

## CHAPTER 8

## Combining Empathy with Problem Solving: The Tamra Model of Facilitation in Israel

*Eileen F. Babbitt and Pamela Pomerance Steiner,  
with Jabir Asaqla, Chassia Chomsky-Porat,  
and Shirli Kirschner*

Yaad is a small Israeli-Jewish community of 120 families, established in the 1980s as part of a Zionist vision to populate the Galilee in northern Israel with dozens of Jewish settlements, each of 50 to 250 families. These communities were intended to (and do) serve as wedges between Arab villages and towns to stop their natural expansion. It was hoped that as these settlements grew, they would develop into a Jewish majority in the Galilee, preventing Arabs from becoming the majority and then demanding autonomy. Yaad was erected at the foot of a hill, on what used to be the fields of Miaar.

Miaar was a very old Palestinian village perched on the hilltop. Strategically situated, it had overlooked a main road connecting the ancient, if not biblical, towns of Acre, Sakhnin, and Tiberias. In Miaar itself one can still find stones from biblical to Byzantine times, as well as remains of more recent Palestinian buildings and tombstones. Standing there today, it is easy to envisage the ancient village. Many elders and descendants continue to visit the village site and the cemetery.

In 2004, the inhabitants of Yaad and the former inhabitants and descendants of Miaar met to discuss the future of this hilltop site. This was the first time that Israeli Jews living in such a situation decided not to build on what used to be an Arab village *out of respect* for the pain and suffering of the former Arab inhabitants. As far as we know, it was also the first time for members of two such communities to air mutual grievances, share memories and pain, empathize, and resolve to act jointly.

This chapter records how this historic outcome developed. We begin by describing the innovative facilitation training program that prepared the two local facilitators of the Yaad-Miaar process, one Arab and one Jew.

158 Building Peace: Reflections from the Field

We then describe the relationship between the two communities before and after the facilitated dialogue, and the dialogue itself. We conclude by reflecting on lessons from this work, for Israel and for other communities in conflict.

### Facilitation Training: Developing the Tamra Model

Yona Shamir is a sixty-something whirlwind of wise intelligence, networking, and indefatigable determination whose dream is to improve relations among different groups of Israelis, to help build a more peaceful country and region. In 1995 she founded the Israel Center for Negotiation and Mediation (ICN) at the Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa. This educational NGO reflects Shamir's belief in the need to "cast . . . a large net" to educate "the public, school children, governmental and non-governmental agencies, industries and the army . . . [to] change the culture from an adversarial culture to a joint problem-solving culture" (Shamir 2005).

In 1998 Shamir began working with Israelis and Palestinians at the border crossings between Israel and the Occupied Territories, in what she describes as joint problem solving. When the second Intifada began in September 2000, she suspended this work, sensing that such efforts could not be effective at that moment. Then came the violent protests of October 2000 and the police killing of thirteen Arab-Israeli citizens. She realized "that we are sitting on a volcano . . . about to erupt," and "decided to work with Jews and Arabs *within* Israel," focusing on the unresolved land disputes in certain areas of the Galilee:

In 2001, ICN trained Jewish and Arab heads of municipalities in negotiation and mediation . . . [T]he head of an Arab municipality . . . who participated in the training workshop, . . . asked [me] to try . . . to resolve the land issues between Sakhnin and Misgav [in northern Israel] . . . After several meetings and discussion with both heads of the municipalities and members of the council, I realized that the level of animosity and lack of trust was so high that no government-sponsored negotiation or mediation would work. (Shamir 2005)

At that point Shamir decided to create a cadre of facilitation teams, Arab and Jew, who could work with the Jewish and Arab communities in the Galilee and potentially throughout Israel, to encourage creative and nonadversarial problem-solving on land disputes. She discussed this idea with a friend and colleague, Boston University professor Hillel Levine, founder of the International Institute for Mediation and Historical

Conciliation. He offered to have his institute fund the project's initial training stage.

Now Shamir sought trainers to prepare these teams. She chose Professor Eileen Babbitt of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, whom she knew and whose work she admired. She knew of Babbitt's extensive track-two experience with Israelis and Palestinians, working with Professor Herbert Kelman of Harvard University.<sup>1</sup> With Shamir's agreement, Babbitt brought in her long-time colleague, psychologist Dr. Pamela Steiner, who also had track-two experience with Israelis and Palestinians in association with Kelman. Shamir also brought in Australian mediator and facilitator Shirli Kirschner, a lawyer who works with consensus-building processes in both the public and private sectors, and has also worked in Israel.

Shamir envisioned a training program composed of two segments of four days each. Babbitt and Steiner would teach the first segment, and Kirschner the second. Shamir identified twenty potential trainees: nine Arab citizens of Israel and eleven Jewish citizens. All resided near Haifa in northern Israel; only a few had any training or experience in facilitation or mediation. All the sessions were conducted in the Arab town of Tamra, about a forty-five-minute drive from Haifa.

### The First Training—January 2003

We, Babbitt and Steiner, designed the first four-day session to introduce and discuss a track-two process known as interactive problem solving, in Herbert Kelman's version called the Problem-Solving Workshop (Kelman 1992). We believe that facilitators must personally experience the kind of process they will later facilitate for others, so we planned that, on two of the four days, the trainees would engage in an actual problem-solving workshop that we would facilitate.

