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## Overview

Founded in 2001 by Washington natives Brendan and Sean Tuohey, PeacePlayers International (PPI) uses basketball to unite, educate and inspire young people in divided communities worldwide. Based on the premise that children who play together can learn how to live together, PPI currently operates programs in South Africa, Northern Ireland, Israel and the West Bank, and Cyprus that provide children from groups in long-standing conflict the opportunity to form deep, personal relationships that transcend communal divisions. Through sustained, structured interaction, PPI helps these young people build new, shared identities through competition and teamwork.

All of PPI's programs include an element of formal peace and life skills education, anchored by a unique basketball-based peacebuilding curriculum developed in partnership with the Arbinger Institute. This innovative curriculum uses a combination of fun, on-court activities and guided discussion to teach children proven methods of overcoming personal and societal conflict. Implemented by local coaches who double as mentors, PPI's curriculum helps ensure that the gains made by children on the basketball court extend far beyond it.

On the macro level, PPI is committed to helping transform communities, not just individuals. For example, when PPI partnered with the Jerusalem Municipality's Girls Basketball League in 2007, its involvement marked the first time that Arab girls, previously excluded due to the structure of the Israeli school system, could participate. By building trust within both the Arab and Jewish communities as a neutral party, PPI created an unprecedented opportunity for collaboration. The Jerusalem Municipality viewed the partnership so positively that it invited additional mixed teams to participate in 2009.

## Program Rationale

Over 1 billion children worldwide live in regions affected by violent conflict, typically bearing the worst of its costs. According to a Harvard University report, today's wars "seek to bring the battle more immediately, more systematically, and more massively" to civilians.<sup>1</sup> Food supplies are decimated or captured. Hospitals are destroyed or overwhelmed. Disease and crime increase precipitously. Children, the most vulnerable part of any population, are disproportionately harmed: in the recent conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, most deaths resulted not from conflict, but from "infectious diseases, malnutrition and neonatal/pregnancy-related conditions."<sup>2</sup> Children, 19% of the population, accounted for 47% of conflict-related deaths.

Nor is conflict easily solved by political agreement. The typical civil war faces a greater than 40% chance of returning to conflict within five years, and countries remain at an extremely high-risk of

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<sup>1</sup> Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research. *Transnationality, War and the Law: A report on a roundtable on the transformation of warfare, international law, and the role of transnational armed groups*. Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, April 2006, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> International Rescue Committee. *Mortality in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: An Ongoing Crisis*. International Rescue Committee, New York, NY, 2007. Pg. iii

reverting to conflict even a decade later.<sup>3</sup> Most civil wars do not start, they *restart*, as the rifts caused by initial violence create durable pressures for its resumption.

In the case of communal conflicts, these pressures most often manifest themselves through social segregation, as communities draw together in defense and grow suspicious of outsiders. In some cases, children from different communities may live literally across the road from one another, but still lack substantive opportunities for positive interaction: in Northern Ireland today, more than ten years after a political peace, 95% of schools are segregated by religion and “peace walls” still snake throughout Belfast, dividing Protestant and Catholic communities. In such an atmosphere, young people learn about each other through the media, myths and stereotypes, producing adults steeped in fear, mistrust, and hostility. Resources that could support education and development are re-routed to security; opportunities for collaboration yield further polarization; and the status quo remains, at best, a tenuous peace. The reinstitution of mutual respect and trust at the grassroots level is essential for communities in conflict to move beyond mere truce to a new atmosphere of positive cooperation.

## Program Locations

### South Africa (Founded: 2001)

Young people in South Africa are twice as likely to contract HIV as those in the rest of the world, and over 50% will do so before turning 24. Recent estimates by the Actuarial Society of South Africa predict that adult life expectancy in KwaZulu-Natal, the province where PPI – South Africa is based, will drop from 53 years in 1996 to 37 years in 2010 as a result of HIV/AIDS. In response, PPI – South Africa (PPI – SA) has augmented PPI’s core mission of bridging divides with a unique life skills curriculum focused on HIV prevention and risk-reduction, developed in partnership with the Harvard School of Public Health’s Centre for the Support of Peer Education. Conversational, interactive lessons led by trained coaches build trust and facilitate honest dialogue on topics including HIV/AIDS prevention, gender roles, drug and alcohol awareness, diversity, and personal development. Since 2001, PPI – SA has worked with over 25,000 children and trained more than 200 young adults as coaches and mentors.

