



Rebuilding Trust

Glocal Annual Magazine 2025



Front cover: Tal Ben Yaakov,
during his Glocal internship at Village Health Works, Kigutu, Burundi

Back cover: Assaf Dgani, Ethiopia

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Words from Glocal Academic Head

Trust is the invisible thread that holds societies together. It connects neighbors, communities, governments, and nations. Yet, in many parts of the world today, this essential fabric has been strained or torn-by conflict, misinformation, inequality, and historical injustice. Rebuilding Trust brings together voices from across the globe to explore how trust can be restored, nurtured, and sustained in times of uncertainty and transformation.

This issue features contributions from Glocal alumni and partners, international development practitioners who work at the front lines of reconciliation, community building, and institutional reform. These are not abstract theorists, but people engaged in the daily challenge of helping societies find common ground after division. Their stories-drawn from near and far conflict zones, fragile governance systems, and divided communities-offer insight into the slow, patient, and deeply human work of rebuilding trust.

We look at how communities heal after civil war and how traditional practices and modern interventions intersect in rebuilding social cohesion. We examine the role of government and media in either deepening mistrust or becoming credible actors for positive change. Whether in a post-conflict setting or in places where trust is eroded by corruption or manipulation, the path forward often depends on dialogue, inclusion, and transparency.

Rebuilding Trust is not just about problems-it is about possibilities. It is about the creative strategies and quiet persistence of those working to restore confidence in one another and in the institutions meant to serve us all. In these pages, we hope you'll find inspiration, provocation, and a deeper understanding of what it takes to build a more trusting world.

I thank, with great appreciation, the staff of SID Israel, for their support in designing this collaborative project. I am grateful for the hard work of magazine authors, who brought their experiences and insights forward, allowing us to expand our understanding of this field. A special thanks goes to the Magazine Editor, Shay Yoos, for her dedicated, professional work in supporting the authors' writing process and putting the magazine together.

**With hope and aspiration for brighter days,
Reut.**

Shay Yoos

Letter from the Editor

The level of uncertainty in the world feels higher than ever, with rapid and constant change reshaping our reality. Governments are shifting, and the very nature of development as we once knew it is undergoing dramatic transformation. This turmoil often gives the impression that humanity is becoming more divided, and with division comes fear- an emotion that can hinder progress across many areas. At a time when trust is eroding on so many levels, rebuilding it is more crucial than ever.

In these challenging days, it was important for us to bring light and hope by focusing on trust-building and reminding ourselves that, at the end of the day, all humans share the same fundamental desires: to be free and recognized. Trust is the cornerstone of cooperation, progress, and peace, and when nurtured, it has the power to bridge divides and heal wounds.

I am deeply grateful to be part of this magazine, which brings together voices from different parts of the world, sharing stories of how people build trust, how this trust transforms attitudes and behaviors, and can lead to real and lasting change. These stories, written by eight talented contributors, serve as proof that light can triumph over darkness and that when people come together with a shared purpose, they can open hearts, minds, and doors.

I hope this magazine inspires you to foster trust-building in communities, work, and personal circles. Change begins with trust, and trust begins with us.



The Role of Trust in Conflict, Humanitarian Aid, and Peacebuilding

Barak Talmor

Trust is often described as the glue that holds relationships together, but in the context of conflict and humanitarian crises, it becomes something far more essential: the foundation upon which peace and cooperation can be built. Without trust, conflict remains entrenched, aid delivery is obstructed, and reconciliation efforts falter. Yet, in the most challenging conditions, trust can be cultivated-through dialogue, shared interests, and most importantly through consistent actions.

Creation of safe spaces for political dialogue

In conflict situations, trust is typically in short supply. Each side fears that any goodwill gesture may be exploited, leading to an ongoing security dilemma. Scholars argue that trust is a "central requirement" for conflict resolution, as it enables adversaries to take steps towards cooperation with the belief that commitments will be upheld¹. Research has shown that trust has a greater impact on cooperation when conflicts of interest are high, meaning that fostering trust is especially crucial in deeply entrenched disputes².

A key method for building trust in conflict settings is the use of confidence-building measures (CBMs)-small, incremental actions that demonstrate reliability. By proving commitment to agreements in a low-risk manner, CBMs can pave the way for deeper negotiations. However, if trust is not actively built, structures of cooperation often collapse. This has been seen in numerous failed negotiations, such as Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, where persistent mistrust has prevented long-term agreements³.

Beyond formal negotiations, trust-building in post-conflict societies is crucial. Reconciliation efforts, governance forms, and community rebuilding all rely on restoring trust not only between groups but also in institutions. Where people do not trust the state or international actors, efforts to maintain peace are likely to fail⁴.

Trust in Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian operations depend heavily on trust-between aid organizations, local communities, warring parties, and donors. Aid workers must gain the trust of local populations to ensure that humanitarian assistance is accepted and effective. Mistrust, whether due to historical grievances, perceived bias, or lack of transparency, can lead to aid blockages, attacks on humanitarian workers, and ineffective relief efforts⁵.

One of the most critical aspects of trust in humanitarian work is neutrality. Organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) emphasize the importance of appearing impartial so that all sides in a conflict feel comfortable engaging with aid workers⁶. Without this trust, access to vulnerable populations becomes nearly impossible.

Similarly, trust is vital in the relationship between humanitarian organizations and their donors. Governments and private donors must believe that aid agencies are using funds efficiently and ethically. Transparency in reporting and accountability measures play a key role in sustaining this trust⁷.

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Trust in Environmental Peacebuilding

Environmental peacebuilding presents a unique opportunity to build trust between conflicting groups. Shared natural resources, such as water, energy, and agricultural land, can serve as a common ground for cooperation⁸. When two sides of a conflict recognize that collaboration on environmental issues benefits both sides, they begin to develop trust that can extend beyond ecological concerns.

One prominent example is cross-border water management agreements. Research has found that countries engaged in joint water governance are more likely to foster peaceful relations, as these agreements necessitate ongoing cooperation and information sharing. Similar initiatives, such as shared solar energy projects or collaborative conservation efforts, have been effective in building trust between divided communities⁹.

Rebuilding Trust in Action: Jumpstarting Hope in Gaza

The theoretical aspects of trust-building are not merely abstract concepts; they come to life in humanitarian projects that bridge deeply divided communities. Jumpstarting Hope in Gaza is one such initiative, working at the intersection of humanitarian relief, energy and WASH access, and environmental peacebuilding. The project aims to provide shelter, energy and WASH services for 20,000 displaced people in the south and north of Gaza.

Trust Between Partners: Overcoming Skepticism and Building Cooperation

In a region where decades of conflict have eroded trust, working together as Israeli and Palestinian partners requires intentional trust-building measures. The Arava Institute for Environmental Studies, an environmental research institute located in Kibutz Ketura at the Arava valley, has long worked at fostering such connections with Damour for Community Development, a Palestinian NGO.

For the past eight years, both organizations have worked together at building access for off-grid energy and WASH services to communities in the region. When the war in Gaza began, both organizations turned to each other to see how they could support relief efforts.

From the outset, the initiative faced skepticism-would the collaboration last? Would aid be delivered fairly? Could the partners truly continue to rely on one another under such a challenging reality? Overcoming these doubts required consistency, transparency, and a commitment to open communication.

One of the key ways trust was established was through inclusive decision-making. Palestinian partners were not just beneficiaries of aid but leading stakeholders in designing and implementing the project. Every step of the process-selecting sites, determining needs, distributing resources-was done collaboratively. This ensured that no party felt sidelined, a key factor in trust-building.

Jumpstarting Hope in Gaza delivers humanitarian aid and off-grid infrastructure solutions to displaced communities across Gaza, with a pre ceasefire reach of over 12,000 people. The project supports displaced people's shelters with essential supplies, including food, hygiene kits, tents, water bladders, and winter clothing, while simultaneously building towards implementing off-grid water, sanitation, and energy systems. These include atmospheric water generators, desalination units, biodigesters, solar microgrids, and mobile wastewater treatment technologies. Aid is procured locally and internationally, coordinated with Israeli authorities, and adapted in real-time to evolving field conditions.

In response to the ongoing blockade and renewed displacement, the initiative has prioritized emergency food distributions and rapid WASH infrastructure deployment, including the construction and repair of over 50 toilets and washing stations.

Trust in Humanitarian Aid: Delivering on Commitments

Trust in aid work is built through delivering on commitments. Jumpstarting Hope in Gaza focused on immediate, tangible needs: providing off-grid water desalination, energy solutions, and sanitation infrastructure in areas where traditional aid mechanisms had failed.

One of the first trust-building milestones was the successful deployment aid in the form of food, hygiene kits, tents and more. Many aid projects in the past had failed to meet expectations due to bureaucratic hurdles or unreliable logistics. By ensuring that the first deployment was successful, the initiative gained credibility within the community.

Another crucial factor was ensuring equal and fair distribution of aid. Transparency was key: all stakeholders-Palestinian partners, community leaders, and international supporters-knew exactly what resources were available and how they were being allocated. This level of openness countered mistrust and prevented fears of favoritism or hidden agendas.

Trust in Environmental Peacebuilding: A Shared Interest in Sustainability

Beyond immediate relief, the project also emphasized long-term sustainability and cooperation, reflecting the principles of environmental peacebuilding. The introduction of renewable energy and water solutions is not just about humanitarian relief-it was about laying the groundwork for continued collaboration between communities. Water and energy shortages do not discriminate by nationality, and addressing these challenges together fosters interdependence. By working on shared environmental concerns, Israeli and Palestinian partners developed a common interest in maintaining and expanding the project, creating a durable foundation for trust beyond political divides.

