

Building Bridges

Restorative Dialogues between Victims and Offenders

A Guide to Establishing and Running the Building Bridges Programme



Building Bridges: Restorative Dialogues between Victims and Offenders



A Guide to Establishing and Running the Building Bridges Programme

~

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Foreword

Prison Fellowship International developed the Sycamore Tree Project® (STP) in 1996 to provide its affiliates with a way to incorporate victims' concerns into their programming. It brings victims into prison to meet with small groups of prisoners for facilitated discussion of topics related to crime and justice. They are not each other's victims and offenders, but often the crimes are the same.

STP is now regularly used by Prison Fellowship affiliates from 34 countries in Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, and the Pacific. It has been adapted in Rwanda, Colombia, and the Solomon Islands to help those countries deal with the aftermath of genocide and civil war. Studies in England and New Zealand have shown that STP changes the attitudes of its offender participants in a direction that would suggest they are less likely to commit new offenses. There is not yet published research on its actual impact on recidivism rates nor on its effects on the victims who participate, although there are research projects underway concerning both topics.

Some have questioned whether STP should be considered a restorative process since the victims and offenders are unrelated. Our experience is that it is an effective way to introduce a restorative perspective on crime and justice to prisoners and to victims. We can also say that it appears to help some victims heal from their trauma and gives prisoners a new understanding of the ripple effect crime has on the lives of victims, their families, and their communities. In some instances, STP participants have gone on to facilitated meetings with their own victims or offenders.

There are significant cultural, legal, regulatory, and religious differences in the countries using STP. Consequently, Prison Fellowship International has allowed its affiliates to adapt the program as needed. Europe is probably the region in which the most adaptations have been made, due in part to the highly structured nature of correctional regulations and secularism in many countries. Yet the European STPs have flourished, and it is our hope that they will grow further as a result of participating in the Building Bridges project.

Daniel W. Van Ness
Executive Director, Centre for Justice and Reconciliation at Prison Fellowship International

Chapter 1

Building Bridges: Introduction

The purpose of this guidebook is to explain the Building Bridges programme and to provide practical guidance to individuals and organisations wishing to run and facilitate the programme. The guidebook is a training tool which explains step-by-step the content and developmental process of Building Bridges.

What is Building Bridges?

Building Bridges is the name of both an EU funded project, which seeks to establish a programme of intervention for victims and offenders, and of the programme itself. Information about the project can be found on the project website <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/>.

The Building Bridges programme brings together a group of victims of crime with a group of offenders for ‘restorative dialogue’ and learning. In the programme, victims have the opportunity to meet with ‘unrelated’ offenders (i.e. offenders other than those who committed the offence against them) and to help them to understand how offending behaviour actually affects its victims. For victims of crime, this is an opportunity to share experiences of victimisation, to tell their story of the crime committed against them and its effects, to experience a form of apology, to experience constructive dialogue with offenders, to obtain a measure of restoration and healing, and to gain emotional support. Offenders who take part in the programme get a chance to understand how their offending behaviour affects others, to develop more empathy for victims of crime, and to change their perspective about their past behaviour. They are encouraged to reflect upon the roles that values such as respect, empathy, and accountability might play in their lives. And, they have the opportunity to make (symbolic) reparation for their past offences.

Background and core features of Building Bridges

The Building Bridges project is a collaboration between Prison Fellowship organisations in seven European countries (the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain) and two research institutions (the University of Hull, UK and Makam Research, Austria). The programme developed by the project involves an effort to develop and adapt the Sycamore Tree Project® (STP), for use throughout Europe. In what follows, we will briefly explain what Prison Fellowships are before describing the STP and explaining how the Building Bridges programme develops and adapts it.

Prison Fellowship

The Prison Fellowship movement was founded in 1976 by Charles Colson, following his release from prison for a Watergate-related crime.¹ During his time in prison, Colson realised the importance of Christian witness in prisons and, following his release, formed Prison Fellowship in the USA. This subsequently became the basis of a worldwide organisation, Prison Fellowship International (PFI). Today, Prison Fellowships exist in 125 countries and PFI is the principal association of national Christian ministries working within the criminal justice field. The distinctive feature of PFI is its emphasis upon combining prayer and practical activities - such as visiting and supporting prisoners and their families, and organising legal assistance and restorative justice programmes - to bring about justice and healing in response to crime.

