Foreword

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People have waged peace in the midst of war in diverse situations throughout the world. Crafting a viable peace is the work of many hands, involving different sectors of society and spanning generations. Peacemaking thus requires a marathon mentality. Success is rare and, to the perceptive, seldom permanent, since advances on one front often bring about a new set of challenges or change-generated conflicts. This volume shares the experiences and lessons learned by practitioners reflecting on their work of many years. They stress the primacy of local peoples and their indigenous capacities and acknowledge the need to complement the work engaged in by both governments and inter-governmental institutions – indispensable ingredients in building peace that is both viable and durable.

The cases in this publication constitute ground-breaking work. Confronted by enormous obstacles, church people and business leaders linked up with politicians to advance a difficult process that led to South Africa's negotiated transition and the end of the apartheid system. A diverse array of organizations and institutions in Guatemala – representing indigenous peoples, churches, unions, women's groups and others – collaborated to advance citizens' assemblies that articulated an agenda for peace and forged viable though imperfect agreements in negotiations between government and guerrillas.

In Northern Ireland, women from different communities organized to have a voice in the framing of an accord and its painstaking enforcement. In Colombia and the Philippines, people continue their efforts to build territories where non-combatant citizens' rights are respected in regions where the military and armed opposition are locked in combat. These experiences are but a few examples. While they do not provide blueprints for guaranteed success, they nevertheless reveal alternative paths or ways of taking further steps in situations that at times seem utterly without ways forward.

Even the brave efforts of governments or inter-governmental organizations have at times floundered on the hard realities of protracted conflicts. In Israel and Palestine, the *Oslo Accords* – though initially celebrated as a breakthrough – have failed to halt the escalation of violence that is deepening the divide, the bitterness and the mounting loss of lives. The Northern Ireland *Belfast Agreement*, forged with the support of the governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, finds itself continually challenged as inter-community and inter-party relations break down, demonstrating that even the best efforts of government leaders constantly face constraints and limitations. It may be that if people own the process, they will work hard to ensure viable outcomes and overcome the inevitable obstacles that arise once the agreement is in place. The earlier we engage in the task of building the social infrastructure of peace, the sooner societies will come closer to another reality where the dignity of difference is celebrated, political tolerance observed and a just peace becomes possible.

Moreover, waging peace in the current climate characterized by the global 'war on terrorism' presents a daunting challenge. In past decades we have witnessed humanitarian disasters, monstrous massacres and seemingly unending wars in many regions of the world. However, in the aftermath of the tragic events of 11 September 2001, the work of citizens on many fronts to bring about a just peace has become more difficult and the field for their participation greatly reduced; yet increased involvement is more imperative than ever. As governments form alliances to act against a perceived common scourge of 'terrorism', pre-eminence is given to military means of resolving disputes. Such approaches have tended to undermine efforts to address the specific grievances at the heart of intractable conflicts in diverse contexts. They have taken actions that can erode respect for the rule of law and advances in the fields of human rights, while making negotiating efforts even more difficult.

In working for peace, process and outcome walk hand in hand. Unless people own the process and help shape sustainable outcomes, it will indeed be difficult to provide human security or a meaningful future. Unleashing more violence or launching full-scale war does not guarantee a comprehensive security where men and women feel safe or communities secure. Security that is people-centred responds to the deepest yearnings of the young and the old alike and is shared even by those across political divides. It may be only where people and their communities put their hands to the task of building a more inclusive peace that the possibility of a human security addressing common concerns becomes less distant.

In the end, the experiences of people who have tried to build peace and remain undaunted are a source of hope. This publication may seem a modest step, a small contribution from people whose thoughts are captured within two covers. However, for those who have lived or still live amidst violent conflict, hope perhaps is the hour's need in the marathon journey called peacemaking.

Building on his own experience in the 1986 'people's revolution' in the Philippines, Professor Ed Garcia has spent years promoting and supporting popular participation in peace processes in Africa, Asia and Latin America. He is a Senior Conflict Advisor at International Alert in London.