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## **Building Peace from Scratch**

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A peace-building process is based on activity, acceptance, understanding of political reality, communication, and empowerment. Acceptance means accepting everybody as he or she is and let each know it. This is at the heart of peace work, it is the prerequisite for effective communication, and includes accepting other even in cases of severe disagreement. Peace work requires both an understanding of political reality and the expression of one's own political opinion. Acceptance and the expression of political opinion are not at variance but complementary. Combining acceptance and understanding of the political context provides hope for real communication in which messages are both sent and received, with appreciation and interest. Empowerment implies overcoming of the feeling of powerlessness, often present in conflict by all sides and in all social groups. It includes recovery of self-respect and respect for others. Education and economic independence are important facets of the empowerment concept. Essential principles of peace-building process are responsibility, solidarity, cooperation, and nonviolence. Responsibility encompasses caring for human rights, the suffering of others, and for consequences of our own intended and unintended actions. Solidarity allows learning through listening and understanding. Even with the best intentions on both sides, cooperation may be difficult and painful. Nonviolence is a way of life.

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