¹ See <http://www.prisonfellowship.org.uk/who-we-are/our-story-so-far/> (last accessed 25/06/2014).

The Sycamore Tree Project®

PFI developed STP (in 1996, with the name deriving from the Biblical story of Zacchaeus.² It was piloted in the United States, England and Wales, and New Zealand in 1997, and programme manuals were published in 1998. STP has been run in 34 countries in all continents. STP is run in a prison by trained Prison Fellowship volunteers and small group facilitators. STP typically consists of 6-8 sessions of 2-3 hours. In different countries two main ways of delivering STP have developed: (i) with equal numbers of offenders and victims throughout and (ii) as a more offender-oriented, victim-awareness course, in which a victim or number of victims take part in just some sessions. The objectives of STP are to meet needs of both inmates and crime victims who participate. With regard to inmates, the goals include: encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions; enabling them to develop victim awareness and empathy; enabling them to experience confession, repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation regarding their offences; and to help them make amends through participation in acts of symbolic restitution. With regard to victims, the aims include helping them to resolve issues around the offence committed against them; giving them a chance to tell their stories and to start a healing process; helping them to become better informed about crime, offenders and restorative justice; enabling them to see offenders take responsibility for their offending; facilitating them to do ensure that something positive and useful comes out of the damaging experience of crime, and helping them gain a sense of closure, forgiveness and peace.

PFI allows its affiliates to adapt the STP programme as needed, provided the revised versions still include seven 'essential elements':

1. Victims and offenders meet to discuss the impact of crime and share their personal stories.
2. Participants discuss the impact of crime, responsibility/accountability, confession, repentance, and reconciliation.
3. A Christian facilitator helps participants build a supportive community governed by respect, equality, confidentiality, active participation, and listening to others.
4. Learning is done largely through guided small group discussions in which all participants are allowed and encouraged to participate.
5. Prisoner participants are invited to offer symbolic acts of restitution near the end of the programme.
6. The programme concludes with a public celebration during which victim and offender participants share what they have learned and experienced.
7. The programme is based on biblical principles.³

Restorative justice

The idea of restorative justice features significantly in STP and Building Bridges. Restorative justice is a distinctive way of viewing and responding to crime. Whilst it has ancient roots, the contemporary restorative justice movement emerged in the 1970s. Since the 1990s, interest in the idea has grown rapidly and today criminal justice systems all over the world are experimenting with restorative justice. Very basically, the core idea of restorative justice is that in the aftermath of a crime justice can be best achieved, not simply by punishing the perpetrator(s) of the crime,

² Luke 19 vs. 1-10.

³ Communication from Daniel W. Van Ness, Executive Director, Centre for Justice and Reconciliation at Prison Fellowship International.

but by encouraging and facilitating perpetrators to understand and help repair the damage the crime has done to people and relationships.⁴

Restorative dialogue

A key idea of the restorative justice movement is that one powerful way of achieving the goal of repairing the harm caused by crime is restorative dialogue.⁵ Restorative dialogue involves offenders and victims of crime meeting face-to-face for a facilitated discussion of the harm crime causes and of what might be done to repair this harm. There is an emphasis upon victims and offenders themselves deciding these matters through dialogue, rather than relying upon experts and professionals to provide them with answers and solutions. A key aim of restorative dialogue is to enable offenders and victims to come to a common understanding of the harm of crime and agreement on how best offenders can make amends.

Building Bridges

The STP has significant potential for promoting justice and healing in response to crime. The Building Bridges project is based on the idea of realising that potential throughout Europe. In order to achieve this, Building Bridges employs the basic ideas of STP, but also makes some significant adaptations. In particular:

- The Building Bridges programme incorporates scientific research. From the outset, the practical development of Building Bridges has been informed and shaped by state-of-the-art knowledge about restorative justice and the experience of victimisation and by a distinctive evaluation aimed at identifying the factors that assist and might hinder successful implementation of the Building Bridges programme.⁶
- A particular concern behind the development of Building Bridges has been to make the programme as beneficial for victims who participate as for offenders. Hence, the programme is based upon knowledge on how to involve victims in such interventions and on what the needs of victims of crime are and how these are best met.
- Building Bridges is designed to be run in a range of settings, both inside and outside of prisons.