Shamir and Levine naturally wanted to attend the workshop sessions, but an element of Kelman's approach, one we fully embrace, is to permit no observers in any workshop. This keeps the discussion confidential and keeps the participants from feeling they are performing for an audience. Over the years, however, we had evolved another role within the facilitation team: the "observer/advisor," often a facilitator-in-training, who observes sessions and gives the facilitators feedback about procedural or substantive points. We offered Shamir and Levine this role. This let the trainees see this role in operation, so they could use it themselves in the future; it also allowed us to draw upon the extensive experience of both Shamir and Levine without compromising the process itself.

Another aspect of our track-two practice is to include on the facilitation team people from each identity group represented in the conflict. We

## 160 Building Peace: Reflections from the Field

wanted our team to include an Arab Israeli, so Shamir enlisted Jallal Abu Touama, then head of an Arab municipality in Israel. He joined Shamir and Levine as an observer/advisor. The three observer/advisors were very helpful, especially in interpreting the general mood in the room.

The problem-solving workshop (PSW), mentioned above, was the primary focus of this training. Kelman's workshop model rests on the theory of basic human needs, developed in the 1960s by Professor John Burton of University College at London. Drawing on his extensive experience as both an Australian diplomat and an international relations scholar, Burton (cited in Miall, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse 1999, 47) described "a universal drive to satisfy basic needs such as security, identity, and recognition." While material interests can be negotiated, Burton found that these basic human needs cannot be satisfied by power bargaining. If, however, the parties to a conflict explore and understand these needs, they can build sustainable relationships and agreements on that basis. Kelman integrated Burton's human-needs theory with social psychology research on intergroup and identity relations<sup>2</sup> to develop the workshop. He has used it with Israelis and Palestinians since the 1970s.

In general, workshop discussions last several days and unfold in phases. In the first phase, the workshop participants from each community meet separately with the facilitators to get acquainted with each other and with the range of views they hold about the current, on-the-ground situation. They also get a feel for the process.

The second phase, when all parties first come together, enables participants to express their own community's needs and any fears they hold about not having them met. In addition, the facilitators ask the participants to listen actively to the *other* community's needs and fears. Usually both communities prominently identify, in their own ways and words, the basic human needs Burton cited: recognition as a people and nation of a certain identity entitled to self-determination, and security in that endeavor. The model assumes, and experience has shown, that even when material interests seem to conflict, both parties can relate to the basic human needs of their adversaries—because they are often the same. The fears are usually that past experiences of hurts and betrayals will be repeated, and that agreements will be violated, if they are even reached.

In the third phase, participants are encouraged to ask questions and talk over what they have heard from each other. They may acknowledge that they have understood the fundamental needs and fears of the other community. Occasionally such acknowledgment is explicit; often, in our experience, it is not.

In the fourth phase, participants discuss the *broad* shape of a solution, coming up with options that simultaneously address both parties' needs

and fears. In the fifth phase, they identify constraints to achieving that solution; in the sixth, they discuss ways to overcome the constraints. In a seventh optional phase, they may agree on concrete joint action.

In this first Tamra workshop, the trainees participated in only the first four phases because of time constraints. We then engaged them in some of the basics of “reflective practice” by jointly critiquing the PSW model and considering ways to use it effectively in the Galilee.

### **The Second Training—February 2003**

The second segment, conducted by Shirli Kirschner, focused on teaching facilitation and consensus-building skills. As MIT’s Lawrence Susskind, a leading theorist and practitioner of consensus-building, and Jeffrey Cruikshank (1997, 11) define the process, it “requires informal, face-to-face interaction among specially chosen representatives of all ‘stakeholding’ groups; a voluntary effort to seek ‘all-gain’ rather than ‘win-lose’ solutions or watered-down political compromises; and, often, the assistance of a neutral facilitator or mediator.” Consensus building rests on the principle that stakeholders should be “at the table” to provide direct input into the policy decisions that will affect their lives. Having such a direct role in creating an agreement, they will more likely support the outcome and implement it effectively. Consensus building, as distinct from the interactive problem solving of the previous training session, is especially valuable when people are ready to work on the concrete aspects of a settlement.

Kirschner focused in on one potential weakness of consensus building: the more powerful party can dominate a negotiation process, leaving the less powerful party feeling silenced. She therefore taught participants to use a method called “talking paper,” in which participants can anonymously write their ideas on colored squares and post them on a board. This allows visual tracking of proposals, without attribution; those who feel less empowered or confident in a given discussion can still participate fully, contributing their ideas and opinions.

Kirschner also included sessions on co-facilitation and reflective practice, critical elements that enable facilitators to work together effectively and learn from their successes and mistakes. She encouraged participants to reflect on how to make the various tools more culturally acceptable in Israel. She ran all the components of the workshop in Hebrew and Arabic, as well as in English, to stress the importance of acknowledging and honoring the distinct communal identities in the trainee group. Kirschner herself speaks English and Hebrew. For the Arabic, she enlisted the assistance of Touama, the Arab-Israeli observer/advisor from the first training. By modeling this process in the training session, she encouraged

## 162 Building Peace: Reflections from the Field

our trainees to consider how they might integrate both languages into the facilitation sessions they would eventually conduct.

**The Third Training—June 2003**

Shamir had not envisaged a third component. However, as we three trainers reviewed the first two workshops, we saw the need for a third session. It would let the participants further develop their skills and would reinforce an essential aspect of working with conflicts involving identity: the development of empathy.

