

Basic Concept

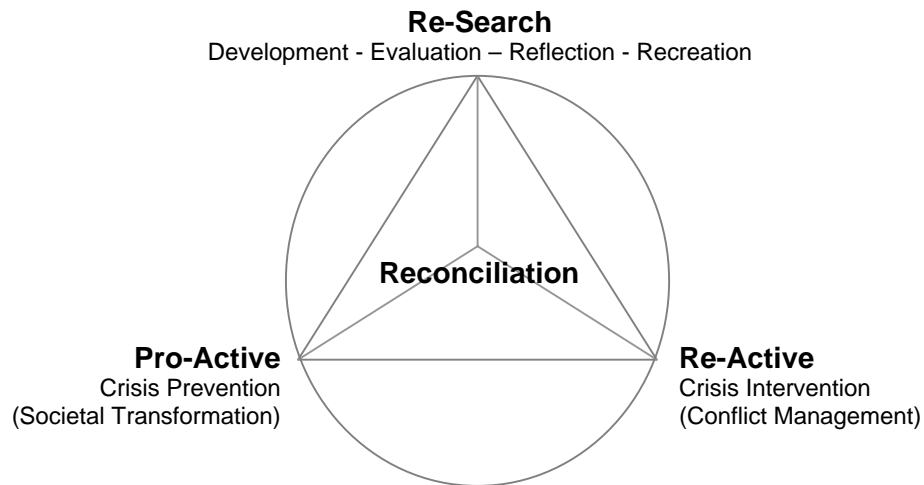
NIALL O'BRIEN CENTER

for Active Nonviolence, Reconciliation and Community Futures

The Niall O'Brien Center is a peace center of the Philippine section of the peace movement Pax Christi. It is located in the province capital of Bacolod City on the island Negros, approximately one hour flight South of Manila.

The peace center was named in honor of the late Father Niall O'Brien, the long-time chaplain of Pax Christi Pilipinas, who worked for justice, nonviolence and reconciliation in Negros for more than 30 years. By the end of 2004, Pax Christi could buy his house, a well-known meeting point of local peace initiatives. It was extended to become a place for encounter and mutual learnings.

As a “service center” of Pax Christi, the Niall O'Brien Center follows the guiding idea of reconciliation and the (re-) building of relationships. After strategies of conflict resolution failed to bring any solutions to the numerous armed and often violent hostilities, members of the peace movement searched for other opportunities and strategies for peace processes on the interpersonal level.



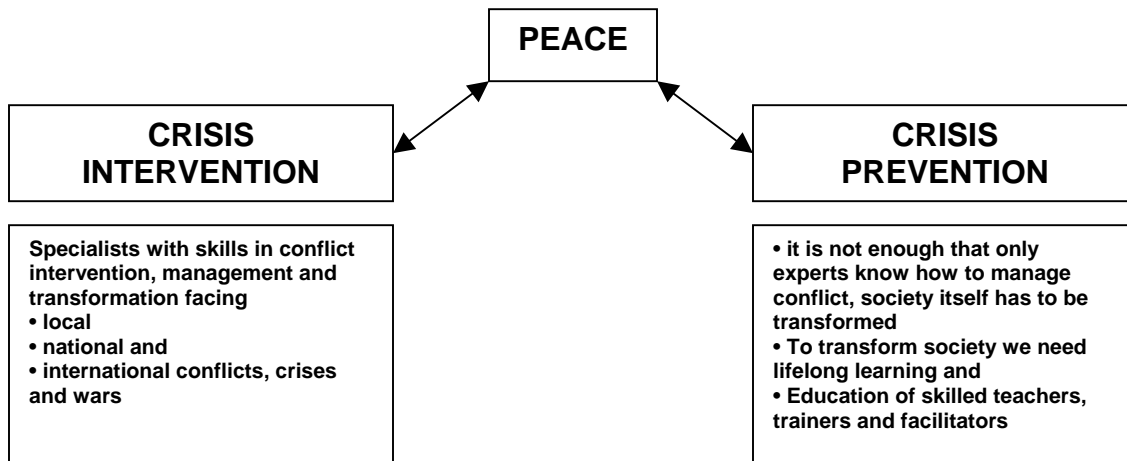
Picture 1: Triangle of reconciliation work