The next stage of this response is the recent procurement of 8 Watergen machines, which are atmospheric water generators. These systems are being sent to field hospitals and IDP camps in Gaza, to provide a long lasting response to the shortage of high quality drinking water.

Conclusion

Trust is not an abstract ideal-it is the practical foundation for conflict resolution, humanitarian aid, and peacebuilding. Without trust, negotiations collapse, aid delivery stalls, and reconciliation efforts struggle to take root. However, when trust is built intentionally-through transparency, shared decision-making, and demonstrated reliability-it has the power to transform adversaries into partners. Jumpstarting Hope in Gaza illustrates that trust-building is possible even in the most challenging environments. By committing to inclusive collaboration, fulfilling promises, and focusing on shared survival needs, the initiative has not only provided life-saving humanitarian aid but also created new avenues for cooperation between communities long divided by conflict.

As this work continues, one thing remains clear: trust is the foundation upon which lasting peace is built.

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The French-built Ministry of Foreign Affairs building in Hanoi, reflects Vietnam's approach to honoring its layered history.

Credit: Hien Vu



From Confrontation to Cooperation: **Vietnam's Multi-Partner Trust Building Journey**

Hien Trung Vu



Vietnam's journey from a war-torn nation to a respected international partner represents one of the most remarkable transformations in modern diplomatic history. After decades of conflicts with major powers including the United States, China, France, and Japan, Vietnam has successfully rebuilt trust and established productive partnerships with its former adversaries. This transformation reflects a unique approach that combines traditional Vietnamese values with pragmatic modern diplomacy. The US-Vietnam relationship exemplifies this successful trust-building process. From bitter enemies in the 1970s to comprehensive partners today, this bilateral relationship demonstrates how determined leadership, strategic patience, and mutual understanding can transform historical antagonism into constructive cooperation. Vietnam's model of trust reconstruction offers valuable lessons for international relations, particularly for developing nations emerging from conflict.

Vietnamese Philosophy and Diplomatic Strategy

Vietnam's foundation for trust-building stems from deeply rooted cultural values and modern diplomatic adaptations.

The Vietnamese agricultural civilization, spanning over 4,000 years, has cultivated a peace-loving mentality, evident in traditional proverbs like "Lây ân báo oán" (returning kindness for enmity).

These values have been reflected in key moments throughout history, such as King Tran Nhan Tong's reconciliation policy with the Yuan Dynasty and the Tay Son Dynasty's diplomatic efforts with Qing China¹ (Thuan et al, 2018; Tran, 2009).

The emphasis on harmony, reconciliation, and practical solutions forms a crucial foundation for both past and present strategies. This commitment was enshrined in Vietnam's foreign policy frameworks, including the Central Resolution 13 (May, 1988) emphasizing "thêm bạn bớt thù" (make more friends, fewer enemies), which remains a guiding principle for international engagement.

Vietnam's philosophy has evolved into what is often called "bamboo diplomacy," a concept that emphasizes resilience and adaptability while staying rooted in fundamental national interests.

Like bamboo, which bends with the wind

**Like bamboo, which bends with the
wind but does not break,**

**Vietnam's diplomatic approach
balances cooperation with diverse
partners.**

but does not break, Vietnam's diplomatic approach balances cooperation with diverse partners while safeguarding sovereignty and stability.

By 2025, Vietnam now maintains diplomatic relations with 194 countries and has established comprehensive strategic partnerships with 12 nations including China, France, Japan, and the United States - all former adversaries. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, 2025).

In addition, Vietnam's proactive international integration strategy, has led to its participation in 17 free trade agreements (Center for WTO and International Trade, 2024) and memberships in over 63 international organizations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, 2025).

This diplomatic agility allowed Vietnam to maintain independence while navigating global complexities, including managing public health strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic (Tinh et al, 2022).

While economic cooperation has been instrumental in Vietnam's reconciliation efforts, it has not functioned in isolation. Trade agreements and investment partnerships have strengthened interdependence, yet lasting trust requires more than economic ties. Vietnam has complemented its economic strategy with security cooperation-such as strategic dialogues with major powers-and cultural diplomacy, including educational exchanges and historical reconciliation initiatives. This multidimensional approach has allowed Vietnam to foster stability, strengthen international partnerships, and rebuild trust with former adversaries.²

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A Vietnamese visitor stands silently in front of a preserved MiG-21 fighter aircraft
-
at the B-52 Victory Museum in Hanoi.

Credit: Hien Vu

Case Study: Vietnam-US Trust Building Process

The normalization of Vietnam-US relations exemplifies Vietnam's strategic combination of cultural values and pragmatic diplomacy. The foundation for trust was laid through humanitarian cooperation, particularly in the search for and repatriation of U.S. servicemen classified as Missing in Action (MIA) or Prisoners of War (POW). Between 1988 and 1995, the two nations conducted 143 joint field activities to search for and repatriate the remains of missing U.S. servicemen, reflecting Vietnam's willingness to address sensitive historical issues early in the process⁶ (Furmanovsky, 2007) (Bui T. N., 2006).

Key milestones in the trust-building journey included the lifting of the US trade embargo in 1994 and full normalization of diplomatic relations in 1995. Economic cooperation became a cornerstone, with bilateral trade growing from \$451 million in 1995 to over \$132 billion in 2024⁷ (Nguyen, 2024). Agreements such as the 2001 Bilateral Trade Agreement and Vietnam's 2007 accession to the WTO deepened this partnership. Joint initiatives to resolve war legacies, such as dioxin cleanup and unexploded ordnance clearance (UXO), demonstrated both nations' commitment to healing historical wounds and fostering future cooperation. The US has contributed over \$381 million to clean up contamination sites like the Da Nang and Bien Hoa airports, while collaborative UXO programs have cleared hundreds of thousands of square meters of land⁸ (Quang et al, 2013).

High-level diplomatic visits, such as President Obama's 2016 trip to Vietnam and the 2023 meeting between President Biden and Vietnamese leaders, have further solidified the relationship. These visits symbolize a culmination of decades of trust-building efforts, with both countries affirming their commitment to security cooperation and economic growth.

Broader Applications of Vietnam's Trust-Building Model

Vietnam's successful trust-building with the US has parallels in its relationships with other former adversaries. In Japan's case, initial humanitarian cooperation through the Japan Red Cross laid the groundwork for diplomatic normalization in 1973. Economic partnership followed, with Japan becoming Vietnam's largest ODA donor, contributing \$23 billion since 1992⁹ (Hoang, 2021). Key projects in infrastructure, technology, and education have reinforced this relationship, along with cultural exchanges such as the Japan-Vietnam Festival.

Similarly, Vietnam's relationship with France has evolved from colonial conflict to strategic partnership. The 2013 Strategic Partnership agreement built upon decades of collaboration in areas such as education, where bilingual schools and joint universities have flourished. French investment in Vietnam reached \$3.5 billion across 605 projects by 2022, underscoring the importance of economic cooperation. Vietnam's maintenance of French architectural and cultural heritage also demonstrates its respect for shared history¹⁰.

Analysis of Success Factors

Vietnam's successful trust-building efforts with former adversaries, such as the United States, Japan, and France, demonstrate the transferability and effectiveness of its unique approach to international relations. The foundation of Vietnam's trust-building model lies in its ability to seamlessly integrate cultural understanding, economic collaboration, and consistent engagement, fostering sustainable partnerships. This approach is characterized by three key success factors: strategic patience, a pragmatic approach, and cultural sensitivity.

Vietnam's long-term vision, exemplified by Party Resolution 13 (1988), emphasizes the importance of strategic patience in gradually engaging with former adversaries, even amid ongoing tensions. This patient approach has allowed Vietnam to make steady progress through humanitarian cooperation and ongoing dialogue, showcasing its leaders' ability to persevere in negotiations and trust-building efforts despite challenges. Concurrently, Vietnam has employed a pragmatic approach, prioritizing mutual benefits by addressing sensitive issues, such as war legacies and economic cooperation, in parallel but separate tracks. This strategy has facilitated progress in areas of shared interest without being

impeded by historical disputes, with trade agreements and cultural initiatives providing a practical basis for stronger political ties. Furthermore, Vietnam and its partners have consistently demonstrated cultural sensitivity, respecting each other's historical narratives and political principles. This mutual understanding has reinforced cooperation, as evidenced by high-level joint statements acknowledging the distinct values and shared goals of each nation. By nurturing public support for diplomatic initiatives on both sides, cultural sensitivity has played a crucial role in the success of Vietnam's trust-building endeavors.

Conclusion

As the world navigates increasingly complex challenges, Vietnam's trust-building journey offers a valuable roadmap for sustainable peacebuilding, underscoring the significance of blending cultural wisdom with diplomatic pragmatism. The remarkable transformation of Vietnam-US relations, in particular, exemplifies the enduring strength of trust, diplomacy, and strategic cooperation in international relations, providing a model for other nations seeking to emerge from conflict and build lasting partnerships in an increasingly interconnected world.

