

Relational Diplomacy Institute

The Role of Social Media in Promoting  
Peacebuilding in Egypt

*Presented to:*

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## Why are we here?

1. Egypt is in transition from an authoritarian state and people's revolution to citizen participatory governance.
2. The educated and wealthy are participating in revitalizing Egypt, but the poorer and illiterate individuals are unable to engage in the process.
3. Economic opportunity for all, engaging those in poverty in economic development, is one solution to building cohesion among socio-economic groups which underpins sustainable peacebuilding.
4. Supporting a bottom-up, rather than trickle-down process, of communication, from impoverished Egyptians to government officials, is expected to return positive result.

## What kind of peace?

Peacebuilding in Egypt requires active economic participation by the poorest citizens in Egypt, because economic instability in large populations destabilizes the country and prevents peaceful coexistence among people. We are proposing a relational communication model that incorporates the poorest of Egyptians in sustainable community development resulting in sustainable peacebuilding and peaceful and cooperative coexistence across all social groups. Our impoverished clients will be brought into full participation by establishing communication with government officials using internet, social media and mobile applications.

Our definition of peace was confirmed by a 2012 survey of students across the Arab cultures as largely economic opportunity, and they say when it is fulfilled, peace naturally follows. United Nations in recent years has increased efforts for sustainable economic projects as a function of peacebuilding around the world. On its website, it writes "The United Nations has been at the center of expanding international peacebuilding efforts, from the verification of peace agreements in southern Africa, Central America and Cambodia in the 1990s, to subsequent efforts to consolidate peace and strengthen states in the Balkans, Timor-Leste, and West Africa, to contemporary operations in Afghanistan, Haiti and Sudan."  
<http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/about/peacebuilding.shtml>

## How will economic opportunity bring about peaceful coexistence?

1. Economic, social and political cooperation will bring about peaceful coexistence within social groups and across social groups.
2. The poorest members of society will be happier, more hopeful, forward-looking, more willing to engage in community-building and sustainable peace. They will seek knowledge, ideas, new ways of doing things.

3. The resulting mutual respect and peace within communities will encourage peaceful co-existence within Egypt and with neighboring countries and across-borders.

## How does our relational communication model add to sustainable peace?

A harmonious society is one in which everyone shares in a culture of economic equality that fosters a way of behaving and thinking that results in opportunity for all, and a state of stability and peaceful living. But in Egypt barriers to economic opportunity for almost 33 percent of the population, many constituting the illiterate poor are denied accessibility to education, learning, knowledge and skills. Illiteracy deprives them of participation in the technologically-driven world of marketers and business developers. Poverty and illiteracy are barriers preventing participation in community development and stability, both essential to peaceful coexistence across all social levels.

## How can impoverished citizens turn into productive members of society who are able to contribute to community peacebuilding?

Our project will facilitate communication between the poorer members of society and government officials who together can focus on long-term development strategy that incorporates the impoverished and illiterate individuals in order to promote socio-economic recovery and establish stability (United Nations Economic and Social Council working on peacebuilding in nations emerging from conflict. **ECOSOC and Peacebuilding** <<http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/about/peacebuilding.shtml>>) Only if participating citizens have the financial resources to secure and maintain themselves and their families will they be able to contribute to community, nation and sustainable peacebuilding. There is no doubt that the outcome will be a revitalization of one of the most important assets any country could possibly have, namely its human resources.

## How can our relational communication model ensure peacebuilding?

Under our model, the impoverished Egyptians will be able to make not only business decisions for themselves with advice and support from appropriate government officials, but they will also be able to make informed and problem-solving contributions to their communities, as a result of the conventional and social media expertise we offer that will establish and maintain communication for them.

## How does social media play a role in peacebuilding?

Social media will be used in 3 ways:

- 1) Facilitating communication between poorer clients and government officials. Connecting them to authorities, who hold political power and wealth in order to pursue these economic goals. We will voice their needs, assist them in articulating business problems and help them move creative solutions.
- 2) Learning new business practices and joining internet groups of common business interests. Our Egyptian clients will need access to the internet to learn about new global business practices, and to share the economic ideas, innovations and successes that they have experienced as small local businessmen and businesswomen.
- 3) Information distribution across the internet and social media, telling their stories which may gain world-wide recognition and turn viral, as many videos on the internet have. Locally, we expect that recipients of this effort will spread information and stories about our "relational communication model" through word-of-mouth to others in the community, creating a buzz that will bring local and national recognition to this endeavor.

## How will social media be used?

The relational communication model necessarily requires a rich multi-step flow of communication, using interpersonal contacts, emails, blogs, the dominant social media Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and mobile applications.

1. Conventional internet emails and blogs for long-term sustainable relationships between our clients and government officials.
2. Social media Facebook for maintaining communications and building "friends" and groups who share economic and peacebuilding information and ideas.
3. Twitter for engaging individuals and groups within Egypt and across borders, and for gaining recognition for achievements in economic peacebuilding.
4. YouTube for video distribution, sharing client stories of hardship and success, their roles in building economic opportunity and related stable communities essential to peacebuilding.
5. Mobile applications that will give ensure instant access between client and government officials, enhancing success in economic endeavors in the community, and peaceful coexistence.
6. A website to host material and connect with the social media, on behalf of the clients.

Other social media applications and networking practices will be incorporated as they become useful, e.g. Instagram to establish a photographic record of success of economic efforts and peacebuilding.

## WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE OF THE RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION MODEL?

1. Establish a relational communication office in a selected location.
2. Staff the office with up to five employees, several who will be university student interns and who will perform social networking and conventional communication duties as well as translation between Arabic and English.
3. Solicit pilot clients who would arrive in person to the office.
4. Provide consultation to assess their needs in order to determine which government agencies best fit their needs.
5. Contact the government to arrange for contact with the client.
6. Remain involved in the relationship developing between the client and government officials.
7. Established a web presence for the client that will represent not only the client's aspirations and success, but also related messages that encourage peaceful coexistence in the community, neighborhood, cafes, alleys and other places where people generally gather.

Social media and the internet will be used for promoting client successes, only after establishing a solid platform of trust on which a roadmap is crafted containing long-term goals and expected accomplishments for sustainable growth and peaceful coexistence.

## HOW ARE CLIENTS ENGAGED IN COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE?

The clients' engagements in rural and small town economic advancements are expected to solve current and subsequent community problems by their working in economic related activities. These include trade exports, imports, local market distribution and food safety, transportation logistics, among other endeavors, and establishing both forward and backward linkages to the domestic market. All of these activities can hardly be accessed by them now. As communication and social media conduits between client and government, we will assist clients in articulating --through current business communication practices and social networking technologies -- to government officials the use and reallocation of available and new resources, changing products and practices to fit the local market and re-channel local products for distribution to international markets. We expect this relational communication process will enhance stability in the poorer communities and advance peaceful coexistence in Egypt, along the concepts and practices initiated by the United Nations Economic-Social.

## WHAT IS NEXT?

After conceptualizing the pilot relational communication model, the next stages consist of the following steps:

1. Selecting the community in which the project will be established.
2. Contact government officials.
3. Hire and train staff.
4. Begin to contact potential clients.
5. Seek funding sources for the project, with a focus on the private sector.
6. Establish a monitoring system to gauge the ongoing success of the relational communication model.
7. Upon finding this model to be successful, relational communication models will be established in other communities.

This proposed project is expected to continue for the long-term.