The nature of the process in this third workshop enabled us, for the first time, to focus on the explicit challenge of “insider” facilitation. Insider facilitators (who are themselves members of the communities in the conflict) are likely to bring to the work the same strong feelings, painfully tough experiences, and long-conditioned reactions that other members of their own communities will have in relation to the “other.” When the discussion in a conflict resolution process gets emotional and both parties start to compete over who suffered more, insider facilitators are likely to experience the same reactive, adversarial thoughts as the participants. For the facilitators to disable destructive verbal conflict and instead enable productive joint thinking, they must in that moment manage their own fear, hurt, and anger—their “triggers” that produce an immediate emotional response. Therefore, we intended that during this last training the participants would begin four processes:

- 1) Gain awareness of their life experiences as members of these identity groups and of how such experiences may be triggered.
- 2) Learn how to work with strong emotion, within themselves and in others.
- 3) Understand the processes of trauma and healing.
- 4) Understand the importance and challenges of working in teams.

To accomplish these goals we chose to use historical narrative to develop participants’ understanding and empathy for the difficulties and possible traumas each had faced in his or her own life because of the conflict. This method was based on the model “To Reflect and Trust” (TRT), developed by Albeck, Adwan, and Bar-On (2002). Unlike the PSW and the consensus-building approach, narrative work focuses entirely on what has happened to each participant and their families, personally, as individual members of their communities. This approach opens important psychological doors that we see as critical to conflict resolution efforts.

One door that opens is to healing. Steiner's work as a psychotherapist, with individuals who have experienced immense hurts, was relevant here. It convinced her that workshop participants must heal enough from their own experiences of pain and injustice to have the inner "space" to take in the pain and injustices suffered by "the other."

Another door opens to understanding how the past influences the present. For example, in a workshop, when participants hear their own group characterized as perpetrators, they are likely to be "triggered." That is, they tap into fearful, hurt, or angry inner spaces that they only partially know, understand, or accept. That emotion then explodes into the current encounter. As a result, triggering "may continually interfere with adapting one's feelings, attitudes, and behavior to the changing reality" (Albeck et al. 2002, 306). In brief, triggering leads people to unconsciously project the past onto the present in an unproductive way.

A third door opens to expanded identities. Members of an identity group change when they take in the suffering of the hated "other." Their own identity expands to include the fate of members of the other community. At the same time, their sense of their own community expands and may also become more honest; they see that their community can be perpetrator as well as victim. This process allows them to begin to construct a new identity—one not based either on negating the "other" or on denying the existence of both victim and victimizer roles within oneself (Albeck et al. 2002).

For this third workshop, we designed a complex curriculum that would allow the participants to continue developing their facilitation skills and gaining exposure to each other's personal histories in a safe, constructive way. We summarized the research and theories on trauma and healing in the context of conflict management and underscored the importance of using active listening skills and open-ended questions in the narrative process. We also worked on "slowing down the process" by teaching ways to ensure that each participant in a dialogue actually understand what the other is saying, and the other knows that he or she is understood. Ultimately, "going slowly" allows people to integrate and internalize a multifaceted learning process that is not just intellectual but engages core emotions and values.

We then grouped the participants into facilitation teams including both Jewish and Arab members. Each team was responsible for facilitating one narrative session, with the other trainees as participants. Although the TRT model lays out the steps in the process, each team was responsible for some planning: suggesting ground rules for their session, sharing the facilitation role among team members, and thinking about ways to open and close the session.

As the first step in the TRT model, each participant takes a designated amount of uninterrupted time to tell his or her own story in relation to

## 164 Building Peace: Reflections from the Field

the conflict, going back at least one generation. In our workshop, the focus was on how, when, and in what ways the narrator could trace the effects of the Arab-Jewish conflict on his or her own life.

After each individual's narrative, the facilitators invited other participants to ask questions of the narrator, but only to clarify. Next, facilitators offered participants who were feeling empathy for the narrator a chance to express it. For example, a participant might say, "Your family lost six people and the family home of three generations. Hearing that made me feel sad and angry for you. It was unjust and unfair." This kind of acknowledgment is crucial. The listener confirms the narrator's truth: recognizing that these events, as described, are absolutely valid for the narrator. Feeling understood and validated provides the narrator with some healing, and thus some of that inner space to take in another's story. At this moment, workshop participants can start to experience a transformation in attitude toward the other community.

Throughout this session, we stressed the need to distinguish between understanding and approving. That is, to achieve and offer understanding and empathy, and acknowledge the other's truth, does not signify moral approval of any particular behavior.

In the next step, some participants offered their own, often very different, perspectives on what the narrator presented. The facilitators had explained that this must be done without judging the narrator's experience. They then asked if the narrator would like to add to or respond to what had been said. These steps are important and necessary to enable the group "to reflect together, based on mutual acknowledgement, respect, and dignity" (Albeck et al. 2002, 19–21).

This third workshop was the most powerful of the three. The narratives shared were extremely deep and provocative, perhaps because most trainees had already developed trust during the earlier workshop segments. Everyone was visibly moved by what they heard, and the narrative process deepened connections among them. They were eager to take these ideas out into the community, although not yet confident that they could run these processes completely on their own.

### Putting the Tamra Model Together

After the third workshop, based on discussions with the facilitators and some trainees, Babbitt and Steiner realized that the trainees needed further mentoring. This was hardly a new insight; most facilitators and mediators develop their skills through apprenticeship. But we trainers, living so far away, could not offer the amount of connecting needed for apprenticeship. We decided, therefore, to conduct a fourth training session, explicitly designed as an intensive, advanced session for another cohort of



Israeli Jews and Arabs who already had good mediation skills. We would train the experienced mediators in interactive problem solving and in the narrative trust building. This second group could then partner with the first trainee cohort, expanding the number of facilitators and mentoring those with less experience.