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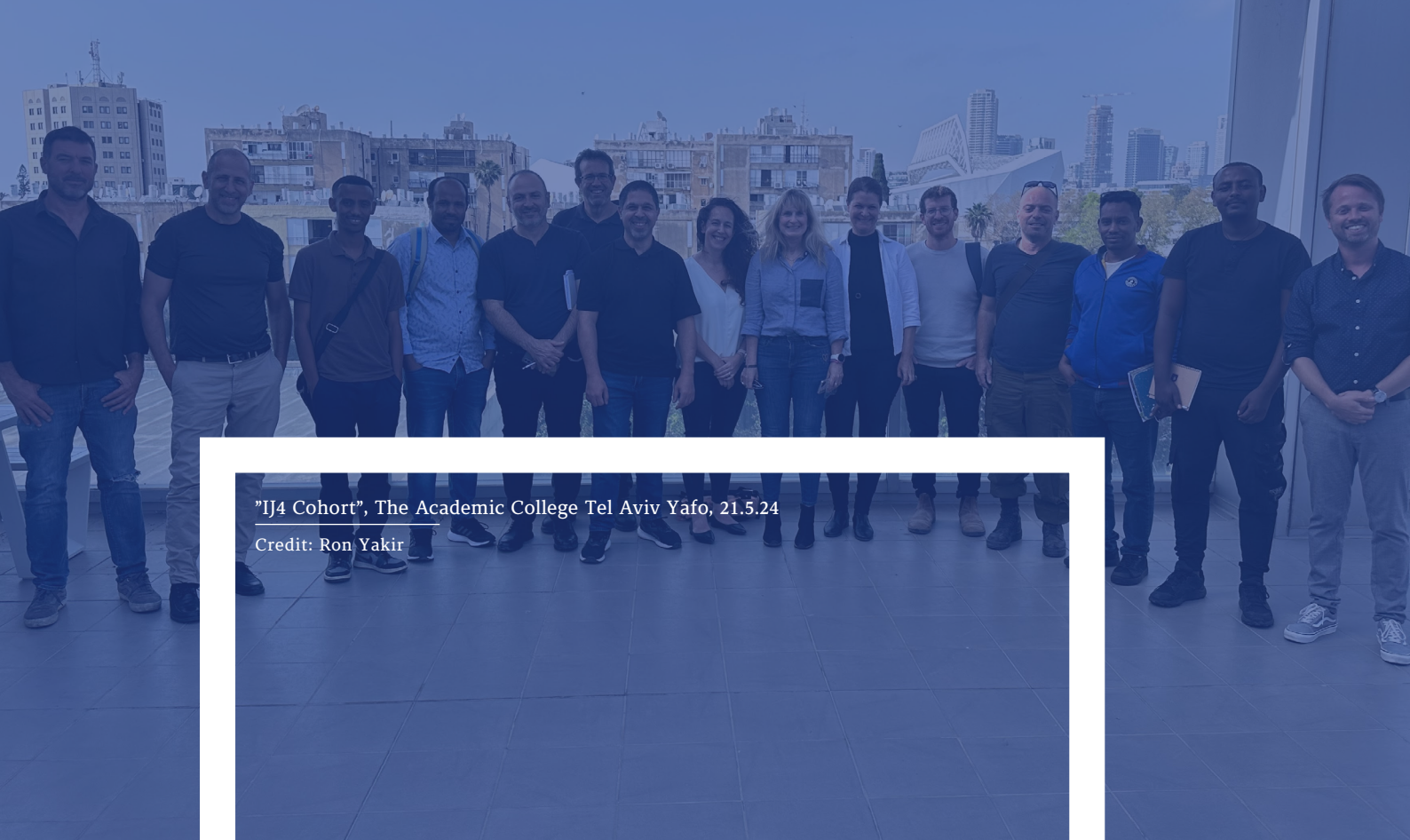
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"IJ4 Cohort", The Academic College Tel Aviv Yafo, 21.5.24

Credit: Ron Yakir

Building Trust Amidst Trumol: Lessons from the Innovation Journey Program in Israel and Ethiopia

By **Hagit Freud**, Managing Director at Nura - Global Innovation Lab¹, **Yonatan Bukhdruker**, Project Manager at Nura - Global Innovation Lab², and **Rachel Shaul**, Senior Program Director, Women's Economic Empowerment & Food Security at JDC.

The fourth cohort of the Innovation Journey program, led by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in partnership with Israel's Ministry of Economy and Industry, and with the Pears Program for Global Innovation³ as the content and professional partner, was scheduled to launch in October 2023. Designed to help Israeli agritech companies forge partnerships in Ethiopia, the program was aimed to adapt Israeli agritech innovations to meet the needs of Ethiopia's smallholder farmers and positively transform and impact their businesses, families and communities.

It was built on the growing recognition that fulfilling the impact and financial potential of Israeli technologies in low and middle income countries requires extensive, holistic support to address the various challenges they face such as market barriers, the need for adaptation in technology and business model, addressing regulation, and proving that the tech is operable in the unique environment. This insight is not only a key lesson from the Innovation Journey process but also part of a broader trend in international development. Multiple organizations are increasingly dedicating tools and budgets to support private-sector engagement in International Development efforts. Programs such as USAID's Development Innovation Ventures (DIV)⁴, the Gates Foundation's Grand Challenges⁵, and the World Food Programme's Innovation Accelerator⁶ were all designed to foster innovation and private-sector involvement by providing both funding and a supportive environment for companies to enter the international development and humanitarian space.

The Innovation Journey was no different in that sense. Initially designed as an introductory field trip, it evolved over the years into a comprehensive

capacity-building and matchmaking program, incorporating training sessions, workshops, extensive partnership-building processes, and fundraising support, including two dedicated grants from the JDC. After the first three cohorts secured the establishment of at least one solid partnership project in each cohort, the fourth cohort was set to be the most ambitious-doubling its size and success.

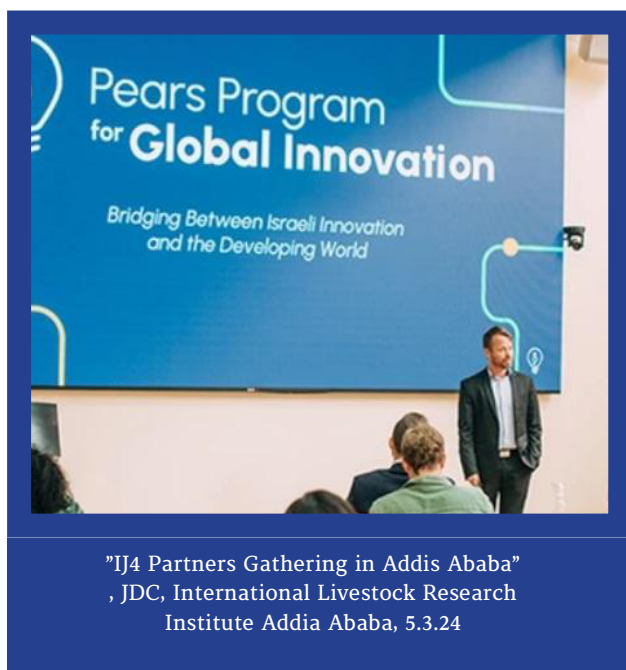
Then, October 7th happened.

This wasn't the first time conflict disrupted the program; the third cohort had been relocated to South Africa due to Ethiopia's civil war. This time, it was Israel's war reality that created the need to postpone the program. We needed to reassess how, or if, we could bring on board apprehensive and risk averse agritech companies, shaken by conflict, for this journey. At the conclusion of the process, we reaffirmed an important lesson about effectively engaging with the private sector.



"IJ4 Market Adaptation Workshop",
The Academic College Tel Aviv Yafo, 21.5.24

Credit: Yonatan Bukhdruker



"IJ4 Partners Gathering in Addis Ababa"
 , JDC, International Livestock Research
 Institute Addis Ababa, 5.3.24

Knowledge Gaps, Risks, and Prioritization

When facilitating the entry of Israeli companies into a market in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is necessary to address three key challenges. First, Israeli companies often face significant knowledge gaps in these environments, making it difficult to understand unique local needs, assess opportunities, anticipate barriers, or predict success, all while requiring adaptation. Second, these markets involve risks such as economic instability, political unrest, infrastructure gaps, and regulatory challenges, further complicating the business activity. In Ethiopia, a two-year civil war exacerbated these challenges, requiring careful planning and resource allocation. Third, markets in Sub-Saharan Africa are rarely top priorities for Israeli companies, especially tech start-ups seeking quicker wins. Despite Ethiopia's potential, with 127 million people, 15 million smallholder farmers, and strong ties to Israel, a grounded and clear-eyed evaluation is essential to secure company buy-in and ensure a sustainable exploration process.

To Continue or Not?

With wars raging in Israel and Ethiopia, we debated whether to move forward. Some elements, like the planned festive program launch, were clearly out of the question. We also were fully aware that Israeli companies would be hesitant to embark on high-risk ventures while focused on preserving their existing activity. On the Ethiopian side, we anticipated skepticism about our ability to deliver under such turbulent circumstances.

Yet, we also recognized challenges weren't pausing for our reality, and Israeli companies still needed opportunities to generate business as other avenues closed.

Ultimately, we decided to move forward with programmatic adjustments, understanding that the only way to bring everyone on board and follow our lead was to be fully transparent, and project a deep understanding of the realities on both sides. In the end, it all came down to building trust.

Adopting a Hands-On Approach

The Innovation Journey program was initially designed to build the capacity of participants to engage effectively, identify suitable matches for partnership, and facilitate collaborative project building. This structure addresses the key challenges mentioned earlier and requires significant mentoring on both sides. Unlike previous cohorts, where the program was deliberately managed with a lighter touch and often relied on digital communication, leaning toward respecting the autonomy and individual personalities of the players involved, this time, we deployed a close-support methodology, providing close guidance to all parties.

The Pears Program⁷ team served as the linchpin, guiding stakeholders through every step of the process.