### Northern Ireland (Founded: 2002)

Despite the existence of a formal peace agreement between Catholics and Protestants since 1998, less than 5% of educational bodies in Northern Ireland are integrated. Though incidents are sharply down from the days of “The Troubles”, from 2008 to 2009 the Police Service of Northern Ireland recorded over 1,800 sectarian or racist crimes. Worryingly, the summer of 2010 has seen a resurgence in violence, beginning with riots during “Marching Days” in July and culminating in a “spate of attacks more frequent and reckless than before” by dissident factions in August.<sup>4</sup> PPI – Northern Ireland uses basketball, a culturally neutral sport in the region, to help Catholics and Protestants alike build a shared future for their children. Working in partnership with schools and community centres, PPI – NI brings together children from all backgrounds to build mutual understanding, forge new friendships and adjust to the complexities of growing up in a post-conflict

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<sup>3</sup> Collier, Paul, Anke Hoeffler and Mans Soderbom. “Post-Conflict Risks”. *Journal of Peace Research* [Forthcoming]. Available at <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~econpco/research/conflict.htm>

<sup>4</sup> *The Economist*. “Northern Ireland: The bombs of August.” August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Available at: [http://www.economist.com/node/16847842?story\\_id=16847842](http://www.economist.com/node/16847842?story_id=16847842).

society. Since 2002, PPI – NI has worked with over 17,000 children and trained more than 35 young adults as coaches and mentors.

### **Middle East (Founded: 2005)**

In Israel and the West Bank, deep social divides have undermined generations of peacemaking efforts. Even where Arab and Jewish communities live side-by-side, life is starkly segregated, leaving most in both communities to rely on exaggerated misinformation for their knowledge about the “other” side. PPI – Middle East (PPI – ME) uses basketball to integrate Israeli Jewish, Israeli Arab, and Palestinian children, using the neutral medium of sport to build the trust necessary for sustainable peace. In both Jewish and Arab communities, PPI – ME works with diverse populations and promotes full gender equality. PPI – ME also operates a single-identity capacity-building program in the West Bank that provides a recreational and educational outlet for underprivileged children and additional training opportunities for coaches. Since 2005, PPI – ME has worked with over 5,500 children and trained more than 80 young adults as coaches and mentors.

### **Cyprus (Founded: 2006)**

Since the end of an inter-ethnic war in 1974, Greek and Turkish communities on this small island in the Mediterranean have been physically separated by a UN-administered "Green Zone" stretching from one side of the island to the other. Reconciliation efforts have continually stalled. The Greek Cypriot community rejected a UN-brokered peace plan in 2004; the Turkish Cypriot community elected a staunchly nationalist President in April 2010. Launched with a grant from the United Nations Development Programme in 2007, PPI – Cyprus (PPI – CY), has engaged schools and clubs from both sides of the island to enable Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot boys and girls to play together and build friendships that overcome generations of intolerance and offer many of its participants their first opportunity to interact with peers from the other side of the divide. Since 2007, PPI – CY has worked with over 500 children and trained more than 20 young adults as coaches and mentors.

## **Program Design**

### **The “Twinned Basketball Clubs”**

PPI’s programs revolve around “Twinned Basketball Clubs”, networks of integrated youth basketball teams that bring children together from opposite sides of deeply rooted conflicts for a combination of basketball and peace education. Though exact ages and program structures vary by location, in general, PPI’s players are between 8 and 16 years old, recruited through partnerships with local schools and community centers. Initial activities typically occur in a “single-identity” context; that is, with participants hailing from the *same* cultural background, as PPI prepares players and families for what is in many cases a child’s first bicomunal experience. After a period of single-identity basketball practice and an introduction to PPI’s peacebuilding curriculum, each team will then begin monthly “twinings” with a corresponding team from a different community (i.e., in the Middle East, Arab children will “twin” with Jewish children; in Northern Ireland, Protestant children will twin with Catholic children, and so on). Featuring fully integrated basketball games and activities and further instruction in PPI’s peacebuilding curriculum, twinings provide a unique opportunity for children from cultures that rarely meet to collaborate on the court and build mutual trust, respect and friendship.

Over time, the frequency of twinning events increases, as players and their families become more and more accustomed to integration. In many cases, teams will twin as often as once each week, and some teams have even merged to form one fully coherent entity. One such team in Israel, for example, consisting of girls from the Arab neighborhood of Beit Safafa and the Jewish neighborhood of Katamon, has just merged into one team after three years of steadily deepening twinning work. In October, they will begin competing in Israel's National Youth League, the highest level of youth basketball in the country, where they will be the first *ever* team with players from both East and West Jerusalem.

