



Introducing the Kumi Method

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Introduction

Since 2003, a group of academics, practitioners, activists and students in the fields of conflict transformation and community development have been developing a new methodology for social transformation in conflict.

Kumi (roughly translated as “Rise Up” in Hebrew and Arabic) focuses on helping participants to reflect upon their beliefs about themselves and “the other” and eventually negotiate some of their strongly held goals and interests while at the same time enhancing the capacity of the participants to organize more effectively to address the conflict they are experiencing. The new Kumi method effectively addresses the problematic dynamic of over-specialization of many conflict methodologies which deal solely with one or two aspects of a conflict (e.g. removal of stereotypes). Kumi, on the other hand, is specifically designed to bring conflicting parties together for a deeper analysis of the conflict and a deep and meaningful engagement with each other within the context of a robust and sustainable strategy and action plan.

Background

The programme was conceived in 2003, at the end of a week-long meeting of young European, Israeli, and Palestinian activists to discuss the European role in the Israeli Palestinian conflict. Inspired by a shared goal of moving toward sustainable peace and development in the Euro-Mediterranean region, and disillusioned about the effectiveness of civil society efforts to have constructive impact on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the programme is based on three basic insights:

1. The conflict is sustained by institutional and ideological structures on both sides. These structures shape the attitudes and the behaviour of the conflict parties. A sustainable resolution of the conflict must involve the transformation of these structures through robust collective action. Many previous attempts by civil society organizations at participatory “people-to-people” projects in the region have had little impact at best and, at worst, reinforced the current divisions, inequalities and asymmetry of capability. Focusing on joint Israeli -Palestinian activities for peace education and reconciliation was a step too soon.
2. While not neglecting the potential positive long-term impact of joint activity, if properly designed, attention needs to shift to working also in each society separately in order to

enhance the capability for constructive organized collective action, especially on the Palestinian side, and to transform ideology, especially on the Israeli side. Both of these objectives are intended to address the abuse of the power asymmetry between Israelis and Palestinians, which is seen to be the single most significant obstacle to a sustainable resolution of the conflict. The problem is not the asymmetrical quantity of power existent between two states or two societies: Spain and Andorra, Germany and Luxemburg and other asymmetrical “couples” have had very good and productive neighbouring relationships regardless of the asymmetry of power. The problem in this conflict is the abuse of this asymmetry by the powerful part to oppress the powerless and deprive them of many of their rights.

3. Relative power is not a matter of perception but is anchored in objective reality. It is emphasized that the problem is not the power asymmetry itself but rather the lack of institutions and ideology which prevent or at least contain its abusive use. Changing this objective reality is a long-term process of social change. But meanwhile, targeted interventions can help to ameliorate the asymmetry of power in an intractable conflict such as the Israeli -Palestinian one. On the Palestinian side, this could be done by enhancing Palestinian capability to renewing the basic functionality at the national societal level, greatly disrupted by the policies of occupation, while at the same time forging new alliances, internally and with powerful external actors that aim at a sustainable resolution of the conflict. On the Israeli side, ideological transformation is intended to change perception about how the Israeli power advantage could be more morally utilized in ways which do not increase animosity through innovating new policies towards the Palestinians and the region that can better achieve the long-term security needs of society.

Previous Israeli-Palestinian people-centred interventions usually aimed only at the ‘usual suspects’ and when attempts were made to reach those so far excluded they were solely with the aim of shifting their thinking towards that of the ‘usual suspects’. No genuine attempt to modify the paradigm in accordance with their needs was made. Furthermore, existing interventions have not created sufficient linkages between levels of analysis (e.g. structural vs. actor-oriented approaches) and practice (e.g. the famous micro-macro gap). Finally, no theoretical breakthroughs have been made, and no critical mass has been formed.