About this guidebook

This guidebook has been prepared for people and organisations who wish to run a Building Bridges programme. In order to ensure that the programme is run effectively and in line with standards designed to ensure the safety and well-being of all who participate in it, it is crucial that those involved in organising and delivering Building Bridges receive appropriate training. Hence, we advise that anyone seeking or planning to run Building Bridges contacts a member of the Building Bridges project team. Contact details are available at: <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/>.

This guidebook forms the basis of training on the basic elements of Building Bridges. It provides an overview of Building Bridges (chapter 2); explains the roles and responsibilities of programme facilitators (chapter 3); explores ways of recruiting and preparing participants (victims and offenders) for a Building Bridges programme (chapter 4); explains the basic structure of a Building Bridges programme and provides some general guidelines for programme

⁴ For an overview see Johnstone, G. *Restorative Justice: Ideas, Values, Debates*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2011).

⁵ See G. Johnstone and I. Brennan, *Victim-Offender Encounters for Restorative Justice Dialogue: A Review*, available at <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/12/WS-1.-D1.3c-VOM-review.pdf>.

⁶ The scientific papers from Building Bridges are available at <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/publications-links/>.

organisers (chapter 5) and emphasises the importance of follow-up work, and makes some suggestions on how this might be organised and conducted (chapter 6).

Although it explains the role and responsibilities of facilitators in a Building Bridges programme, this guidebook does not provide a programme of facilitator training. However, some guidance on how to arrange appropriate training is available on our website <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/>. The website also contains a selection of resources which will be useful for those running a Building Bridges programme. Prison Fellowships who wish to run Building Bridges can access STP manuals and other materials from Prison Fellowship Europe (PFE).⁷

⁷ At the time of publication, PFE is in the process of relocating its headquarters. Contact details, when available will be made available on the Building bridges website.

Chapter 2 Overview of Building Bridges

Restorative justice⁸

Penal systems pursue ‘legal justice’. They seek to impose upon criminal wrongdoers the punishment they deserve, to treat all citizens ‘equally’, and to respect the rights of suspects and offenders. In punishing offenders, penal systems also seek to achieve other ‘forward-looking’ goals, such as reducing the desire and opportunity of offenders (and others tempted) to commit further offences in the future. To the extent that they succeed in these tasks, penal systems perform valuable social functions: providing a meaningful and just response to criminal wrongdoing and creating greater security.

For various reasons, most criminal justice systems only partly succeed in these tasks. However, even if they functioned perfectly, they would still meet only some of the needs created by criminal wrongdoing. Criminal wrongdoing causes much physical, psychological, financial, and social harm to its victims (direct and indirect). It also damages the *trust* required for healthy social relationships between people in society. And, arguably, even those who commit criminal wrongdoing are often damaged by the experience (regardless of whether they are convicted and punished). If people affected by criminal wrongdoing are to experience justice and healing, society’s response to crime has to extend beyond the dispensing of ‘legal justice’. In addition, it has to incorporate efforts to repair the ‘wider harm’ caused by crime.

In recognition of this need, a powerful social movement has arisen in recent decades promoting *restorative justice* in response to criminal wrongdoing. The core principle of restorative justice is that in the aftermath of criminal wrongdoing, the priority of society should be to ensure that the harm caused by the offence is repaired. Another key idea is that the best way of achieving this is for all the parties with a stake in an offence to meet face-to-face and collectively decide how to deal with its aftermath and future implications.

In practice, restorative justice takes a variety of forms. The most developed forms of restorative justice are victim-offender mediation (VOM) and ‘conferencing’, in which a group of people affected fairly directly by an offence take part in a facilitated meeting (ideally after undergoing intensive preparation), express their feelings about what happened, and contribute to deciding how the offence should be dealt with – with an emphasis on reparative outcomes. In discourses of penal policy discussion of restorative justice has, rightly, focused on VOM and conferencing. However, efforts to bring an experience of restorative justice to people affected by criminal wrongdoing take many other forms. One of these is the Sycamore Tree Project® (STP).⁹

The Sycamore Tree Project® – the conceptual basis for Building Bridges

The Building Bridges programme is based on the fundamental concepts of the existing Sycamore Tree Project, a restorative justice programme offered by affiliates of the global organisation Prison Fellowship International, initially designed to be run in prisons with groups of offenders,

⁸ The literature on restorative justice is now vast. For an overview and critical discussion of the key themes, see Johnstone, G. *Restorative Justice: Ideas, Values, Debates, 2nd edition* (London: Routledge, 2011). Johnstone, G. (ed.), *A Restorative Justice Reader* (London: Routledge, 2013) is a collection of essential readings on the subject.