Israeli companies were recruited through personal meetings where their concerns were addressed directly. For the first time, an in-person event was held in Addis Ababa to strengthen trust and ties. JDC's local team, which is running, among other things, their prominent TOV program that helps Ethiopian smallholder farmers adopt high-quality seeds and precise agriculture technology, led the coordination of the event. Afterwards, we communicated on a weekly basis with our Ethiopian counterparts that expressed the interest to explore Israeli innovative solutions, to foster dialogue, identify needs, and ensure mutual understanding. This not only built the necessary trust but also enabled the team to mediate effectively and identify promising opportunities for partnerships.

Navigating Unprecedented Challenges

Our new approach demanded flexibility and a significant investment of time. Take Ripe Guard, a company that developed a state-of-the-art technology to manage and reduce post-harvest losses. The CEO, Itamar Lupo, from Northern Israel, had to navigate both military duties and personal challenges. At times he had to join sessions virtually, skip activities, miss deadlines or have extra support. He indicated that despite the circumstances, the program opened his eyes to the huge potential his technology can bring to smallholder farmers, and he is now focusing on engaging in additional emerging markets to fulfill his impact.

On the Ethiopian side, a local startup named Birama, which supplies fresh produce to households in Addis Ababa by sourcing from smallholder farmers, relied heavily on communication with the team to navigate the program and identify

the right partners. After numerous constructive interactions and steady guidance to ensure nothing fell through the cracks, they ultimately won the JDC grant and confidently advanced with their pilot in collaboration with one of the program participants.

This entire process proved fruitful. Overall, we recruited 10 Israeli companies and formed 8 partnerships. On the Ethiopian side, the program's launch event in Addis Ababa saw the participation of 60 stakeholders demonstrating high interest in Israeli technology. Throughout the process, 14 Ethiopia-based stakeholders remained engaged, with two partnerships receiving grants from the JDC to fund pilot projects. While their engagement journey is still in its early stages, we can confidently say the program exceeded our expectations, fostering a strong commitment from all sides.

Lessons Learned: Private Sector Also Needs Trust Building

The fourth cohort of the Innovation Journey reaffirmed that operating with companies and startups in high-risk environments requires strong investment in trust-building as the foundation for all subsequent efforts. While this is widely recognized in the international development sector, it is often less obvious when engaging with the private sector in Israel. The traditional approach of simply letting companies navigate these markets on their own, or in light-touch activities such as business seminars and overview events, is not enough.

This is something the Pears Program has long advocated, and the JDC's Innovation Journey reinforced it beyond doubt-companies need structured support to operate in these challenging

environments. With the risks involved, trust-building is critical to guiding them through long processes and encouraging them to follow our lead, even when their instinct is to take a more direct, business-first approach. While businesses excel in their fields, market forces often steer their priorities elsewhere. If we want companies to invest in developing markets we believe hold significant potential, we must equip them with the right tools and create the trust-based environment necessary for success.

This lesson extends beyond extreme circumstances like war. Even in less challenging environments, stakeholders-especially in the private sector-are likelier to go the extra mile when they trust, respect, and empathize with their partners, particularly in high-risk markets. This is something all stakeholders working with the private sector should remember. Ultimately, by facilitating the entry of Israeli agtech into these markets, we can support more smallholder farmers to increase their productivity and economic opportunities, which is the impact we all aim to achieve.

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¹ formerly known as Pears Program for Global Innovation

² formerly known as Pears Program for Global Innovation

³ Renamed recently to NURA- Global Innovation Lab

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⁵ <https://gcgh.grandchallenges.org/>

⁶ <https://innovation.wfp.org/>

⁷ NURA- Global Innovation Lab

⁸ NURA- Global Innovation Lab



"IJ4 Wrap up event", Hertzog Offices, 19.9.24

Credit: Shlomi Mizrahi

СТАНТС-



ЕНДАРЬ

How Russian Activists Trust and Protect Human Rights Amid Political Repression

Anna Fridman

According to Amnesty International¹, over 21,000 individuals were penalized for their anti-war stance in 2022 alone. As of 2024, OVD-Info² -one of Russian leading human rights organizations - reported that nearly 3,000 people are facing criminal prosecution for their political beliefs, with one-third of these cases involving anti-war statements. Since the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war in February 2022, the human rights situation in Russia has rapidly deteriorated, undermining trust within Russian society.

First, the number of individuals and organizations labeled as "foreign agents" or "undesirable organizations" has grown substantially. This status has had a dramatic impact on several NGOs and media outlets, causing them to lose the trust of their audiences and donors, and in some cases, leading to their closure due to financial unsustainability. Second, the growing reprisals have effectively destroyed not only public political discussions but private ones as well. People have lost trust in each other due to the revived practice of denunciations. During the first six months of the war alone, Russians wrote nearly 145,000 denunciations, most of which were related to the Russian-Ukrainian war³.

Moreover, the growing political repression and war-related threats have triggered a large emigration wave: between 500,000 and 700,000 individuals have fled the country⁴. This mass exodus has been the subject of intense media discussions, exposing the widening societal divide and increasing mistrust. Those who remain in Russia have often labeled emigrants as "traitors" - a narrative amplified by state propaganda. Conversely, many emigrants have lost trust in those who stayed, viewing them as adaptive to the regime.

Thus, intensified reprisals have fractured trust within civil society, damaging relationships between NGOs, the media, and their audiences and donors. The growing divide has also eroded trust between politically active domestic and emigrant communities, and undermined trust among Russians who cannot discuss politics freely without risking denunciation.

However, contrary to initial concerns, the emigration did not disrupt activist networks but instead led to a dynamic reorganization and elaboration of trust-building strategies. A cooperative spirit has emerged between those who left and those remaining, with the politicized nature of emigration fostering self-organization within the diaspora. The



Intensified reprisals have fractured trust within civil society, damaging relationships between NGOs, the media, and their audiences and donors.

geographic distance from the repressive state machinery has reduced the costs of political dissent for both groups⁵. As a result, human rights and peace-promoting organizations have successfully bridged the gap between emigrants and domestic communities, organizing spaces for open political discourse and action with reduced risks of denunciation. This article examines how initiatives like the Feminist Antiwar Resistance (FAR), OVD-Info, and Memorial have facilitated trust-building and dialogue between these two groups on the protection of human rights and peace promotion within the context of ongoing war and political reprisals.

Collaborative action as a base of trust-building

Within Russia, any activity related to “undesirable organizations” is considered an administrative offense and can lead to criminal penalties. This environment poses significant challenges for NGOs, increasing the risks of political persecution for their staff and volunteers.

Among the organizations examined, FAR is officially designated as undesirable, while OVD-Info is classified as a “foreign agent,” facing operational and funding limitations, as donors are often hesitant to contribute to such organizations. Memorial, though liquidated by the courts, reemerged as Memorial HRDC without a legal entity, continuing its mission despite raids and detentions⁶.

While the trust of domestic communities in organizations has decreased due to the risks of persecution, findings indicate that the criminalization of organizations fostered emigrants’ solidarity and collective action since they perceive such organizations as effective and credible, and in many cases, criminalization has attracted additional support from emigrants⁷. As a result, human rights and peace organizations have increasingly relied on the engagement of emigrant communities to mitigate the costs of political dissent for those remaining in Russia and distribute tasks according to risks. For instance, OVD-Info requires potential candidates for employment to be located outside of Russia. Both OVD-Info and Memorial HRDC actively recruit volunteers from both domestic and emigrant communities and utilize secure communication tools like Telegram chatbots to protect volunteers’ anonymity and enhance their trust in the organization. While these measures ensure personal security,

they also cause a sense of isolation, a challenge that FAR addresses through its approach to activist communication.

Creation of safe spaces for political dialogue

FAR’s evolution as an anti-war movement, particularly after the war’s onset, has been rooted in trust building among activists who have dispersed globally⁸. FAR adopted a decentralized, horizontal structure, creating “cells” in various countries that communicate securely through encrypted platforms like Telegram and Element.

Creating safe spaces for political discussions became a central focus of FAR’s activities. FAR encourages the formation of small, sustainable activist groups known as GRAS (Groups of Raising Anti-War Self-Consciousness), which organize local political discussions through events like film screenings, reading clubs, picnics etc., all designed to build trust and understanding between activists. FAR has also established security protocols for groups within Russia and facilitates safe communication channels. Moreover, FAR organizes online workshops that bring together emigrant and domestic activists, enabling them to exchange experiences and learn vital skills for writing on political topics, engaging in debates, maintaining psychological resilience, and establishing samizdat periodicals. In FAR’s setting, activists in Russia can interact with their emigrant counterparts without revealing their identities.

FAR also works to build trust with individuals who are politically inactive or exposed to hostile, war-driven narratives. Activists write articles about war and political prisoners for

the samizdat newspaper Zhenskaya Pravda [Female Truth], which imitates regional newspapers commonly found in Russian mailboxes.

Support of political prisoners as a common cause

Support of political prisoners became a unifying cause for domestic and emigrant communities. FAR, OVD-Info, and Memorial all actively engage in this cause, managing to share responsibilities between emigrants and those remaining in Russia to involve them in it: while activists within Russia participate in court representation and provide logistical support for prisoners, emigrant communities organize letter-writing campaigns that allow to provide psychological support to those imprisoned, create a dialogue between activists, and hold fundraising activities. These events are often held online or outside of Russia since attempts to organize such events within Russia have resulted in raids and detentions⁹.