In reflecting back on the way the first three training workshops fit together, we hypothesized that the three models presented—interactive problem solving, consensus building, and narrative trust building—could be offered in different sequences depending on the needs in a particular community, and on community reactions to any model. For example, if community members were engaged in consensus building over a land dispute but the process had gotten bogged down in recrimination and hostility, a team of facilitators could offer the “needs and fears problem-solving module” to help them reframe the conversation. If that process seemed to open up deep-seated issues rather than resolve them, the “narrative module” could be used. Later, the community could return to negotiation using the “consensus-building module,” now better equipped to handle the give-and-take of a negotiation process, helped by a facilitator. Thus the “Tamra Model” was born—conceived as a flexible set of modular components that could be used to respond at any particular moment in a given peacebuilding process.

“Graduates” of the Tamra training program formed Facilitators for Conflict Resolution in Neighboring Communities (FCRNC), and during the summer of 2004, two of its members saw an opportunity to apply the model.

### Applying the Model: The Yaad/Miaar Conflict

The model was used in a planning process with two communities in the Galilee: the residents of Yaad, a small Jewish community; and the former residents of Miaar, a Palestinian village that existed before 1948, near where Yaad is now. This case study of the process was written by the two Tamra trainees who facilitated the process—Chassia Chomsky-Porat and Jabir Asaqla. It is based on their own experiences, interviews with residents of both communities, and archival documents.<sup>3</sup>

According to “Village Statistics,” a land survey by the local British authorities under the British Mandate in 1938, Miaar included about 6,425 acres, of which about 2,718 were cultivated. In 1938, two years after the Great Arab Rebellion against the British, the local British military destroyed part of the village to punish the inhabitants for hiding and helping Palestinian rebels.

In 1948, before the Independence War (the Israeli-Jewish appellation), or Naqba (the Palestinian appellation), the village’s population

**Table 8.1 The Three Modular Components of the Tamra Model**

	<b>GOALS</b>	<b>METHOD</b>	<b>WHEN TO USE</b>
<b>Problem solving</b>	<p>(1) Gain insight into each party's needs, fears, and concerns.</p> <p>(2) Think jointly about how mutually to meet these needs, fears, and concerns.</p> <p>(3) Humanize the enemy.</p>	<p>(1) Begin with single-party meetings.</p> <p>(2) Then, in joint meetings</p> <p>(a) Identify each party's needs, fears, and concerns.</p> <p>(b) Discuss needs and fears.</p> <p>(c) Think about shapes of solutions.</p> <p>(d) Identify constraints.</p> <p>(e) Brainstorm ideas about overcoming constraints.</p> <p>(f) Take concrete steps.</p>	<p>(1) In an existential conflict, when some see group identity as threatened.</p> <p>(2) When parties in such a conflict are stuck in adversarial debate and recrimination.</p>
<b>Consensus building</b>	<p>(1) Find a sustainable outcome to a concrete problem.</p> <p>(2) Make sure all stakeholders are represented.</p> <p>(3) Reach an "all-gain" rather than a "win-lose" decision.</p>	<p>(1) Draft ground rules.</p> <p>(2) Decide on language to use.</p> <p>(3) Brainstorm options.</p> <p>(4) Construct packages.</p> <p>(5) Produce an agreement.</p> <p>(6) Decide on implementation.</p>	<p>(1) When decision is needed about specific action.</p>
<b>Trust building</b>	<p>(1) Start on the healing process.</p> <p>(2) Understand how the past influences the present.</p> <p>(3) Expand participants' identities.</p>	<p>(1) Speak one's individual narrative about the intergenerational experience of the conflict.</p> <p>(2) Ask clarifying questions.</p> <p>(3) Express empathy.</p> <p>(4) Discuss others' perspectives on events in narrative.</p>	<p>(1) When either of the other two processes get stuck.</p> <p>(2) When participants want to deepen their relationships.</p> <p>(3) As preparation for "insider" facilitation.</p>

numbered 762. In July 1948, the Israeli Defense Forces archives<sup>4</sup> say that paramilitary forces conquered and then destroyed the village in the same night. When they attacked, the village was already deserted. Its inhabitants had fled, having heard about soldiers' cruelty in other villages. Most families fled to nearby villages where most of their 6,000 descendants still live.

According to interviews with local Arabs, however, the deserted village was conquered but not destroyed. Ten families returned to their homes and resumed farming. Soon afterward some of the men were arrested and fined by what had by then become the Israeli forces. In 1951, the military expelled those ten families and dynamited the buildings.

In the 1930s, the Jewish administration in Palestine under the British Mandate had documented all land ownership, aiming to gain possession of these lands, preferably by purchase. However, like many Arab citizens of Israel, the Miaaris did not sell land to Jews. Therefore, to take possession of Palestinian land after 1948, the Israeli government had to expel Palestinians and expropriate their land through special laws. The procedure for doing so evolved in several stages.