⁹ STP is one of many efforts to bring restorative justice into prisons and to prisoners. For an overview of these, see Johnstone, G. (2014) *Restorative Justice in Prisons: Methods, Approaches and Effectiveness*, Council of Europe, PC-CP/docs 2014/PC-CP(2014)17e rev, available at [http://www.coe.int/t/DGHL/STANDARDSETTING/PRISONS/PCCP%20documents%202014/PC-CP%20\(2014\)%2017E_REV%20Report%20on%20Restorative%20Justice%20in%20Prisons%20by%20Mr%20Gerry%20Johnstone%2029.09.14.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/DGHL/STANDARDSETTING/PRISONS/PCCP%20documents%202014/PC-CP%20(2014)%2017E_REV%20Report%20on%20Restorative%20Justice%20in%20Prisons%20by%20Mr%20Gerry%20Johnstone%2029.09.14.pdf).

victims, and volunteers. The STP programme has always placed an emphasis of having actual victims involved in the restorative justice process, although the number of victims involved and the extent of their involvement varies across different parts of the world. It is probably useful to think of this variation as existing on a continuum. At one end, one victim comes in for one session of the course. At the other end, there are equal numbers of offenders and victims, and victims have input in multiple sessions. (As we shall see, the aspiration of Building Bridges is to have this latter end of the continuum as the starting point/goal).

Although STP programmes are diverse in their implementation, they all follow a core structure, focussing on helping offenders to learn more about the effects of crime in the lives of those involved, especially victims. STP helps offenders to learn to take responsibility for their deeds and make steps towards restoration of the harm caused by their crime. The main topics of an STP programme are:

- Restorative justice – introduction
- What is crime and who are involved and affected
- Taking responsibility
- Confession
- Forgiveness and reconciliation
- (Symbolic) act of restitution

During the STP programme (a) victim(s) (who is not a victim of any of the offenders who participate) comes in to share his or her personal experience of crime and the feelings and situations that follow in the aftermath of crime. Research conducted with participants and facilitators in the scope of the Building Bridges project found that the story of the victim appears to be a powerful way for the offenders to recognise and understand the actual effects of crime. The research also showed that the sharing meant a lot for the victims involved. It was found that during STP programmes, victims often feel it was the first time that they had had the chance to speak to offenders and to have a voice in the criminal justice system. Over the many years that STP has been offered, victims have often reported the programme as having helped them to let go of a lot of negative feelings. Crucial to this is that they now experience offenders as people willing to listen to them and say sorry for what happened. They find out that offenders are human beings with a life and a story as well. The stereotypical image of ‘the criminal’ which they had in their mind tends to fade and the offender becomes humanised to them. The studies conducted in the framework of the Building Bridges project underline the claim that the healing is often so strong that after participating in several STPs the victim does not feel like a victim any longer and wants to ‘move on’.

Building Bridges

Building Bridges is a project that seeks to further develop the Sycamore Tree Project in order to create more and better opportunities for restorative dialogues between victims and offenders. Building Bridges seeks to create opportunities for victims to share their personal experiences and have a voice in the criminal system. In Building Bridges, one of the founding ideas of STPs is emphasised: victims are not merely as a means to reach out to prisoners in order to help them develop more victim empathy; rather, victims are involved as people who themselves deserve and require the opportunity to take part in a restorative process in the aftermath of crime. In Building Bridges victims are offered opportunities to work on restoration and reconciliation. Based on experiences of many STP programmes in the past, the hope and expectation is that Building Bridges will contribute to the wellbeing of the victims and their perspective for a healed and better life. In the research underpinning the Building Bridges project, we will seek to

determine whether and to what extent that does occur. We also expect that the healing through well-facilitated restorative dialogues between victims and offenders can be achieved in other settings, such as peace circles in local communities. Hence Building Bridges can also be organised outside of prisons and in the project we will be attempting to assess the healing effects of these also.