History

Phase I (2003-2005) saw further research to enable the idea of the approach to take a more tangible shape. During this time the programme was conceived as a 10-year programme (2003-2013). The aim is to challenge the structures and cultures sustaining the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from below in order to transform it from a destructive force into a catalyst for political reform and socio-economic development in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Phase II (2005-2008) saw the idea taken to a number of international and national organizations which now form an informal coalition supporting the various projects of this wide-ranging programme. At the same time, research got underway in order to ensure that action is guided by a rigorous and systematic understanding of reality. The key part of this research was a project hosted by the Institute of Development and Peace at the University of Duisburg-Essen and funded through a two-year grant from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) (2005-2007). It focused on analyzing previous Israeli-Palestinian people-to-people projects from a conflict transformation perspective as well as exploring the network structure of the Israeli-Palestinian peace camp.

Development of the Method

One of the initial findings of this research project, pending the publication of its final conclusions, was the identification of a crucial need to pay more attention to methodology, hence the collaboration to create a new set of tools for social transformation in conflict. The story of creating this new set of tools started in November 2006 in a technical meeting held outside Jerusalem. It brought together academics and practitioners to compare and contrast their approaches. During this meeting, and another one held in April 2007 in Germany (funded by the Heinrich Boell Foundation and USIP), the decision was made to attempt a synthesis of three tools: ARIA, developed by Jay Rothman for use in identity based conflicts; TRANSCEND, developed by Johan Galtung and his colleagues as an integrative approach to conflict analysis and creative conflict engagement; and the Technology of Participation (ToP®), developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs for the purpose of facilitating organizational and community development.

In June 2007 experts representing these three traditions met for another week to create a synthesis of their tools. During this meeting, and via online communication over the following year, a toolkit for Social Transformation in Conflict started to emerge and was tested for the first time in September 2008 with a group of students and graduates from the Department of Psychology at the University of Hamburg, joined by a number of facilitators, academics and community development experts from Israel, Palestine, Europe and the USA as participants, observers and evaluators.

Phase III (2008-2010) continued the development and sought to demonstrate the effectiveness of the new method. This occurred through several facilitator training sessions in Israel and Palestine (West Bank) and multiple workshops designed not only to assist groups in conflict, but to further refine the method.

First a group of 14 Israeli, Palestinian and European facilitators were trained on the new method. These new Kumi practitioners co-facilitated 14 workshops, beginning as supporting facilitators to the method experts and eventually running the workshops on their own with minimal supervision.

Piloting the Method

Four workshops were conducted with Israeli and Palestinian organisations that were already working together. These workshops focused on enhancing the capability of the existing Israeli and Palestinian coalitions to mobilize active constituencies on both sides of the conflict line to improve their influence on challenging the structures and cultures sustaining the conflict.

Another four workshops were held with Palestinians only to demonstrate the effectiveness of the new method in enhancing the capability of Palestinian organizations and local communities to: overcome internal fragmentation; to provide an enabling environment for empowered leaders to emerge; to engage in autonomous development aimed at satisfying the basic human needs of Palestinian society; and to organize more effectively to challenge the occupation.

Four other workshops were held with Israeli participants. The objective on this intra-Israeli track was to demonstrate the effectiveness of the new method to facilitate the emergence of coalitions capable of challenging the Israeli security discourse. It was assumed that the current state of the Israeli security discourse represents a major impediment to movement toward ending the conflict.

Another two workshops aimed at bringing together Israelis and Palestinians from groups that are more hard-lined to discuss the issue of self-determination. One workshop brought moderate Palestinians and Israelis from the right-wing and the second workshop brought Palestinian refugees together with moderate Israelis. In both workshops they were joined by European activists.

The objective of these workshops was to test the capacity of the new methodological synthesis to engage these groups in a critical dialogue, amongst each other and with a third party (Europeans). The aim was to help them to reflect and to differentiate between what is legitimate and what is not legitimate in their goals and, building on this, to redefine these goals in legitimate ways in order for them to achieve their needs. It is important here to emphasize that the main focus was to help the participants realize that while needs are always legitimate, specific goals and means to achieve these needs may be illegitimate and, over the long run, undermine the capacity to achieve the legitimate goals.

Phase IV (2010-2013), based on the findings of a major evaluation of Phase III of the project, and once the design of the new method has been finalized, this model of STiC (Social Transformation in Conflict) will be replicated on a wider scale to empower a critical mass in both societies to take effective steps towards peace, justice and development in Israel and Palestine, in the context of the wider Euro-Mediterranean region. Furthermore, the project is beginning to use the developed Kumi method outside the Middle East during Phase IV.