First, the Arab (or Palestinian) citizens of Israel were declared a security threat. To handle this "threat," a military regime was established in 1950; it lasted until 1966. Martial law was declared in territories populated by Arabs, in accordance with the Defense (Emergency) Regulations of 1945. This law applied primarily to the Galilee in the north, and the "Small Triangle" in the east of Israel. The military regime issued regulations that strictly prohibited movement in and out of the villages, even to the surrounding fields, without a special permit from the regional military governor. Such permits were extremely rare.

Then in 1950, an "absentees' property" law was passed. An absentee, the law declared, was a person who "at any time" between November 29, 1947, and September 1, 1948 "was in any part of the land of Israel outside of the territory of the state of Israel"—in other words, in the West Bank or Gaza Strip or in another Arab state. The property of any such absentee could be expropriated and handed over to the Guardian of Absentees' Property; absentees were not allowed to appeal or receive compensation.

Eventually, one property at a time, all that the Palestinian refugees left behind in 1948 became legally the property of the state of Israel, including the property of Palestinian citizens of Israel known as "present-absentees." These were considered absentees even though they had remained within the state of Israel or returned after a short absence. Thus, the official Israeli version of what happened in Miaar became crucial: their records showed that the village had been destroyed in July 1948, so they validated the claim that Miaar's inhabitants could not return and live there.

## 168 Building Peace: Reflections from the Field

Consequently, the former inhabitants lost their claim over lands they had owned, and those lands automatically became the property of the new state.<sup>5</sup>

Given Miar's strategic situation on a hilltop overlooking a main road, the Israeli military placed its regional headquarters there and abandoned it when fighting ended in the area. The hill remained uninhabited until the 1980s, along with remains of the buildings and the deserted cemetery.

As noted, during the 1980s, the state of Israel feared that the Galilee would become an Arab zone, allowing the Arabs to demand autonomy there. Thus, it established the practice of repopulating the area with small, new Jewish communities, which now spread over 49,504 acres of land still owned by the state. These twenty-nine communities, averaging 100 families each, now belong to a single municipal entity, the Misgav Regional Council, founded to serve as the "watchdog" of these national lands. Also in the late 1980s, the Arab citizens of Israel set up "the Uprooted Committee," to coordinate the activities of local groups in many Palestinian villages, joining together the uprooted people and their descendants in a public campaign to regain what they consider their lost rights, and to return to their villages and rebuild them.

Yaad, one of the Misgav communities, was built at the foot of Miar hill, on what used to be Miar's fields. Founded in 1974 by a group of polytechnic graduates who wanted to create an industrial village, it now has 120 families. Prior to the recent meetings with the former Miar residents, few of Yaad's members had any knowledge of local history. Many had never gone up the hill (ten minutes by foot), let alone knew any of the Arab descendants or even that they lived nearby. Miar was something vague, not even connected to the cemetery up the hill, and certainly not to actual people's lives. Yaad's inhabitants were unaware that Miar's remaining elders carried vivid memories of their lives in the village and of the evacuation, that many visited the village to mentally recapture what once was, or that many, such as Abu Zaki, yearned to return: "A tent will do. That, and to die and be buried there."

To continue the process of moving Jewish families into the Galilee, the Israeli land authority demanded that Yaad expand, from 120 families to 250. This would mean producing a final expansion plan, drawing borders, and having the plan approved by the regional planning committee. The planning process, initiated in the 1990s, led Yaadis to a lively debate over where and how to expand. They chose the hill as part of the expansion, but set no date.

The violent events of October 2000 fast-forwarded this timetable. Many local Jews were genuinely panicked about their future safety and security. Some suddenly saw their Arab neighbors as a threat. The community reacted, planning to build on the hill as soon as possible. By making this

land an integral part of the enlarged Yaad, they hoped to prevent Miaar's former inhabitants and descendants from demanding their expropriated lands. The fence surrounding the community would expand to include and enclose the hill, keeping out the Miaaris.

### Recent History and Present Status

The approval process included a period for filing formal objections and comments. During this period, residents of Yaad heard that nine former Miaari inhabitants and descendants intended to file an objection. Fourteen Yaadis, in sympathy with the Miaaris, contacted them and met to talk. Although they decided to file separate objections to the plan, they made the same demand as the Miaaris: drop plans for twenty-eight of the proposed dwellings, bordering on the village center and cemetery. But the Yaad group based its case on scenic and archeological considerations; they knew that the planning committee would automatically reject an argument based on consideration of or respect for the pain of the Miaaris.

The planning committee accepted this proposal in part, agreeing to drop fourteen proposed houses. Both groups decided to continue pressing to drop the other fourteen dwellings. At that point, the two groups initiated a process with the entire Yaad community, including discussions and tours of the hill led by Miaari elders, who described everyday life in their childhood village. The elders' stories gave life to the stones and turned them into homes brimming with the life of families, with their small joys and sorrows—and facilitated a change of heart among the Yaadis. It became okay to empathize with the Arabs' plight.

In the ensuing negotiations, the Yaadis promised that if the Miaaris withdrew their objection, the Yaadis would do their best to ensure that Yaad reached an informal decision to drop the remaining fourteen houses. They could promise nothing more binding; these communities make such decisions in a democratic voting process. The Miaaris promised, as a token of good faith, that if the Yaadis succeeded, they would then withdraw their objection. *Neither promise was official.* The amazing thing was that both promises were based on trust, which is extremely rare and usually very difficult to achieve in Jewish-Palestinian relations in Israel.

After a patient and careful process of persuasion within the community, Yaad voted unanimously—and unprecedentedly—to drop the second fourteen houses. The reason was *acknowledgment of Palestinian pain.* The following morning, as promised, the Miaaris withdrew their objection. The roadblock to approval was removed.