### **PPI's Peacebuilding Curriculum**

All of PPI's activities are supported by its unique peacebuilding curriculum, developed in partnership with the Arbinger Institute, a worldwide center for the study of conflict transformation, and the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, a charitable foundation supporting more than 50 sport-for-good projects worldwide. The curriculum uses interactive activities and guided discussions to teach participants ways to overcome inter-personal conflict in a manner that fully respects the humanity of others, emphasizing each individual's power to influence the complete web of relationships that surround them. For example, one game, called "King of the Ring" forces players to compete against each other in increasingly smaller spaces. At its conclusion, coaches lead a guided discussion of how patterns of conflict can be limiting, leading to feelings of being "trapped," and how we can move beyond such feelings. In the supportive atmosphere of an integrated team, children can practice the curriculum's application first with their teammates under the supervision of their coaches, and then with their family, friends and community.

### **Leadership Development**

PPI's teams are led by specially trained coaches drawn from the local community, who act as mentors and examples for their children. At the age of 16, participants themselves can begin training to become coaches and community leaders in PPI's "Leadership Development Program", where they continue bicommunal activities, assist coaches and staff, mentor younger participants and organize community service projects. This cyclical nature is deliberate: young people grow with the program, earning the skills and knowledge to help others grow in turn. Many of PPI's coaches and staff-members are now graduates of its Leadership Development Program, a trend that will continue as the organization matures.

### **Recognition, Awards and Investment**

PPI has received numerous honors and awards, as well as frequent local, national and international press coverage. Recent highlights include the following:

- *The Washington Post* featured PPI for the second time in the organization's history on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The article highlighted PPI's cultivation of local leadership abroad.
- In July 2010, adidas, a worldwide leader in sports apparel and marketing, renewed its partnership with PPI through 2015, including an unrestricted investment of €200,000 per year, plus equipment and materials.
- The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) joined PPI in a three-year, \$1,640,000 partnership in July 2010 to support PPI's work in the Middle East, with USAID supporting half of all costs for the life of the project.

- In June 2010, PPI Executive Director Brendan Tuohey was named a Term Member of the Council on Foreign Relations.
- PPI is in the second year of a three-year, €300,000 partnership with the Laureus Sports for Good Foundation to develop a sport-for-peacebuilding toolkit to train other organizations in PPI's methods.
- In May 2010, PPI's project in Cyprus was named to the shortlist for a Beyond Sport Award for "Best Sport for Conflict Resolution" project. Award winners will be announced September 28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>, 2010.
- In January 2010, Reid Cherner spotlighted PeacePlayers International in *USA Today* and on his blog, "Game On".
- Arn Tellem, President of the Wasserman Media Group, a PPI Board Member, and the second-most influential agent in sports business according to *Street & Smith's SportsBusiness Journal*, wrote an article about PPI titled "Peace of My Heart" for *The Huffington Post*.
- Best-selling author and negotiator Ron Shapiro, PPI's Chairman *Emeritus*, singled out PPI as his favorite "Innovative Idea" in an interview with *Street & Smith's SportsBusiness Journal* in December 2009.
- PPI co-founders Brendan and Sean Tuohey received the Laureus Sport for Good Award, given to individuals who make a contribution to the world beyond sports, at the 2008 Laureus World Sports Awards.
- Two PPI Board Members from Northern Ireland received the Arthur Ashe Courage Award at the 2007 ESPY Awards in a nationally televised ceremony.
- Former President Bill Clinton profiled PPI in his book *Giving: How Each of Us Can Change the World*. President Clinton personally recognized PPI co-founder Brendan Tuohey at the press conference announcing the book.
- Former President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush visited PPI's program in Northern Ireland in 2008. The President took part in multiple drills and activities with PPI – NI's participants.
- PPI's work has also been highlighted in several other national and international news outlets, including *The Today Show*, *Sports Illustrated*, the BBC, *The Chicago Tribune*, CNN, Reuters, *The Washington Post*, *Reader's Digest*, *Parade*, *CBS Sunday Morning*, and many more.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

PPI is committed to rigorously monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of its programs, both with regard to individual participants and the overall societies where it works. In 2010, PPI began to implement a new, organization-wide data capturing and monitoring and evaluation system in partnership with Accenture and the Arbinger Institute, which will enable it to thoroughly track attitude change 1) before and after a year's programming and 2) longitudinally as participants progress through the program into adults.