The cross-border collaboration in support of political prisoners strengthens the activist network, allows people to act aligned with their values despite the repressive context, and builds trust despite geographical separation by demonstrating that all sides - whether emigrants or activists still in Russia - are needed to protect human rights.

Exhibition “Through the Bars”, organized by Memorial, All Rights Reversed and the community of lawyers and journalists “First Department”, Berlin, February 16, 2025

credit: Pasha Kogan, «Political Prisoners. Memorial»

International advocacy

One of the most significant ways in which emigrant communities contribute to trust-building is through international advocacy. This includes research, reports on human rights conditions directed to international institutions, and outreach to global media outlets which helps to bring recognition for the work of domestic activists and increase external credibility to local causes.

Furthermore, emigrant communities create informal ways of advocacy. For instance, Memorial's members organized an exhibition called “Repression Federation” in Vienna, showcasing artworks of Russian political prisoners to raise awareness about human rights violations and encourage letter-writing campaign (Memorial HRDC, 2024). FAR also initiated the “Handed Over from Russia” campaign, asking people in Russia to submit statements that they would say if not for the imposed restrictions. These words are then incorporated into public speeches and demonstrations, amplifying the silenced voices. Such initiatives strengthen trust between activists, as validating domestic efforts helps those remaining in Russia feel that they are not forgotten or isolated.



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Conclusion

Despite initial concerns that emigration would disrupt domestic activist networks, Russian human rights and peace organizations have effectively harnessed the potential of emigrant communities, rebuilding trust between them and domestic communities.

The collaboration between emigrants and those remaining in Russia has become crucial in maintaining the operation of organizations, advancing international advocacy, supporting political prisoners, and creating safe spaces for political discourse.

Key strategies for rebuilding trust between these separated communities include adopting informal, decentralized structures, encouraging grassroots activism, utilizing secure communication channels, and creating dialogue and experience exchange platforms. Although political activism in Russia has become less visible, human rights and peace organizations continue to operate, bolstered by the trust and collaboration between emigrant communities and those still within the country.

Memorial's exhibition "Repression Federation", Vienna, November 26, 2024

Credit: Pasha Kogan, «Political Prisoners. Memorial»



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Credit: Glocal International Development Program

Trustworthy media? **Learning from Tangle**

Dr. Reut Barak Weekes



In today's world of seemingly endless information, most of us select news sources that align with our social, political, and economic beliefs. Social media, in particular, reinforces this tendency, as algorithms curate content that mirrors our perspectives, interests, and networks.

Over time, our understanding of reality becomes shaped not only by our personal outlook but also by these digital influences.

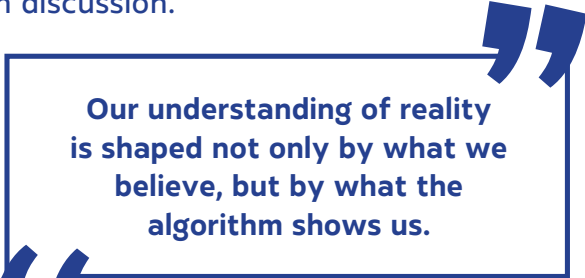
When engaging with others across the political spectrum, we may find that our views diverge so drastically that finding common ground feels nearly impossible. The effects can strain friendships, workplace dynamics, and even romantic relationships. Moreover, we often develop deep mistrust toward media sources that challenge our beliefs or present a conflicting reality. This mistrust leads in one direction-greater division and polarization.

Tangle¹ newsletter, established in the USA in 2019, aims to break this cycle. It "exists to deliver news that can be trusted by the left, right and center all at once". Each day, it focuses on a single topic, presenting key arguments from both left-wing and right-wing media. Then, (in most cases) Executive Editor, Isaac Saul, writes "his take" on the subject. This is an in-depth analysis on the theme, the various arguments and his personal perspective. While the editor presents his perspective, in most cases this is done while presenting its limitations, or the reasons why others would negate it.

For many of Tangle's more than 300,000 subscribers, it is this "My Take" section which assists in bridging the divide between Right and Left, and creating mutual understanding with others.

Another unique aspect is Tangle's transparency - it clearly states mistakes it published, by date, including the total number of mistakes it makes over time. Another unique aspect of Tangle is its transparency; it publicly tracks and corrects its mistakes, listing them by

date and maintaining an ongoing tally. Additionally, Tangle offers a podcast, an interactive forum, and in-person meetups for readers to share insights and engage in discussion.



**Our understanding of reality
is shaped not only by what we
believe, but by what the
algorithm shows us.**

Inspired by Tangle's approach, I interviewed the Founder and Editor in Chief, Isaac Saul in March 2025. First, I wanted to learn more about the initiation of the newsletter - what led Isaac, a well awarded journalist, to move from reporting news, to building Tangle, basing on news reported by others? How did he even think of this idea?

Isaac explained that he "grew up in a politically divided community in Pennsylvania, a Swing State, which is very important every Presidential election. When I was younger and into adulthood I experienced sharing space with people from across the political spectrum. So, having friends and family members who are Conservative, Liberal in the middle seeing the ways in which

politics were tearing them apart. I think also seeing the ways in which their news consumption influences the divide was really informative for me. Especially in the Obama years on, it became really apparent that my family members and friends who were Democrats, were literally not consuming the same news as my family members and friends who were Republicans." As a political reporter, he became increasingly aware that media organizations, regardless of their political leaning, often sought the most sensational angle on a story. This realization made him uncomfortable, prompting him to explore solutions.

Isaac notes that Tangle is not an attempt to lead people to 'meet in the center' or reach an agreement. Rather, he "wants Tangle to be a news organization that people trust regardless of their political affiliation". We discussed how once-neutral media sources are no longer widely accepted as common ground, and Tangle aims to fill that void.

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One of Tangle's missions is to be a "big media organization". In an era of increasing political polarization and a growing number of news outlets, I was curious about how Tangle selects sources from the left and right. Does it avoid extreme views of any kind? Isaac explained:

"The boundaries for us are mostly around our team's judgment on reliability and motivations behind the authors. So, for example, we're not gonna share somebody who's employed by the Administration as a reliable narrator of events. What I try to do as we're selecting the pieces is make sure that if we're sharing an argument, there's some grounding, supporting evidence behind the argument...

I wouldn't share an opinion piece that was based on a presumption. But in terms of how fringe or far out of you might be, we're pretty open. I'm not trying to sanitize views. Even if there's a widely held position, and I find it abhorrent, it's really not up to me. It's representative of the view that people have on the left or the right, so we're gonna share it."

I asked Isaac if there are topics he finds more difficult to cover. He explained that more divisive topics, such as transgender issues or abortion rights attract criticism from a large number of the readers.

Personally, covering the war between Israel and Hamas has been challenging for him as he felt "on an island", meaning every time he wrote about it, he was accused by one of the sides as being blind to their perspective. In my view, this reaction underscores the difficulty of discussing deeply personal and contentious topics. Even among an open-minded audience, many struggle to accept opposing viewpoints. However, Tangle still succeeds in providing exposure to multiple perspectives, even if readers are not always ready to embrace them. Tangle encourages discourse by allowing readers to engage in forum discussions alongside each article. I found these conversations particularly compelling—people from across the political spectrum present their views with structured reasoning, supported by data or examples, and avoid extreme language. This stands in stark contrast to the often-hostile nature of political discussions on social media. I asked Isaac how Tangle's discussions remain civil. He believes it's because people mimic what they receive from the Tangle team: writing with an open mind and humility, admitting when wrong, trying to generate conversations, and not necessarily being right.



**As more people engage
in open conversations,
trust in both media sources
and each other
can begin to rebuild.**

He also credits the nature of Tangle's readership, as its audience consists of individuals open to being challenged and eager to understand opposing perspectives. Additionally, the Tangle podcast highlights reader discussions, and Isaac occasionally addresses the community directly to reinforce respectful engagement.

To conclude, In my opinion, Tangle's approach of generating conversations is a key point when thinking about the role Tangle can play in bridging the political divide: when the polarization and social division grows, there is a growing tendency to protect one's views. With growing distrust, people usually insist on convincing others and being proven right, and their capacity to have open conversations is limited. Tangle offers a space where people can read opposing views while knowing their own perspectives are also represented. Hopefully, as more people engage in these open conversations, trust in both media sources and each other will begin to rebuild.

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Breaking
the Trust Barrier:

The Journey Toward True Localization

Alberta Nana Akyaa Akosa
& Ayelet Levin-Karp

Localization is increasingly recognized as key to effective international development, yet projects often fail due to a disconnect between global agendas and local realities. Trust is central to bridging this gap- without it, partnerships remain transactional, reinforcing power asymmetries rather than fostering true collaboration¹.

This article presents insights from a conversation between Ayelet Levin-Karp, CEO of SID-Israel and former Israeli economic attaché in Ghana, and Alberta Nana Akyaa Akosa, Founder and Executive Director of Agrihouse Foundation in Ghana. They explore the challenges and opportunities of localization based on their partnership and broader experiences.

"The journey for Agrihouse Foundation began eight years ago when we realized that there was a gap to fill within the agribusiness sector" shares Alberta, "from then until date, Agrihouse Foundation partnered with a long list of international organizations ranging from Development partners to international NGOs and even private sector players² to implement successful programs and interventions. In 2018 we started to partner with the Israeli trade mission to Ghana, and had run a few successful projects together."

Ayelet: "During my time in Ghana, finding the right partner and establishing an equitable collaboration process was difficult, given significant cultural differences and lacking the cultural context that typically helps assessing organizational reliability. I remember finding value in the fact that Agrihouse Foundation's activities were rooted in the realities on the ground, having strong relationships with different stakeholders in the ecosystem. With time and through open communication we were able to establish a fruitful relationship".