The decision not to build those twenty-eight houses left Yaad with a new issue: what to do with the space of the old village center and cemetery.

170 Building Peace: Reflections from the Field

The Yaad group offered to create a joint memorial park, but the Miaaris surprised them by objecting vehemently. Their experience was that when Jews promise a park on what had been Arab land, it quickly turns into housing.

### Using the Tamra Model—Insights and Changes

During the whole period of these negotiations, one of us, Chassia Chomsky-Porat, a Jewish graduate of the Tamra trainings and a member of the group within Yaad that objected to the housing on the hill, was in contact with the leader of the Miaar group, urging him to engage in the kind of structured dialogue she had been trained to facilitate. She argued that only after going through this process would both communities be able and ready to create joint proposals and find solutions that would respect both communities. The Miaar leader agreed. Chassia contacted Jabir Asaqla, another trainee and a Palestinian, to co-facilitate the workshop. We two (Chomsky-Porat and Asaqla) then began interviewing potential participants from the two communities.

On September 3, 2004, the dialogue process began with fourteen participants. To date, the process has consisted of what we have called the “Fears, Needs, and Hopes Workshop” (referred to above as the PSW) and four monthly, one-day sessions on October 10, November 11, and December 31 of 2004, and February 11, 2005. Initially we agreed on the September workshop as a single event; but at its end, when we asked “What next?” participants acknowledged that they were not ready yet for action, let alone joint action, and asked us to facilitate an ongoing dialogue process. It would let us get to know each other and each community and culture better and to discuss problematic issues, such as the right of return and the Jewish/Zionist nature of the state. Participants also wanted to share personal and collective narratives and their feelings around them.

We decided, *jointly*, to have four monthly sessions and then think again about “what next.” After each session, based on its developments and atmosphere, the facilitators would decide what to do at the next session. Eventually, we settled on these topics for the four sessions:

- (1) Participants’ narratives
- (2) A tour of Miaar (the remains and abandoned cemetery)
- (3) More participants’ narratives and the hoped-for start of changing attitudes
- (4) The question of what next

### Phase I: The Fears, Needs, and Hopes Workshop

The workshop was very emotional. In turn, the participants discussed their own community's fears, angers, frustrations, needs, and hopes regarding the intercommunal conflict, in front of the other party. The listening party recorded what they understood the speaking party to be saying. Then each group shared what it had heard.

When the Jews heard their words reflected back to them by the Arabs, they suddenly realized that what they had said had racist overtones, such as, "I would be glad to have Arabs living in Yaad. On the other hand, I am not so sure . . . [T]hey would spread . . . their norms of dirt and violence." The Jews had a hard time digesting this. By the end of the workshop, it became clear that *we hear what we want to hear* in the others' words, no matter what they really say. This lets us hold on to our old positions.

This insight applied even to interpreting the instructions. For example, the Jews prepared a random list of fears, needs, and hopes, while the Arabs composed a unified "position paper." The Arabs, perhaps like those in other occupied communities, thought more as a collective, because they shared a collective hope and dream—in this case, to return to Miaar. The Israeli Jews, on the other hand, were already living their materialized dream and thus could afford to think individually. In another example, the Jewish participants were adamant that theirs was the only truth, and that by interpreting the rules differently, the Arabs were *bending the rules*. The result was considerable animosity and mistrust—mixed with a genuine need to hear and be heard. This shared need led to the mutual request to continue the dialogue, with structured and facilitated sessions.

### Second Session: Narratives

At the second session, participants said the workshop had been on their minds the whole month. At that stage, however, each side brought in facts and figures to prove there was only one truth—its own. The Jewish participants acknowledged the harshness of their earlier words, but they still feared the Arabs were hoping for compensation and would not yet budge from their initial positions of righteousness or from "the Zionist ethos" that justified their position. As some said, "This is our home, and we have nowhere else to go." The Arabs felt they were fighting to regain their collective identity and emphasized their feeling that *they* were the owners of the site, that it was *their* home. As one said, "I am the landlord. I have a house, land from which I was uprooted and to which I am deeply attached." Some mixed feelings about identity emerged too: a Jewish woman said that during the workshop she had found herself identifying more with the Arabs than the Jews.

## 172 Building Peace: Reflections from the Field

Then each person shared his or her personal narrative: family history related to the conflict, going back two generations. Everyone was extremely attentive and empathic. Few had had any opportunity to listen to the others' stories and narratives, and to tell their own. Interestingly, no one saw the obvious common denominator: all the narratives were about uprooting. When we, the facilitators, commented on this, no one could explain not being able to see it. We think we know the reason: once a person sees that her story resembles the "other's" story, she may be expected to understand the other's experience, and then face the fact that, to some degree, she had done unto the other what had been done unto her. If they admitted the similarity, the Arabs would be expected to empathize with the Jews' experience of being uprooted—and vice versa. On this topic, two of our participants wished to contribute their insight in their own words:

I, Chassia, with Jabir's agreement, want to explain this further, as we see it. The Arabs see themselves as paying the price of the Holocaust: because of it the Jews immigrated to Israel en masse and "received" a state. The result was the war—Independence or Naqba—which took many lives and deprived the Arabs of homeland, dignity, and property. Those who remained became the oppressed minority, citizens de jure but not de facto.