Some of the key questions that PPI seeks to address include:

1. What are the outputs of the program, including numbers of children served, coaches trained, and participants retained each year? Each site comprehensively tracks data to monitor these totals.
2. Are the perceptions of participants changing? PPI has developed a set of pre- and post-intervention surveys in partnership with the Arlinger Institute to assess the impact of its programs.
3. Are our coaches having a positive, meaningful impact on the children with whom they work? Short-term assessment methods include feedback from participants, teachers, parents and other community groups and leaders. Long-term outcomes are determined by the tracking of our coaches and participants over several years.
4. Are the participants and coaches becoming advocates for tolerance and a shared future? The primary strategy to assess this outcome will be through the monitoring of participants over a longitudinal period.
5. Are programs being used as a model for other cross-community initiatives? PPI actively engages with the broader peacebuilding community and civil society sector in each of its sites to monitor the field's development.

PPI also regularly engages independent evaluators to assess the overall impact of its activities from a technically sophisticated and impartial perspective. Their conclusions thus far include the following (Full copies of all independent evaluations of PPI are available on request):

*South Africa: Centre for Development Support, University of the Free State (2005)*

- “Children exposed to [PPI] expressed less racial stereotypes and less racism [than the control]. Larger proportions of children were also in favor of racial integration and interracial socialization.”
- PPI “contributed noticeably in breaking down the racial divide and racial stereotypes” among children from different population groups.

*Middle East: Dr. Ephraim Tabory and Dr. Ruth Gaunt, Bar Ilan University (2007)*

- Both Arabs and Jews reported “more positive attitudes” and “attributed greater competence” to the out-group.
- “Both Arabs and Jews reported greater willingness for contact with the out-group.”

*Northern Ireland – Institute for Conflict Research (2008)*

- “The PPI-NI primary school twinning programme has been successful in meeting its original aims and objectives.”
- PPI – NI “has been successful in providing the opportunity for a significant number of young people from the two main communities in Northern Ireland to play and learn together in a fun, safe and secure environment...The programme appeared to encourage the development of positive relationships...as well as increasing [participants'] levels of tolerance of one another.”

*Cyprus – Noverna Consulting and Research (2010)*

- PPI is “having an unmistakable impact on bridging divides and helping children overcome their mental barriers for the other community.”
- “Children are gradually becoming ‘change agents’ and are trying to influence the perceptions of other children, their elders and their communities.”

## **Sustainability**

In September 2008, PPI convened a Board-level Committee to develop a Strategic Plan that would guide the organization through 2012, the second comprehensive Strategic Plan in the organization’s history. The Committee collected and analyzed feedback from Board members, volunteers, funders and staff representing each of PPI’s locations to create a document outlining a prudent route for PPI from entrepreneurial start-up to sustainable institution.

In brief, the plan identified the following four goals as urgent strategic priorities for PPI in the next three years:

- Further cultivating the independence and local leadership of each of PPI’s existing sites;
- Continuing to implementing PPI’s new peacebuilding curriculum worldwide;
- Launching a technical assistance initiative that will increase PPI’s impact exponentially; and
- Establishing PPI as a worldwide leader in the measurement, evaluation and strategic enhancement of peacebuilding and sport-for-change interventions.

Among the early achievements of this Strategic Plan has been a substantial increase in the amount of funds secured locally for all of PPI’s programs. While historically the organization’s budget has been financed almost entirely by funds raised through PPI’s Washington, DC, headquarters, in its most recent fiscal year (ending July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010), PPI – Northern Ireland secured the majority of its budget from local sources and PPI – Middle East secured a landmark grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development in a process led by local staff. PPI – Cyprus and PPI – South Africa, too, have begun to generate significant funds locally, helping facilitate PPI’s full transition to local leadership.

This diversified revenue structure is further complemented by PPI’s ongoing technical assistance initiative, an extension of its curriculum development activities with the Arbinger Institute and the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation. With a grant of €100,000 from the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, PPI is adapting its curriculum into a comprehensive training program that will introduce other organizations to PPI’s methods. While a primary goal of this initiative is to provide other nonprofit organizations a cost effective means of enhancing impact, PPI also expects this added capability to offer an opportunity for earned revenue, as PPI partners with government bodies, corporations and other international actors to improve their effectiveness in divided communities. PPI has already held a successful pilot training event with organizations from Morocco, Bulgaria and the Republic of Ireland hosted by its program in Cyprus in August 2010, and is currently completing a full business plan for this initiative.