

Project Report

Peace building as a pillar of foreign policy and the role of private nonprofit foundations

Looking back on a decade of SPF initiatives

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SPF's approach to peace building

For some 10 years SPF has supported projects in the field of peace building.* To begin with we focused on preventive diplomacy. As our first initiative, we set up a study group to consider what contributions Japan could make in this field and what role there was for private foundations.

Later, preventive diplomacy was identified as a new area of concern in SPF's Operational Guidelines for the Third Midterm Program, which took effect in fiscal 2000. Since then, we have supported activities to strengthen the underpinnings of areas that the public sector cannot address. These activities include research, consciousness raising, human resource development, and networking both in Japan and overseas.

Research: The final report of the study group established in 1996 made numerous proposals regarding human resource development, the shaping of public opinion, and the establishment of NGOs to inform policymakers. The report clarified the situation of NGOs involved with preventive diplomacy, the state of government-NGO cooperation, and the challenges facing Japanese NGOs and the contributions expected of them, on the basis of which we identified the overall direction for the Foundation's program development.

SPF also supported a research project regarding the role of mediation-type NGOs in conflict zones. The project carried out a comparative analysis of international NGOs engaged in mediation activities in Sri Lanka and Burundi as cases indicating the role to which Japanese peace-building NGOs should aspire. This study provided a valuable resource, considering the tendency for NGOs' actual mediation

processes to be revealed only to the parties concerned.

Consciousness raising: Debate over the involvement in conflict zones and potential conflict zones led gradually to discussion of the concept of peace building, which is broader than that of preventive diplomacy, and clarified the arenas for private-sector activity. It also became clear that funding is the greatest problem facing NGOs.

With the question of how to secure the funds needed for private-sector peace-building activities in the forefront of our mind, we engaged in a variety of activities to spread understanding of peace building and appreciation of its importance in an effort to appeal to people with a latent interest in this field. These activities included publication of books, as well as on-line symposiums, a "conflict bulletin board," and other cyberspace initiatives.

Human resource development: To rectify the lack of opportunities for young people to gain sufficient experience, SPF supported a training program targeting graduate students and people with master's degrees. Specialists in foreign policy, security, and area studies served as instructors, and opportunities were also provided for overseas training in Sri Lanka. In addition, to develop specialized personnel, we supported a program to train demining team leaders with the cooperation of an organization involved in mine removal in Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. Personnel trained under this project are now engaged in demining project with the help of government funding.

Networking: Spreading the achievements of consciousness raising and human resource development in a sustained and effective manner depends on securing and retaining people interested in peace building. By supporting study groups, seminars, and other forums SPF has helped build and maintain networks of bureaucrats, researchers, and others.

Peace building as a priority issue in the ODA Charter

At present SPF is supporting three projects related to peace building. The project Establishing a Human Resource Database for Peace Building Activities aims to strengthen networks by providing opportunities for research and overseas training to people registered with the Japan Center for Conflict Prevention and by administering a personnel database. The project Development of Teaching Materials for EOD and Demining, which is putting together a program to train personnel involved with mine removal, is scheduled to complete its teaching materials by the end of fiscal 2006. The project Searching for Peace in Sri Lanka: Exploring the Role of Nongovernmental Actors in the Peace Process aims to explore the role of private-sector actors in peace building by organizing workshops at which Sri Lankan religious leaders discuss modes of the management of autonomy and methods of reconciliation to encourage confidence building among the various forces.

In 2003 Japan's Official Development Assistance Charter was revised, and peace building was identified as a priority issue. The role of both the government and the private sector in this field looks set to keep growing. SPF needs to maintain a posture of accurately identifying needs and continually asking what we can do as a private foundation.

SPF

* The term "peace building" became current after then-United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali used it in the 1992 document *An Agenda for Peace*, in which he proposed preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peace keeping, and peace building as roles the U.N. could fulfill in the post-cold war international order. In this article I am using the term not in the narrow sense of preventing the recurrence of conflict in postconflict situations but in a broader sense that includes wide-ranging approaches aimed at conflict resolution.