In addition, we Jews, outside and inside Israel, make the most of our suffering and work very hard at being the ultimate victims. No one in history has gone through what we have; therefore we have the right to commit whatever atrocity and cruelty we want. We are above humanistic norms, so to speak. Who can blame us? Who dares to blame us? We continually nourish the ethos of the Holocaust, so we can squeeze every possible benefit—political and financial—from the world's guilty conscience.

Hence, many Arab citizens of Israel are very bitter and cannot show empathy for the Jewish plight during the Holocaust, or see the similarities. After all, our similar uprootings had totally opposite consequences: we gained a national home, and they lost theirs.

One of our achievements was creating the space and atmosphere for the Arabs to listen to personal narratives, relate to them with empathy, and then expand their empathy to



understand where Israeli behavior stems from. Most important, we encouraged them to feel safe enough to empathize, without feeling forced to validate us.

### Third Session: A Tour of Miaar

On a stormy morning, the entire group toured the hill, the village remains, and the cemetery. The village came to life; the stones had stories to tell. "Today, when I saw how important it was for each one of you to take us to his parents' home," said one Jew, "I realized for the first time how much this is the personal story of each one of you. It was important for us to be there with and for you, and I realize now that we must open up to each other, not be afraid." Although this person had been on the hill at least twice, this insight was new for her.

At this point, the Jews empathized with the *personal* plight of the Arabs. At the same time, they could not (or would not) connect to the *collective* narrative. One said she could sympathize with a Holocaust victim in Germany, but not with the Palestinian victims. Others wanted to focus on the future rather than the past. We felt that, for the Jews, avoiding the past would let them both avoid feeling guilt toward the Arabs and maintain the friendly atmosphere. Still, some Jews said, "Before we turn to the future, we have to attend to the pain of the past."

### Fourth Session: A Personal Narrative and Change

Another Miaar elder joined the group and was asked to tell his story. This time, the familiar process of narrative, empathy, and resonance touched even the most analytical Jewish participant, who had so far insisted on "one and only one" truth. We could feel the beginning of a shift. The elder's narrative evoked familiar family memories of uprooting, traveling, and homelessness. People saw parallels between the two collective narratives. Still, no one could acknowledge the suffering, and the Jews again feared that the Arabs might be expecting compensation.

Next, we asked the participants to share a change that they had undergone, during and because of the dialogue process, using the narrative model: story, empathy, resonance. Interestingly, the two participants who had been at each other's throats during the first workshop, treating each other as mere stereotypes, were the first to speak, and their experiences were amazingly the same. Both realized that one person can create real, substantial change right in his or her own family, neighborhood, village, or municipal entity. As they said, "I realize that I am not always right; that I do not have to be always right; that there are two stories or truths, each

## 174 Building Peace: Reflections from the Field

one just as valid as the other; and that, when we make plans for the future, we must consider the other's past, needs, and plans as well." It was indeed the closure of a circle.

### **Fifth Session: What Next**

Participants made five commitments for further work:

- Keep in touch by maintaining personal contacts and bringing in family members.
- Produce a joint yearly event on the village site to commemorate the Naqba and Jewish Memorial Day.
- Continue the process with an advanced series of dialogue sessions to discuss further difficult issues.
- Arrange meetings with lectures or talks by group members.
- Organize a new Yaad-Miaar dialog group with the two of us as facilitators, thus enlarging the circle of people exposed to the model and its impact.

Three more possibilities were raised at the whole-community level:

- Admit Arab families from Miaar as members of Yaad.
- Establish an Arab-Jewish community based on families from Yaad and Miaar.
- Establish a new Arab community with support from Yaad.

### **Since Then**

In May 2005, a small team met to organize the first joint event or ceremony around the Naqba and the Jewish Memorial Day. Originally, three Jews and three Arabs were invited, but all seven Arab participants arrived. The meeting was warm and friendly. The Arabs said they had missed the group and our meetings. During the meeting, it became clear that they did not yet want a joint event: they had had enough comparisons of victimhood and suffering, with the Jews always gaining the "upper hand" by comparing the Holocaust with the Naqba. They wanted us to just be there for and with them. The group decided that, at this point, we should grieve separately but be merry jointly. The Arabs visited a couple from the Yaad group whose son was very ill; this visit became a larger event, involving the whole group.

We spoke of common hopes that, later on, both groups would feel more secure in the relationship (both as individuals and as groups), and we could create joint memorial ceremonies.

More broadly, the process was filmed for a documentary, is being studied at the Center for Humanistic Education in Kibbutz Lohamei Hageta'ot, and has been discussed in professional coexistence conferences in Israel.

### Reflections of the Israeli Facilitators

Clearly, attitudes changed, and the level of commitment improved, from an initial low. Although the first workshop had been planned to last for two days, we learned by chance halfway through the first day that none of the Arab participants planned to return the second day. So we decided to complete the workshop in one very intense and intensive day.

But *everybody* attended the following sessions, Jews and Arabs alike, even though the process stretched from September 2004 to March 2005, and even though the sessions lasted six hours and were held on Fridays—the Moslem day of prayer/rest. Moreover, to almost every session, the Arabs brought at least one guest, thus enlarging the circle.

As the process began, each side saw only its own story and its own truth, but at the end each acknowledged the others' pain, losses, stories, and truths. They understood they must plan the future together, respecting and considering the other side's fears, needs, and hopes.

