

Accountability & Responsibility

Peacebuilding work is financed: distinguishing between accountability and responsibility is crucial to maintaining integrity, understanding our own role in conflict environments and ensuring transparency to all partners. We are accountable to those that fund our work and responsible to all those that will be affected by the funded work and, specifically, the partners in-country. They are the ones that will live with the consequences of the work. In trade-offs between the accountability and responsibility, responsibility comes first.

Impact

We seek to have a positive and lasting impact on the peace and conflict dynamics. We believe that it is possible to make the world a better place both through our work with our partners and on a voluntary basis. However, our work is based on the conviction that tackling violent ethnopolitical conflict requires more innovation, creativity and analysis than has so far been invested into this area. A portion of our time is set aside for pro bono work, which is available to in-field, local stakeholders.

Violent ethnopolitical conflicts continue to devastate all peoples, economies, polities, ethnicities and societies. We are happy to share any of our experiences and knowledge with those who are committed to reducing the impact of violent conflict on the lives of individuals and are working towards sustainable and durable solutions.

Idealism & Professionalism

Building peace requires sheer will and passionate belief as well as meticulous skill and rigorous expertise. Ethnopolitical conflict and highly politicised environments result in despair and hopelessness. Frequently, the only source of strength to keep going is a raw belief that the situation must not be so, that it can change – that there can be a better life. These beliefs, combined with professional skill, knowledge and training in peacebuilding, produce a formidable capability to tackle violent conflict and bring about change.

About Us

Austin Consult is an independent consulting practice for decision-makers and local stakeholders in conflict environments working on strategies for addressing ethnopolitical conflicts.

We work with partners in delivering customised approaches in analysis, assessments, strategy development and training that resolve their most significant issues and create lasting impact. Drawing on rich in-field experiences and in-depth conceptual expertise, we look beyond standard solutions to develop new insights, understand organisational needs, identify tangible steps and enhance their capacities to implement effective approaches.

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Principles & Guiding Notions

that steer our peacebuilding and conflict-transformation consulting work

*“Taking pleasure in
... finding things out.”*

We would like to share with you, our partners and prospective clients interested in our work, some of the key principles and guiding notions that set and steer our consulting work in peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

Integrity & Principle

Integrity and principle means understanding the difference between right and wrong and, what is more, doing the right thing. We believe in being clear about what we can and cannot do, about clearly representing our purpose and motivation in assistance as well as in seeking information. We carefully deliberate before making any commitment to ensure that they can be kept. We take time in forming our opinions and actions and continually ask whether we can defend them openly.

Holding opinions and pursuing actions also requires both responsibility and courage. We work to provide the highest quality guided by our principles and those of our partners. We do not compromise conceptual or intellectual integrity for quick fixes, outside interests or to avoid challenges. We strive to identify the real needs of our partners, not just deliver good work. We share all our work with our partners – even those that may be unfavourable or unpopular – in a spirit of frankness and respectfulness. In all cases, we ensure confidentiality with all our partners.

Learning & the Value of Difference

Peace and conflict dynamics are continually changing; the field and discipline of peacebuilding and conflict transformation is ever developing. Progress and change arise from different views, constructively managed and

explored. We seek to engage the non-like-minded as much as those who share our views: the most informative and creative results have arisen from difference.

Relationship Building

Relationships cannot be demanded, imported or bought. They emerge slowly and are built through collective engagement on issues small and large. They develop through a consistent daily commitment to, and realisation of, a shared vision. Building relationships is at the heart of peacebuilding and they are one of the most difficult elements to achieve.

More than establishing or revitalising the infrastructure or the presence of governance, relationships are the essence of what keeps society together. They give organisations and institutions their legitimacy and help individuals and groups to remain engaged on the long path towards lasting peace.

Long-Term Change

Building peace and transforming conflict is a long-term process. There are no quick fixes or instant solutions. Ethnopolitical conflict environments are characterised by deep distrust and cutting divisions running the length and breadth of the social, political and economic spheres. Only a long-term approach can offer any help in addressing these cleavages. We are committed to supporting and accompanying individuals, organisations and groups over the lengthy and tricky path to peace with patience, dedication and perseverance.

Being Humble & Being Bold

Identifying innovative approaches and looking beyond standard solutions requires being bold. It also means being willing to explore together many new ideas and to consider, at times, challenging and controversial directions, in order to find the right and appropriate way forward.

It is a path fraught with sensitivities and difficulties that can only be mitigated by having a sense of humility about our own role to change broader peace and conflict processes. Our experiences have taught us that while we must have a vision that is about the bigger picture, it is even more crucial to understand our own small part within change processes and the impact that is possible. A sense of modesty underlines all of our work.

Stakeholders First & Local Ownership

For approaches to succeed, it is essential that they are designed and owned by the partner. Any durable, sustainable and stable strategy must be based on indigenous methods. From the beginning, we strive to ensure that our joint efforts do not end with our departure. During the engagement itself, we work in partnership and with joint decision-making.

We work with and support all stakeholders who are striving to reach a just and sustainable peace in their own cultural and political environments. We do not advocate one approach over another or seek to impose outside views on highly nuanced local settings.