think that politicians abuse their power; they play politics as well. In the community where I work I hear parallel charges as well about NGOs – that NGOs play politics. There are NGOs that work against the best interest of other NGOs that try to do the same thing that these NGOs have identified as their interest. There are other NGOs as well which claim to be coordinating networks of individuals but if your NGO does not happen to be an affiliate of that NGO, they would not pass on resources to you. They use prerogative, (rightly or wrongly) to block resources from reaching certain NGOs because they are different, they're not affiliated. So that is the reason why I asked that as well and I think either of two things will happen: either networking will be severely challenged by this present state of affairs or that networking could be used as a tool for smoothing out some of these wrinkles.

Question: Glennis Alonzo-Beaton: General Secretary, YWCA

Again I have to thank the panellists for the information but here I ask myself...we all sat, we all listened. When we go back to our organisation what do you do with what we would have learnt? Do we look past the problem (because we all know what's the problem) and try to work and make what we have work or do we just sit back and say, "well it's another conference and what the heck" but do we as individuals today step up and decide we can move beyond this, we can take back our communities, do work and forget the politicians. For me I'm nowhere, I don't even vote so politics doesn't matter too much to me. It's like I'm going through a big crowd and [I] just shift through. That's the politics of the day for me. But how [many] of us can actually drop our political party and look at persons' interests? I hope today that this conference would really wake some of us up because at the YWCA, (I've told several organisations) we're affiliated with an international body. Funding is no problem once you have the right project document, once you sit and get it right. Collaboration? No problem but how much have answered that call?

Moderator

I think we have come to the end of this session. I was really stimulating. I know we are going back with a lot more questions but you have some of our panellists living in this country, we have the University of Guyana...go into the private social sciences sit with Dr.

Kirton...ask to see him and talk to him. I think there are plans to establish a special course on conflict analysis and resolution at the University of Guyana which would be good [for] the strengthening of capacity building of our university. This is a great process and step towards that.

The moderator thanked the panellists, dignitaries, members of the media and representatives from various NGOs and organisations as well as the general audience.

Closing – Mr Trevor Benn:

I would like to use this opportunity to thank Dr. Fox for accepting so readily and conducting so dispassionately the role of moderator. I would like also to personally thank all the panellists for agreeing to be here with us. I would like to say that the intention of this forum was not only to have discourse but to explore the way forward and Ms. Alonzo rightly asked that question in our final intervention, "Where do we go from here?"

The group that worked on putting together this seminar was of the idea that maybe after this seminar what could be done is persons who might be interested in joining the group of us who have started this exploratory role to see what could be done here in Guyana about conflict can leave their contact information so we can plan for the next intervention.

Vote of Thanks – Jennifer Thomside, Youth Challenge (Guyana)

First of all I would like to thank the host organisation i.e. the University of Guyana, GuyberNet, CCWU, Youth Challenge for organising this post-conference activity. I would also like to thank the presenters who came at very short notice. I would also like to thank Desiree who also came at very short notice to be our facilitator.

She went on to thank the persons in the library, caterers and participants for being present and making contributions.