Unfortunately these kinds of collaborations are not always a common case. Alberta reflects on the tension between local priorities and external frameworks she faces working with international organizations: "Sometimes we are compelled to help implement the concept of the development organization, which may not even align (with ours). In some instances, they just want to go a certain way, and when project funding is over,

you are not able to sustain it because the pathway did not align with sustainability and growth. But because they have the funds, you may have to abandon what you think is right to then align with what they would like to implement.

They may possibly not really listen to what will really work on the ground. It's either you take it or leave it. So you are basically compelled to help implement a concept or an activity that may not align to the overall goals of the local communities"



Alberta from Agrihouse Foundation addresses an audience during an outdoor agricultural event

Credit: Agrihouse foundation

Accountability and Transparency

Keating and Thrandardottir³ highlight accountability as key to long-term INGO-local partnerships. Alberta highlights Agrihouse's commitment to transparency:

"The INGOs typically arrive with their own plans and technical expertise, which have ultimately strengthened our procedures, policies, and structures. We've created a blended approach where they can fit into

our work. We often meet to identify gaps and plan together when necessary. This collaboration allows them to understand the real issues on the ground and adjust their strategies accordingly.

Through proper documentation and demonstration of our work using evidence-based approaches, They are increasingly appreciating our local approaches and how we can thoughtfully blend tradition with technology, innovation, and modernity to find common ground. While our partners have come to value our consistency and credibility. They've built enough trust in us to entrust funds to our management, confident we'll deliver the expected results."

Ayelet Shares:

"In my experience, meaningful collaboration between international and local organizations often hinges on the ability to bridge deep organizational culture gaps. To maintain meaningful partnerships, each side needs to make an effort to bridge this gap. Reliable reporting and proper management aren't just technicalities—they are the baseline for establishing trust in our work culture. Without them, it's nearly impossible to sustain strong working relationships. I've seen promising partnerships collapse over this issue alone, which is unfortunate but avoidable."



A wall at Accra Central Market, in collaboration with the Embassy of Israel in Ghana

Credit: Ayelet Levin-Karp

We make sure everyone really understands the issues on the ground, and also build more trust before the project even starts.

Co-Creation: Developing Projects Together

Co-creation should involve not just shifting funding but also collaborative project design⁴. Alberta underscores its importance: "I think that having a strong collaborative partnership with local people is very important. When we work together from the ideation stage through the human resource and financing stage, from concept to finish. We make sure everyone really understands the issues on the ground, and also build more trust before the project even starts."

Alberta shares an example of the trust building process which ended up in the joint planning of a new project: "A big project we are working on is born out of a previous project we received funding for from USAID, through AGRA. We were able to have the proper documentation, be transparent and accountable. We had a team on the ground for our monitoring and evaluation exercise with AGRA, doing that process we identified gaps in the previous program, and we were able to design another program for addressing these issues to submit to AGRA, and through the AGRA and MasterCard, we've been able to get the grant to implement the new project."

Mutual Accountability: A Two-Way Process

Building mutual trust requires open communication from both sides.

Alberta stresses the importance of INGOs understanding local issues and engaging with local community:

"I'm looking at what more equitable accountability looks like. I think it's very important, because this goes both ways. International organizations can build trust if they get to appreciate the real issues on the ground. This way, there may be a balanced approach before designing a program, and that is when they can also build trust and confidence in the local organization or the local people."

"From our side as a local NGO, proper documentation and demonstration, then also evidence-based approaches, was very important. Also, I think it's important to justify how the funds have been used, and then also having a proper debriefing with the international organization, letting them know you are constantly monitoring and evaluating the processes.

Ayelet adds:

When it comes to understanding the local context, we will always rely on the 'translation' provided by local organizations. The more trustfully we listen, the more effectively we can pursue our goals. Only time will tell what impact USAID's unilateral withdrawal will have on how local organizations choose to collaborate with international actors in the future, and on their level of trust in the international development community at large.

Appointing Local Leadership in International Organizations

Another interesting point raised by Alberta relates to the local management chosen by international organizations. "For many years YARA⁵ was bringing in their country directors from Norway to take office in Africa. It was within about four to five years that YARA had its first local CEO. He has been able to build trust, in a very meaningful way."

She stresses the importance of investing in local capacity to ensure long-term impact: *"Local capacity building of the teams that implement projects is crucial. They need to align and understand INGOs' benchmarks, frameworks, and strategies to ensure long-term success."*

Appointing Local Leadership in International Organizations

Another interesting point raised by Alberta relates to the local management chosen by international organizations. "For many years YARA⁵ was bringing in their country directors from Norway to take office in Africa. It was within about four to five years that YARA had its first local CEO. He has been able to build trust, in a very meaningful way."

She stresses the importance of investing in local capacity to ensure long-term impact: *"Local capacity building of the teams that implement projects is crucial. They need to align and understand INGOs' benchmarks, frameworks, and strategies to ensure long-term success."*

Moving Forward

The importance of bottom-up approaches in development has long been recognized. Chambers⁶ argues that sustainable development efforts must be centered on local knowledge and participation rather than imposed externally. For localization to be sustainable, INGOs must invest in existing structures, empower local leadership, and ensure long-term engagement rather than implementing short-lived, donor-driven projects.

The recent withdrawal of USAID from Ghana underscores the importance of strong local leadership and offers a real opportunity to rebuild trust and establish more equitable, locally driven partnerships. Encouragingly, the Ghanaian government has already begun reallocating resources and seeking alternative funding to sustain development programs- demonstrating local systems' readiness to lead.

Building trust as the cornerstone of localization requires humility, active listening, and unwavering commitment from all stakeholders. While challenging, this essential process is more achievable today than ever before. It remains the critical foundation for bringing meaningful and sustainable transformation to the development sphere.

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A wall at Accra Central Market, in collaboration
with the Embassy of Israel in Ghana

Credit: Ayelet Levin-Karp





The Secrets of Rwanda: The Country That Went Through Genocide and Made Reconciliation

Dr. Ron Adam

How did Rwanda turn from a country that went through genocide where one million people were murdered, into being one of the top countries in the world in terms of personal security, the second country in Africa in terms of investment and economic growth, and a country with zero tolerance for corruption?

Some call it the "Singapore of Africa". The streets are cleaner than in Switzerland and green reigns supreme. The "Land of a Thousand Hills", with beautiful tourist attractions. The story of Rwanda is exciting and unique, different from the rest of the continent. Anyone who comes to Rwanda is astonished from what this country has achieved and what it represents today. The dissonance is outstanding.

This article will try to explain the success story of a country that united the ranks and built reconciliation and internal peace between murderers and victims, to show that it is possible.



The Constitution and the Reconciliation Process

The first phase of reconciliation was already evident on July 17, 1994, when it was decided to form an interim national unity government. The composition of the government was similar to the one decided upon in the agreement reached at the peace talks in Arusha, Tanzania in August 1993, under the auspices of the United Nations. That of pre genocide was an attempt to bring calm, but the agreement was never fully implemented and was certainly cut short on April 6, when President Habyarimana's plane was shot down.

The Government of National Unity, established by the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), the Tutsi-led organization that liberated Rwanda in July 1994, had a majority of Hutu people, including the first president, Pasteur Bizimungu. During this period, it was also decided to integrate into the army and police men from the Hutu tribe who had fled to neighboring countries and wanted to return. Since 2003, a permanent government has been in place that expresses "*representative equality*" in accordance with Article 9 of the country's constitution.

Dr. Ron Adam, Israel's First
Ambassador to Rwanda 2019-2023

Credit: Mutanganshuro Lavie

Public Participation

The constitution was adopted in 2003, drafted and written through a fascinating process of public participation, which lasted almost four years.

The process of public participation was another layer of community peacebuilding, reconciliation, and unity. All these principles were expressed, among others, in Article 1 of the Constitution, which states that *"In the wake of the genocide against the Tutsi that was organized and supervised by unworthy leaders and other perpetrators... The Rwandan people" Resolved to fight the ideology of genocide and all its manifestations and to eradicate ethnic, regional and any other form of divisions"*.¹

The first practical element in the process of reconciliation and the building of a new and united society was the introduction of the popular judicial system known as the **Gacaca**. These were local courts, operating in the courtyards of survivors' homes, with local judges from within the community, who have been trained to do so. Such courts were first introduced during the monarchy and since the 17th century have been the primary local legal instance for resolving disputes and restoring order and peace to the community in the event of a dispute. These local and temporary courts, in which the perpetrators were given the opportunity to bring their version, have resulted in the release of tens of thousands of accomplices and criminals, provided that they confess their actions and express remorse and forgiveness as well as commitment to return to the community and live a new life together, life of reconciliation. Nearly 100,000 murderers have been tried in Rwanda's regular courts and imprisoned. The courts sentenced war criminals to different periods according to the different categories of severity of their acts.

The second tool that was introduced in the new republic and also existed during the monarchy was the **Abunzi** (mediator), i.e. the local mediator. This is a hierarchy of local arbitration, which automatically precedes any litigation in an official court. The Abunzi performs a process of understanding a dispute between people in a community or family on a wide range of motives (land dispute, petty crime, or other civil dispute), operates at the cell level (a cluster of villages), and at the sector level, and establishes a decision that binds both parties. Only if the decision is postponed, the dispute goes to court.²

The local court system, the Gacaca court trials, and the Abunzi mediator system were two of the mechanisms that were restored to use by the new republic. In these mechanisms lies the secret of the success of the special Rwanda. The mechanisms known as Home Grown Solutions (HGS) are the "Secrets of Rwanda".