Building Bridges will add elements to the existing STP in order to provide more guidance on victim support. How does Building Bridges build upon STP to make it more victim oriented? The main development is that Building Bridges will be faithful to the STP ideal that victims and offenders both participate in equal numbers and in all sessions. Building Bridges will seek to focus more intensely on victims, develop tools to attract them to the programme and to provide them with support, and enable EU countries to run a programme with equal numbers of victims and offenders. This will create more interaction between victims and offenders and more possibilities to support all participants in their own process. This composition of the group of participants makes substantive additions necessary. Building Bridges will both focus on the offenders and their behaviour and process of restoration, as well as the story of the victims and their process of healing and restoration. Building Bridges will add more guidance and emotional support for the victims who participate. Their needs and questions will be met, whether in the in-prison programme or in community peace circles. Building Bridges will inform and train facilitators on how to do victim and offender preparation and aftercare. The following diagram (Figure 1) represents the goals of Building Bridges with regard to victims.

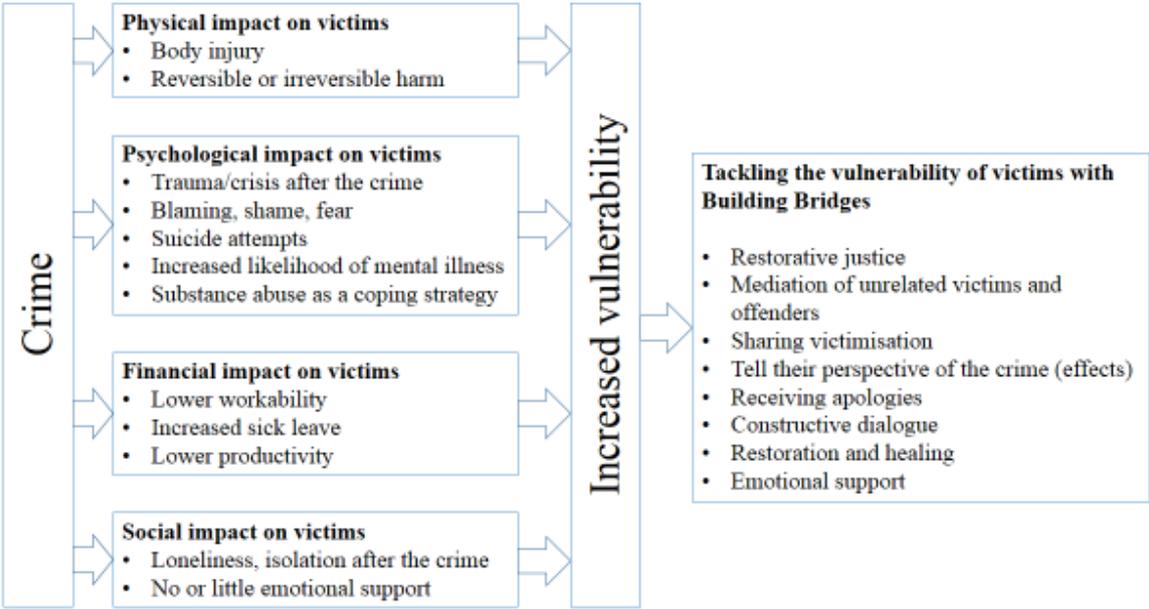


Figure 1: Logic model for Building Bridges

Quality assurance in Building Bridges

In running a Building Bridges programme it is essential to have in place mechanisms which:

- ensure that the wellbeing of all participants in the programme is safeguarded;
- ensure that the core values of Building Bridges are upheld at all times;
- ensure that the prison authorities (where it is run in prison) and the public have confidence in the programme;

- ensure that outcomes are monitored and recorded in a systematic way, so that the success of the programme can be demonstrated.

As part of the Building Bridges project, guidelines on quality assurance are available on the project website.

Building Bridges: Project objectives

Building Bridges is the creation of a consortium of seven European Prison Fellowships, and two research institutions.¹⁰ The project is supported by a European Commission Action Grant JUST/2013/JPEN/AG/4479.

The programme has a range of long-, medium-, and short-term objectives:

Long term objectives

- Promoting victim support, especially emotional support and restoration.
- Promoting restorative justice through victim-offender encounters in Europe.
- Contributing to socially just communities in Europe.
- Contributing to victim participation in European victim-offender programmes.
- Contributing to working on changing value systems with offenders in the aftermath of crime.