Main Partners (Phases II and III)

The Heinrich Böll Foundation <http://www.boell.de/>

The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH) www.miftah.org

The Young Israeli Forum for Cooperation (YIFC) www.yifc.org.il

TRANSFORM The Interdisciplinary Centre for Conflict Analysis, Political Development and World Society Research <http://www.transform-centre.org/>

Method Contributors

The ARIA Group www.aria

Institute of Integrative Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding (IICP) www.iicp.org.at

Institute of Cultural Affairs www.ica-uk.org.uk www.ica-international.org

Funding Organisations

EU Partnership for Peace Programme

Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Germany

Institute for Foreign Relations, Zivik Programme, Germany

Anna Lindh Foundation

United States Institute of Peace (USIP)

What is Kumi?

Kumi is a values-based, action-oriented method for social transformation in conflict. It can be defined as a method for making change happen in accordance with the collective will of a group. The desired change takes place on a number of interconnected levels: a *new understanding* of reality is formed, a *new awareness* of self and other is experienced and a *new behaviour* follows as a result which is intended to *transform*, through word and deed, the structures (i.e. ideologies, institutions, policies, programmes, operative orders, administrative regulations, etc.) that are generating conflict and turn them into structures for attaining and sustaining equitable development and just peace.

Kumi is a *social technology* which combines and integrates terms and concepts from *philosophy*, *social psychology*, *peace studies* and *political economy*. Philosophy informs our ethical orientation and understanding of the world. Social psychology informs our work with the people and provides us with the tools for facilitating the emergence of the new awareness/understanding. Political economy guides our positive analysis of reality. Peace studies provides us with the terms that describe the multi-layered condition of violent conflict to be transformed and the condition of peace with equity that is intended to replace it on the long run.

This method modifies the Participatory Strategic Planning (PSP) process developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs over the last four decades by integrating it with components from two other methods: ARIA, developed by Jay Rothman to engage primarily with identity-based conflicts; and TRANSCEND, an integrative analytical approach to conflict engagement developed by Johan Galtung and currently being codified by, among others, Wilfried Graf and Gudrun Kramer from the Institute of Integrative Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding (IICP).