The Ambassador Gives Cows to the Poor on behalf of the State of Israel (Mashav) as part of the Girinka


Credit: Mutanganshuro Lavie

"The Secrets of Rwanda"

A Special Assembly of scholars and leaders from all walks of life in Rwanda that was gathered in October 1999 and the drafting of the Constitution that followed it, decided to bring back from the monarchy period those governmental processes that were practiced long before the arrival of the colonialists.

These mechanisms were accepted during the kingdom by both tribes, who lived in peace side by side, and complimented each other. Precisely because they were acceptable by both tribes in the past, they were restored after the genocide, and have become acceptable by all, while at the same time supporting the process of unity and peace building.

Article 11 of the constitutional amendment (2015) officially states that *"In order to build the nation, promote national culture and restore dignity, Rwandans, based on their values, initiate home-grown mechanisms to deal with matters that concern them. Laws may establish different mechanisms for home-grown solutions"*.



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Home Grown Solutions - the Mechanisms from the Past

These HGS are a whole world of solutions and governing mechanisms, the most fascinating of them, in my opinion are the Umushyikirano, the Imihigo, the Umuganda. I had the honor and the privilege, as the first Israeli ambassador to Rwanda, to participate in them personally and get to know them up close.

These are the ten HGS mechanisms:

Itorero (National Education Camp)

A national civic education program, introduced in 2009 for high school students, in which the children learn the values of patriotism, unity, democracy, and the history, and what preceded the genocide. It is somehow similar to the youth movements in Israel (like the scouts), but in the case it is only six weeks, usually after the 12th grade.

Girinka (Giving Cows)

Cows were and still are the most important personal asset. It is the asset that made the class difference between the tribes. At the wedding the cow is the dowry.

A female cow that gives milk has become a symbol of wealth, and giving a cow has a very important value in Rwanda.

The program, also known as One Cow for One Poor Family, was reintroduced in 2006 by the president himself, and is a government mechanism to promote equality and food security, empowerment of the poor and development of the community, when the stroller that is born passes to the next poor family in line, and so on.

Umushyikirano (National Dialogue)

The people of Rwanda gather in one place and hold a dialogue for two or three days with the President and all elected officials: ministers, members of parliament, mayors, heads of security forces and Rwandan ambassadors to the world.

After the President's inaugural address on the State of the Nation, any person inside the hall or from broadcast points scattered throughout the country, can ask questions regarding local or national issues that concern him. The President listens and instructs the relevant minister or mayor to respond. Then the president conducts, on-site and live, an in-depth examination of the issue raised, in order to bring about a solution. It is a very significant forum, in which citizens enjoy being part of the governance and decision-making process.

Gacaca (Court Trials)

In 2002, the government instituted the court trials in order to expedite the process of justice for war criminals, who acted during and before the genocide in Rwanda. Unlike the International Court of Justice in the Hague, whose mandate was limited to crimes committed between January 1 and December 31, 1994 (Rwanda opposed a UN Security Council resolution that stipulated this), the mandate of the Gacaca was broader and established October 1, 1990, as the beginning of the Mandate (the beginning of the War of Independence). The process promoted justice, reconciliation and mental healing. About 1.9 million cases were brought before these community courts over a period of eight years.

Umuganda (Cleanliness and Unity Day)

Since 1998, last Saturday of every month, all residents of the country, in villages and cities alike, all together, regardless of the class, women, men and children, from the president and his wife to the last resident, go out of their house for local clean-up or schools and houses renovations. The goal: joint activities, promoting cleanliness at the village and neighborhood level. At the end of the activity, the community is holding a dialogue between the heads of the village or city and the residents. The agenda is fixed: from 7 to 11 a.m. cleaning and renovations, and between 11 and 1 p.m., the local dialogue takes place. There are no exemptions!

Abunzi (Local mediator)

The mediation process is in fact a hybrid institutional and traditional process for resolving disputes. The mediator is usually an accepted personality in the village, respected person with integrity and fairness, who is elected by the community and acts voluntarily.

Imihigo (Performance Contract)

between the King and his elected Representatives. This mechanism was reinstated in modern Rwanda in 2006, where at the beginning of each year, the President and the Prime Minister gather all the ministers of the government, the 30 mayors of cities/districts, 5 heads of provinces, the army Chief of Staff, the Commissioner of Police, Heads of the Security Services, and all the incumbent ambassadors. All of these officials present

to the President the goals they have set for themselves for the coming year and sign an agreement with the President to implement them. The Imihigo is broadcast live to the public.

Umwiherero (National Leadership Retreat)

Once a year, the political and security leadership, along with senior officials from the Private and Civil Society sectors, gather and hold an open dialogue and hopefully brainstorm about the issues on the agenda of the country for the year. The retreat is a government tool for open internal dialogue and takes place in a closed military base, without access to phones during the day, and includes physical activity early in the morning.

Ndi Umunyarwanda (Unity Club)

This initiative was also active during the monarchy and was reinstated in 2013 and aims to discuss and strengthen Rwandan identity. Today, the Unity Club meets once a year and its purpose is to strengthen unity and reconciliation among the citizens and is in fact a forum for open discourse on the circumstances that led to the genocide and its consequences, as well as what it means to be a Rwandan.

In these mechanisms lies the secret of the success of the special Rwanda.

Ku Gicaniro (Around the bonfire)

Teenagers, members of the second generation of genocide, children of perpetrators and survivors alike sit together around the bonfire (today many gatherings are held in the sports hall of the school or community club) and discuss the same topics as adults: how did the education system, the media, and politics contribute to division, exclusion, discrimination, and finally expulsion and extermination, and what can we learn from it.³

Final note

HGS is now the trademark of Rwanda, as it has brought about not only unity and reconciliation, but also economic growth and food security, all based on shared cultural and local values. Rwanda today shares its success story with other countries in Africa and the world. To this end, the Government of Rwanda has established an agency within the Foreign Ministry, called RCI (Rwanda Cooperation Initiative).

The secret lies in leadership. Rwanda's leader, Paul Kagame, who took over the country in 2000, a few years after freed Rwanda. In the first week after liberation in July 1994, Kagame announced a ban on any act of revenge. This was the first call of direction, from which Kagame would lead his people to become a different African state. Kagame, on his orders, broke the cycle of terror, murder and revenge.

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Rebuilding Trust in Joint movements after October 7: The Case Of Combatants for Peace

Mia Biran

On that horrible morning of October 7, just as the first news reports came in, messages started to appear on the "Combatants for Peace Binational Leadership" WhatsApp group. Ahmad wrote, "I'm stuck now between my family in Gaza and my friends in Israel. I pray for them to be safe. I worry about them." Then, Moran responded, "I worry about my family that lives near Gaza and your family in Gaza. I wish this stupid bloody cycle would end already".

No doubt, October 7, and the long, bloody war that followed it, shook us all to the core. But "Combatants for Peace" (hereafter: CfP), a movement founded on 2006 by former Israeli and Palestinian combatants, already had 20 years of experience choosing and re-choosing non-violent action in an extremely violent reality, which helped us come back to our senses faster than others, and eventually not only survive it, but even grow from this rift.

16 months later, discussing rebuilding trust couldn't be more relevant. As conflict zones grow and intensify around the globe (by two thirds since 2021, topping 6 million km², as reported in the latest Conflict Intensity Index (CII)), I hope the experience gathered by Combatants for Peace during this turbulent time, will be at service for peace activists, academics and development professionals working to rehabilitate affected communities worldwide.

Already the following morning, 8.10.23, the movement's leaders organized a series of activists' online meetings. Starting in uni-national groups, moving on to a bi-national forum, the intention was to create a space for both peoples to express their pain and anger openly. What saved these conversations from explosion was insisting on talking "emotions" rather than "opinions" or "facts" (which were still very much unknown), and having both

Israeli and Palestinian leaders facilitating the talks and setting the boundaries for their community members when needed. It does not mean there were no moments of crisis or breaches of trust, but the long years of trust-building and friendship allowed us to hold unprecedentedly fragile, open talks. It was the first time since the movement was founded that Israeli activists expressed feelings of hatred and revenge towards the Palestinians, but also a space for the Palestinian activists to admit the spontaneous joy they felt witnessing those first images of Gazans crossing the fence, before the dimensions of the horrors sunk in. It was the first time the Israelis experienced what it feels like to be victims of a massacre, and the first time the Palestinians were in the shoes of the brutal perpetrators.

It was a punch in the face, but also the sharpest reminder to how similar and connected we all are, to the fact that no one is actually immune to this conflict's heavy toll. And as the Palestinian activists of CfP have never given up on this partnership- not when their land was taken, not when delayed for hours or humiliated at checkpoints, not when they couldn't leave their houses under military curfew, not when they lost family members in the violent routine of the occupation- this was the Israelis' turn to remember that it's in these moments of crisis that our values are standing to the test. We overcame fear and arranged a binational face-to-face activists meeting early in November 2023 in Beit Jala.

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In their study from this exact time, November 2023, "Trends in Jewish and Arab relations in Israel following the Iron Swords War", Achord Research Center found that since the outbreak of the war, both Jews and Palestinian citizens of Israel felt a heightened sense of threat, fuelled by misconceptions that the other side is interested in violence, despite both sides actually being opposed to it.