Medium term objectives

- Transferring an effective methodology (STP) and further developing it to Building Bridges for victim support into different European countries and settings.
- Enabling victim-offender mediators and facilitators, counsellors, prison psychologists, social workers, and others to support victims in the restoration process.
- Training victim-offender mediators and facilitators, counsellors, prison psychologists, social workers, and others in the Building Bridges methodology.

Short term objectives

- Implementing Building Bridges in European prisons and community sites and testing it in 14 programmes.
- Undertaking a rigorous process evaluation of Building Bridges to determine feasibility in different settings inside and outside of prisons in Europe.
- Sharing and spreading knowledge about the Building Bridges methodology.
- Writing a book about victim-offender encounters with Building Bridges.

¹⁰ Gevangenzorg Nederland; PF Hungary; PF Portugal, Confiar Associação; Seehaus e.v. (PF Germany); PF Italy; PF Czech Republic; Confraternidad Carcelaria de Espana; University of Hull, UK; Makam Research, Austria.

Chapter 3 Facilitating Building Bridges

Each Building Bridges programme is run by a facilitator, assisted by one or more co-facilitators. In this chapter we explain the roles and responsibilities of the facilitator and co-facilitators and the attributes, knowledge, skills, and experience they require.

Facilitators: Roles and responsibilities

The facilitator's basic functions are:

- to lead the group through a series of topics;
- to encourage and facilitate open communication and constructive dialogue amongst the participants, enabling them to express their thoughts and feelings, share their experiences, and discuss their problems;
- to ensure that the programme environment is safe, secure and supportive;
- to promote diversity and equal opportunities;
- to maintain and ensure confidentiality;
- to provide participants with appropriate further information about sources of support;
- to lead the team delivering the Building Bridges programme, allocate tasks within the team and provide co-facilitators with effective supervision and support;
- to gather and make effective use of feedback.

What follows is a more detailed breakdown of the facilitator's role:

Leading the group through the topics

The facilitator is responsible for organising each session of the Building Bridges programme, in accordance with the programme structure chosen for that programme. This includes ensuring that there is a clear 'delivery plan' for each session, that there are appropriate and sufficient programme materials, and that each session is effectively managed.

Facilitating restorative dialogue

Communication and dialogue are at the heart of Building Bridges. In order to facilitate this the programme leader must:

- explain the ground rules for participation and communication and ensure adherence to these rules;
- encourage and facilitate all members to participate in the sessions to an appropriate level;
- ensure that all communication is respectful – that people speak respectfully and, crucially, listen respectfully.

A safe and supportive environment

The Building Bridges programme must take place in a safe and supportive environment. The team should create a supportive environment regarding atmosphere, listening, and encouraging. It is the responsibility of the facilitator to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to safeguard the group and its members. This includes having in place a clear strategy and procedure for handling crisis situations in the sessions.¹¹

¹¹ Guidance on safeguarding is available on the project website.

Diversity and equal opportunities

It is the responsibility of the facilitator to ensure that the Building Bridges policy on diversity and equal opportunities is adhered to throughout the duration of the programme.¹²

Confidentiality

The facilitator's responsibilities include ensuring that the confidentiality policy of Building Bridges is explained to participants and adhered to during the Building Bridges sessions.¹³ The facilitator should ensure that any electronic or printed information about the group sessions is stored safely taking into account the requirements of confidentiality. Some prisons may require behaviour reports about participants; if this is the case, this should be made clear at the beginning of the programme.

Information about further sources of support

The facilitator should compile two brief guides to sources of further support that participants can access locally: one for victims and one for offenders. These should be made available to participants during the programme.

Feedback

The facilitator should ensure that feedback is gathered after each session of the programme from the participants and that this is analysed and taken account of before the next session.

Supervision and support of co-facilitators

Facilitators should provide co-facilitators with effective supervision and support, and encourage them to acquire the knowledge, skill, and experience they will need to become programme leaders. There needs to be a clear division of tasks during the programme for smooth collaboration. The facilitator has a leading role in this.

Co-facilitators

It is recommended that the facilitator be assisted by at least one co-facilitator. The role of the co-facilitator is to support the facilitator, as appropriate, in all aspects of their role.