The Niall O'Brien Center focuses especially on crisis prevention – i.e. the preparation for a nonviolent handling of potentially escalating conflicts. However, the starting points of reconciliation work are the current conflicts. Through systematic analysis and approach, we identify specific peace programs. Experiences with these methods will be analyzed, evaluated and used for further projects and trainings. In all activities it is the mutual goal to make a contribution to the reconciliation of conflict parties.

As regard contents, the center follows two basic approaches:

- Crisis Intervention and
- Crisis Prevention.

While crisis intervention responds to acute problem areas and situations, crisis prevention is more pro-active and should lead in general to a more nonviolent and creative handling of conflict. Therefore we need a lifelong mutual learning.



Picture 2: Sectors of peace work, Niall O'Brien Center

As a center for training, the Niall O'Brien Center offers programs and projects in both sectors, which are partially initiated and/or supported by Pax Christi groups or partner organizations:

For the sector "Crisis Prevention" that means:

- The Pax Christi group "Parenting for Peace and Justice" focuses on nonviolent parenting,
- Pilot projects at schools e.g. peace camps,
- Courses in "Creative Conflict Transformation" for college students of the University of St. La Salle in Bacolod City,
- Implementation and coordination of the postgraduate program "Master of Arts in Conflict and Reconciliation Studies" in cooperation with the University of St. La Salle in Bacolod City,
- The "Peace and Development Educators Program", training program for peace facilitators and trainers from various professional backgrounds.

While all mentioned programs and projects aim to train teachers, trainers and facilitators, the focus of crisis intervention is more on the individual preparation for the work in ongoing conflicts. Here, the center offers trainings in the fields of "Peace Journalism", "Conflict Management in the Business Sector", "Mediation" and "Challenges for Health Professionals in Conflict". Pax Christi groups like

HELP for PEACE (Health Professionals for Peace) und EcoPax (Environmentalists for Peace) and partner organizations like PECOJON (the Peace and Conflict Journalism Network) support those trainings through their expertise and specific backgrounds. In cooperation with PECOJON and the peace movement, an alternative intelligence service, the “Peace Agents”, are going to address the problems of corruption, oppression and human rights violations.

A matter of particular interest is the unorthodox cooperation with instructors of the Kyokan Dojo, Aikido Philippines. Aikido is a Japanese martial art and can be understood as holistic concept of nonviolent action; it is the way (Do) of harmonizing (Ai) with universal energies (Ki). Its reconciling keynote is suitable for an approach to creative conflict transformation or – as a way to inner peace – for self-transformation.

Beside the development of its own programs and the implementation of trainings, the Niall O’Brien Centers organizes the “Study Forum on Reconciliation”. The study forum is on a national level, where researchers, teachers, representatives from governmental organizations and peace workers share and discuss their knowledge, experiences and visions on processes and projects of reconciliation.

Initiated by Pax Christi, the city of Bacolod, the province of Negros Occidental and the “Negros Youth” started in 2004, henceforth an annual “Negros Peace Week” to sensitize the public on peace issues and advocate the challenges and opportunities of conflict transformation.

Annex:

Vision
Pax Christi Pilipinas

A pro-active, nonviolent, responsive and creative life affirming movement that reconciles and nurtures relationships and communities

Motto
A Revolution for Reconciliation

Mission
Niall O'Brien Center

Our Center is a space for building and rebuilding relationships in the spirit of a holistic vision of peace.

It is a place for encounter, conversation and dialogue
A place to experience inner peace in a peaceful environment
And a place to learn about peace, conflict, and reconciliation.

Our programs, therefore, focus on creative self and conflict transformation, authentic development and democratic empowerment towards a reconciling society.