Currently, members of both groups are planning to reconstruct Miaar's cemetery. Yaad's landscape architect for the new neighborhood, working with the head of the Miaari group and "El-Aqsa" (an Israeli-Moslem NGO that reconstructs Moslem cemeteries) has redefined the borders of the old cemetery, aided by old photographs. They plan to create a visitors' area where people can pay respect to their dead, and to build a fence, clean the grounds, and renovate tombstones. The landscape architect will present the plan to the Yaad community, then to the local planning committee, for formal approval. Group members and other volunteers will do the reconstruction work, with funding from El-Aqsa. This is the first time in Israel that a Jewish community is willingly incorporating an Arab cemetery within itself. Once Yaad's plan is certified, the intent is to design the park jointly—or at least to ensure that it considers local Arab history.

As a result of the process, one Palestinian group member considered moving with his family to live in the new Yaad neighborhood, not far from his old home. But after discussions with community and committee members, he and his wife decided that it is still too early (his wife and children do not speak Hebrew, for example). He feared that they would always

remain “the other” to some meaningful extent. Still, we see an important result here: Yaad’s absorption committee welcomed them completely naturally, just like any other Israelis.

Finally, the group is very committed to the process and is now working to create more groups so more people can experience the “Fears, Needs, and Hopes” and “Narrative” models and benefit from them, for everyone’s well-being.

### Reflections of the American Trainers

We are thrilled to see our training have such a clear impact. Usually it is difficult, if not impossible, to trace such impacts: many intervening variables and many extraneous inputs obscure the cause and effect of an intervention. In this case, however, we could see precisely what the trainees used from our training, how they modified it to fit the needs of the groups they worked with, and how the community groups responded to the different modules. In fact, the facilitators kept in close contact with us as they implemented the process; we acted as coaches from afar whenever a question arose. For the most part, they did not need us—exactly what trainers hope for! They acted with skill, acute sensitivity, and good judgment, drawing on the models but not being overly constrained by them. The result, as the case study shows, was a transformative experience for the two communities and a national precedent for a nonadversarial way of addressing land claims. We hope the facilitators have the opportunity to put their skills to use in many more communities, because the land issue is critical in Israel.

We were also pleased to see the usefulness and flexibility of developing explicitly discrete modules for intervention. We spent training time introducing each conceptual model as its own module and exploring how they fit together and overlapped; this gave the trainees different arrangements to use in their interventions. We have long recognized the value of flexibility in conflict resolution; each situation requires a nuanced understanding of the conflict dynamics and an equally nuanced response. Until this training sequence, however, we never had the opportunity to develop a viable and appropriate set of options for trainers. Thus, we believe that the Tamra Model is an important addition to conflict resolution methodology.

Finally, the conflict resolution field has yet to fully analyze the training and preparation that the “insider” facilitator needs, and our training process begins that very important discussion. By adding the narrative module explicitly to help with the enormous responsibility and difficulty of that role, we hope to improve the quality of reflective practice for this very important group of colleagues.

Since the Yaad-Miaar process concluded, the FCRNC has continued to meet, to mentor one another and add to their skills. Shamir has raised additional funds, and they plan three more workshops. Our Israeli colleagues tell us people admire the Yaad-Miaar discussions and wish for a similar experience. Israeli Arabs in particular are “astonished and happy” to hear about the process, “especially what the Jewish side went through.”

We are sincerely grateful to Yona Shamir for the opportunity to work with her on these very crucial issues; to Hillel Levine and Shirli Kirschner for assisting with all stages of this training process; and to our wonderful colleagues in Israel, who we hope will continue to build on and expand the learning in this work as they apply the Tamra Model.

## References

- Albeck, Joseph, Sami Adwan, and Dan Bar-On. 2002. Dialogue groups: TRT's guidelines for working through intractable conflicts by personal storytelling. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 8 no. 4:301–22.
- Education Department. 1988. Misgav area during the Independence War. Misgav Regional Council.
- Kelman, Herbert C. 1993. Informal mediation by the scholar/practitioner. In *Mediation in international relations: Multiple approaches to conflict management*, eds. Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffrey Rubin, 64–96. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Kelman, Herbert C. 1997. Social-psychological dimensions of international conflict. In *Peacemaking in international conflict: Methods and techniques*, eds. I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen, 191–238. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace Press.
- Shamir, Yona. 2005. Private communication (September).
- Susskind, Lawrence, and Jeffrey Cruikshank. 1987. *Breaking the impasse: Consensual approaches to resolving public disputes*. New York: Basic Books.

## Notes

1. In track-two processes, nonofficial “third parties” convene off-the-record discussions with influential members of the disputing parties who attend in their personal capacities only. Track-two is meant to complement track-one sessions, in which official representatives convene to negotiate a binding agreement.
2. Kelman provides an excellent summary of this social psychology literature in “Social-Psychological Dimensions of International Conflict” (Kelman 1997, 191–238).

178 Building Peace: Reflections from the Field

3. In addition to the two mentioned below, these documents include “Misgav Area during the Independence War,” issued by the Education Department (1988).
4. Education Department. “Summary Report on the Miaar Action,” file 100, 49/716.
5. Jabir and Chassia make this comment on their historical research. Compared to the “information documented by the Palestinian descendants and foundations dealing with the reconstruction of Naqba events,” they found very poor “documentation . . . in the Israeli archives regarding the events in the region.” They both believe “this shows how little the Israelis thought about the human side of the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians in Israel, versus the immense place it has in the Palestinian memory and identity—both private and collective.”