The study therefore recommends maintaining daily, even casual, encounters between the members of the two groups, in order to break these misconceptions and reduce concerns about the other group and the perception of the threat. While the study focuses on the relations between Jews and Arabs within Israel, we can assume that between Israeli Jews and Palestinians the mutual fear and misconceptions are even stronger, as separation, alienation and lack of acquaintance are much higher, and therefore the importance of encounters between the two groups increases. As most casual interactions between Israelis and Palestinians take place under very clear power dynamics, when the Israeli is either a soldier or a settler, the activities that CfP are organizing are invaluable. And indeed, since that first face-to-face meeting in November 2023, CfP kept insisting on meeting each other- on zoom too, but more and more frequently at binational staff meetings in the Beit Jala office, and soon after- in any way possible:

On joint demonstrations calling to end the war, demanding safety, equality and freedom for all; On binational solidarity fieldwork at the West Bank- rebuilding water channels that collect rainfall at the arid Jordan Valley, harvesting olives with farmers who the military regime prevents from accessing their lands, planting new trees instead of those uprooted by settlers or the army; At joint weekend seminars,



Joint Strategy Seminar, June 2024

Credit: Ghassan Bannoura- CfP

where the activists had the time and space to openly discuss their pain, anger, hope and despair, to ask tough questions and answer honestly without fear or judgement, to unwind, to laugh.

As movement restrictions on Palestinians increased, CfP looked for new, creative locations in area C where both peoples could stay; As the army forces' brutality grew- female activists took the lead and front at potentially tense protests and field activities, and mediated in explosive situations to de-escalate and keep everyone safe. New educational activities were launched to reach wider, more "unconvinced" audiences, along with those feeling lonelier than ever in the current social climate and looking for a community to engage with: a unique program for religious Jewish youth, an in-depth activism training program, and many posts, online webinars and talks with local and international audience, voicing messages of co-resistance and hope for change in a world that was splitting into "Pro-Palestine" vs. "Pro-Israel", at the expense of both peoples.

And maybe most notably, we insisted on holding the 19th yearly Joint Israeli-

Palestinian Memorial Day Ceremony (together with the Bereaved Families Forum), commemorating the Palestinian and Israeli recent victims of the 7/10 massacre and the war on Gaza, focusing on children, stressing the unbelievable shared pain and loss and calling to end the bloody cycle of violence for our shared humanity and shared future.

"Moving to reconciliation... is not a natural process but a result of continuous and consistent persuasion by those who begin the peace-making moves. In other words, individuals and groups are the ones who advocate and propagate the process of peace-making. They seize the new ideas, adhere to them, and disseminate them among society members, trying to mobilize them for the cause."¹

No doubt this was, and still is, a time of crisis. But crisis motivates change. Whether it's for better or worse, we have some ability to determine by the actions we choose to take. Combatants for Peace will keep trying to mobilize more and more people to peace-making. The dozens of diverse new activists who have joined the movement this year prove that this cause has demand, and we don't have the privilege to give up.

Joint Strategy Seminar, June 2024

Credit: Ghassan Bannoura- CfP



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Dr. Reut Barak Weekes gained her PhD in Development Economics from SOAS, University of London. She heads the Glocal Program for International Development at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Her research focus includes: decision making of smallholder farmers in developing countries, social impact of microfinance, and the interaction between NGOs and government entities in development. Dr. Barak Weekes acts as the chairperson of NALA, an NGO which fights Neglected Tropical Diseases in developing countries. In the past decade, Dr. Barak Weekes has advised various international development organizations in Israel, including IsraAid, CoCuDi, CIMI, Fair Planet, JDC and Mashav.

Mia Biran is a human rights advocate and social justice professional based in Israel/Palestine. Currently serving as Program Manager at the Israeli office of Combatants for Peace, she leads with her partners non-violent co-resistance actions to end the Israeli occupation and achieve freedom and justice for everyone living between the river to the sea. This includes organizing solidarity actions with Palestinian communities suffering severe settler and military violence, as well as advocating for this cause and raising awareness among diverse audiences through campaigns and varied educational programs. With an academic background in law and international development, vast professional experience working in the civil society promoting human rights, gender equality and education, and 20 years of field work and street activism, Mia is a strong believer in the power of local communities to lead their own change and in women's role in designing a different future.

Yonatan Bukhdruker has been a Project Manager in the NURA Global Innovation Lab (formerly the Pears Program for Global Innovation) for the past five years, working with startups and entrepreneurs on their engagement with developing markets, bringing their solutions and impact where they can matter the most. Prior to this, Yonatan served as the International Financial Institutions Director in the Trade Mission of Israel in Washington D.C. He managed Israel's relationships with institutions such as the World Bank and the IDB and provided the Israeli private sector with infrastructure and support in their engagement with these institutions, while promoting development goals and offering assistance to developing countries. Yonatan has a BA degree in communications from the Reichman University, including a year in Argov Honors Program in Leadership and Diplomacy.

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Hagit Freud is the Managing Director of the NURA Global Innovation Lab (formerly the Pears Program for Global Innovation). She is committed to harnessing values-driven innovation to enhance global well-being. In her role, she spearheads initiatives that bridge the Israeli innovation ecosystem with the field of international development, facilitating impactful collaborations among entrepreneurs, companies, NGOs, and investors. Prior to leading NURA, Hagit spent several years in East Africa managing operations for an Israeli company. She played a pivotal role in establishing multi-sector, long-term partnerships that advanced large-scale HIV prevention initiatives across Rwanda, Kenya, and Tanzania. Hagit holds a Master's degree in International Development Studies from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Glocal Cohort 3) and a Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences from the Open University of Israel.

Ayelet Levin-Karp is the CEO of SID-Israel, the umbrella organization of the Israeli professional international and development humanitarian aid community. SID-Israel works to create a supportive professional environment based on knowledge exchange and collaboration, and establishing a clear roadmap for Israeli global engagement. In 2018 Ayelet set up the Israeli Trade and Economic Mission in Ghana and West Africa and served as the economic attaché for four years partnering with many local companies and NGOs.

Rachel Shaul joined JDC International in 2022 as Senior Program Director of Women's Economic Empowerment & Food Security Programs. Rachel came to JDC following an extensive career as a senior executive in leading businesses and nonprofit organizations. She previously served as Director of Development and International Relations at The Israel Museum, ranked among the world's leading art and archaeology museums. Prior to that, she held the roles of CEO of Presentense, a nonprofit organization promoting entrepreneurship as a vehicle for social change, and as Head of Global Marketing and External Affairs at Netafim, Israel's leading global Agritech firm operating in over 110 countries. Rachel has further held senior marketing and managerial positions within global high-tech companies including Comverse Technology, Inc. and several start-ups. Rachel serves as a member of the International Women's Forum and is particularly interested in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Rachel earned a BA in Theatre Arts from Tel-Aviv University, a MA in Communications from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and a MA in Science & Technology Studies from Bar-Ilan University. As her thesis for the latter MA degree, she investigated the use of agricultural technology by rural women in India and promoted social change through innovation in diverse communities in Israel and Africa.

Barak Talmor is the project manager of Jumpstarting Hope in Gaza, leading the deployment of off-grid energy and WASH solutions to support displaced communities. His work focuses on sustainable infrastructure, cross-border cooperation, and humanitarian innovation, managing partnerships with NGOs, governmental agencies, and private sector stakeholders. Barak specializes in project strategy, stakeholder coordination, and resource mobilization, ensuring the effective implementation of decentralized water, sanitation, and energy systems. He is a graduate of the Aviram Sustainability and Climate Program at Reichman University, holding a B.A. in Sustainability and Political Science. He also facilitates Listening Vulnerably circles, fostering open dialogue in complex environments.

Hien Trung Vu is a social policy specialist at UNICEF Vietnam focused on children with disabilities. He holds an MA in International Development from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a BA in Social Work from Vietnam National University. With professional experience across Vietnam, the UK, Israel, and Botswana, Hien brings diverse cultural perspectives to his work empowering vulnerable populations, especially children and persons with disabilities.



Credit: Glocal International Development Program

About Glocal

The Glocal MA in International Development at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem is a unique, interdisciplinary program that blends academic rigor with hands-on field experience. Designed for committed individuals seeking to create meaningful social impact, Glocal combines classroom learning with a four-month internship in the Global South, equipping students with practical tools to work effectively in diverse community settings. The program fosters a vibrant, international community of students and alumni, grounded in critical thinking, collaboration, and ethical practice. In an exciting new development, Glocal has recently launched a PhD program, expanding its commitment to cutting-edge research and leadership in the field of international development.



Credit: Ernest Ngabozima, during his Glocal internship in Uganda with local community members

Learn more at glocal.huji.ac.il.

About SID-Israel

SID-Israel's mission is to increase Israel's contribution to the global development effort while advancing its economic, social, and diplomatic interests. Success requires engagement from all sectors, each bringing unique strengths. As the central hub for Israel's international development and humanitarian aid community, SID-Israel connects over 150 NGOs, companies, investors, academic institutions, and independent experts, working together to improve lives across the Global South and in humanitarian contexts.

At a time of growing global challenges, SID-Israel helps leverage Israeli innovation, fosters international collaboration, and strengthens Israel's international standing through its commitment to global development and humanitarian action. It does so by supporting knowledge exchange, connecting professionals and organizations to global networks, and helping them access funding and build strategic capabilities. SID-Israel also develops policy recommendations, hosts forums that bring together civil society and government actors, and works to ensure international development has a stronger place on Israel's public and political agenda. In parallel, it runs public engagement initiatives, including youth-focused educational programs that link new generations to global development issues.



Credit: SID-Israel

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