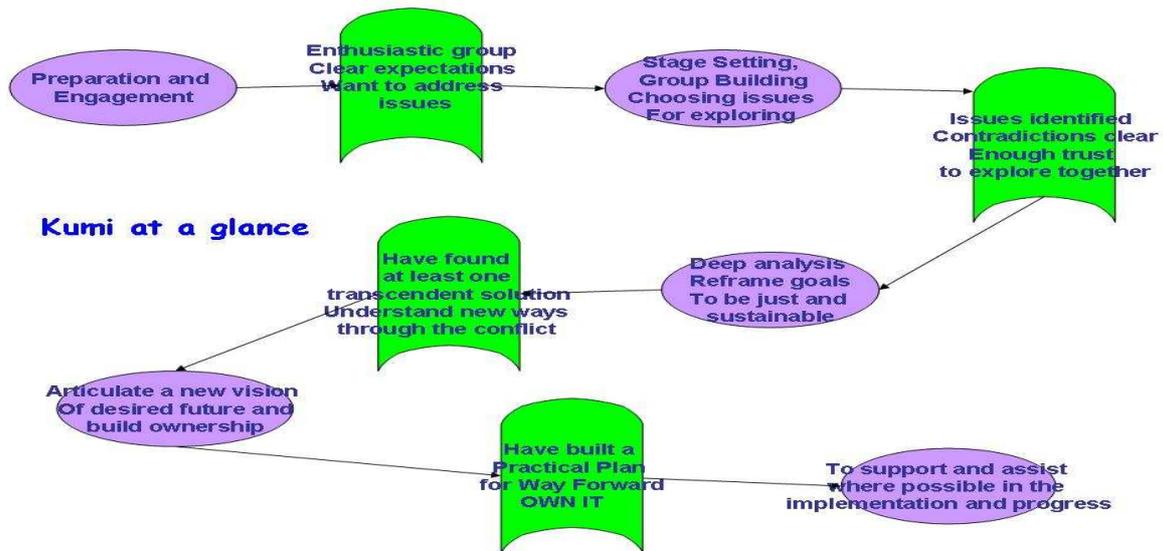
The Kumi Process

The final product, i.e. Kumi, is not a simple cut-and-paste combination of these three approaches but is intended to be a fourth approach in which the building blocks drawn from the three approaches are arranged according to a unique logic which creates a new method altogether. Kumi has its own flow as a method and has slowly woven around itself an individual framework of values, underlying norms, principles, assumptions, hypotheses, aims, a culture of practice and an intentional, self-regulating community of practitioners.

Kumi (roughly translated from both Hebrew and Arabic as ‘rise-up’) consists of five phases, including project exploration and design, a multiple stage intensive workshop, and implementation (including work with the Kumi network). Each phase is designed to build on the one before it, although the exact order of some of the steps (especially those within the workshop) may vary depending on the needs of each particular group.

The five phases are:

- 1) Initial Contact, Exploration and Project Design
- 2) Stage Setting, Group Building and Choosing the Contradictions
- 3) Deep Conflict Engagement
- 4) Participatory Strategic Planning
- 5) Supporting Implementation and Kumi Network Inclusion



Each phase, each session of the workshop, and the method as a whole, is designed to achieve two types of objectives:

- A rational objective, which refers to the resolve of the group and its evolution towards a collective decision to act in order to change the status-quo
- An experiential objective, which refers to the cognitive and emotional change on the level of individual participants and the evolution of their identification of one another and their cohesion as a group.

The Kumi Phases

Phase	Rational Goal	Experiential Goal	Steps / Sessions
Initial Contact, Exploration, and Project Design	To develop sufficient data and acquaintance among participants, facilitators, project and method and to design the project and workshop	To nurture a mutual sense of curiosity, commitment and readiness to engage in a Kumi Project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial contact - Interviews (with leaders) - Online survey - Preparatory workshops
Doorway #1: From Exploration and Design to Workshop			
Group, leaders and facilitators detail clear expectations about their Kumi engagement and show enthusiasm for the next phases.			
Stage setting, Group building, Choosing contradictions	To articulate the substantial issues (and conflicts) we must work on	Have sufficient trust in the whole group that enables them to move to deep exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opening session - Focus - Context check - Goals - Goal contradictions
Doorway #2: From Contradictions to Analysis			
Substantial "stuff" has been identified: 1-9 substantial issues to explore			
Deep Conflict Engagement: Conflict Analysis, Antagonism and Resonance, Transcendence	To undergo a deep analysis of our conflicts and ourselves in an attempt to reframe conflicted goals and develop sustainable and just solutions.	To build trust and group empathy. Participants feel exhausted, yet appreciative of the deeper level of resonance they have.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Antagonism - Resonance - Conflict analysis - Deep structure - Deep culture - Transcendence
Doorway #3: From Transcendence to Vision			
At least one transcendent solution, giving us a new way to address the conflict			
Participatory Strategic Planning	To have participants articulate a vision and plan to achieve their focus based on the new understanding developed in Phase Three.	To develop a deeper level of ownership, creativity and engagement, and confidence of the validity of this experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practical vision based on new understanding - Obstacles - Strategic directions - First year detailed plan - Re-entry
Doorway #4: From Workshop to Implementation and Follow Up			
Set of planned actions with names to move ahead and first steps			
Supporting Implementation and Kumi Network Inclusion	To assure the group is committed to action, to assist as much as possible in its implementation, and to track the progress of the plan.	To feel supported, encouraged and enabled to do the work they have laid out for themselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Re-entry - Kumi Network Communication - Implementation and Monitoring

Kumi is the main tool in a wider “Social Transformation in Conflict” (STiC) approach that includes:

1. Guidance on facilitators’ competences as leaders and social entrepreneurs
2. Notes on effective organization development and network weaving
3. A pedagogic component which takes the participants through a curriculum of study about the structural, cultural and behavioural dimensions of conflict, its mechanisms, and some creative rules of thumb for engaging it. This pedagogical component is tailored to the specific needs of the context in which STiC is applied.