The co-facilitator should assume full responsibility for the group if, for any reason, the facilitator has to leave the session (if there is more than one co-facilitator, the one who will adopt this role should be clearly designated in advance). In many cases the co-facilitators are leaders of the conversations in small groups. To ensure that can do this effectively, they should be well equipped and trained in backgrounds, content of the subjects, as well as group leading skills.

Key attributes, knowledge and skills required by facilitators

Facilitators and co-facilitators need to be committed to the basic principles and values underlying Building Bridges (see chapter 2). In addition, they require a range of skills and attributes, especially:

- the ability to communicate effectively, including good listening skills;
- excellent planning and organisational skills, including the ability to work as part of and to lead teams;
- the ability to analyse and evaluate performance (including their own performance) and progress;

¹² This policy is available on the project website.

¹³ This policy is available on the project website.

- open-mindedness, including flexible thought processes and the ability to think and behave non-judgmentally;
- a commitment to learning;
- a high degree of awareness of safety issues;
- a strong sense of personal responsibility.

People with the above attributes and skills can be found in many settings. Crucially, facilitators need not have any particular qualifications or professional status, nor a background of work in criminal justice, nor any specialised knowledge (of criminology, victimology, restorative justice, etc.). What is important is that they can provide evidence that they possess the above attributes and skills and are willing and able to acquire any more specialised knowledge they will need.

Building Bridges – being informed by the principles of restorative justice - is different in nature from professional support for victims and offenders. Part of the idea behind Building Bridges is to draw upon under-utilised ‘resources’ that exist in communities to provide support for victims of crime and support and accountability for perpetrators of crime. Another crucial idea is to ‘build bridges’ between the community and the prison (and other settings in which offenders are found). Hence, the role of facilitator is in principle open to anyone, regardless of their professional status. The key factors in determining the suitability of someone to facilitate a Building Bridges programme is their motivation, commitment, possession of the skills and attributes outlined above, and willingness to take part in a course of effective training for the role.

Recruiting and training of facilitators and co-facilitators

Recruiting can take place *via* various routes. These include:

- finding people who are volunteering in your organisation at the moment;
- placing advertisements in newspapers, magazines, and other forms of communication used by your organisation;
- personal recruitment, when you know suitable persons;
- a ‘volunteer bank’;
- approaching members of specific professions likely to have good facilitation skills (such as teachers or social workers).

Recruitment should involve application forms, personal interview, and a written contract.

Once recruited, facilitators and co-facilitators should be provided with training, covering topics such as:

- restorative justice;
- Building Bridges;
- ‘Who am I as a programme leader?’;
- practical issues (ICT, programme material, what to know about entering a prison, evaluation forms, preparation with the team);
- writing reflections and evaluations;
- working with groups, especially victims and offenders (types of participants, group dynamics, and roles of leadership). Make use of role play and video clips;
- presenting subjects/ teaching.

Chapter 4

Recruiting and Preparing the Participants

In order to run the Building Bridges programme you need a group of suitable victims and offenders. The programme organiser should designate a person, or small group of persons, whose responsibility it is to recruit these participants. Although various aspects of the recruitment process should be commenced as early as possible, individual participants should not be contacted and registered until the programme organiser is sure that the programme can be run. This is because, once a victim or offender has made the commitment to take part in a Building Bridges programme, to cancel or delay the programme can itself be damaging for them.

Once participants have been recruited, they then need to be carefully prepared for the process. One of the key themes to emerge from the literature evaluating all restorative justice processes is that the more thoroughly the participants are prepared, the better the chance is that the process will have beneficial outcomes.¹⁴ Hence, again, programme organisers should designate a person or group of persons responsible for this preparation and a clear preparation plan should be in place before enlisting participants.

In this chapter, we first describe the process of recruiting and preparing victims, and then the process of recruiting and preparing offenders. However, since one of the main challenges which the Building Bridges project is addressing is that of how to extend the benefits of programmes such as STP to more victims, we will discuss this in more detail.

Victims

Initial contact and assessment

The Building Bridges programme is designed for persons whose lives have been detrimentally affected by a crime committed against them, who have recovered from the initial experience (sometimes called the ‘recoil’ phase), and who now need support to move on to the next stages of recovery from the experience of victimisation.¹⁵ It is important to assess carefully whether victims are ready, in terms of their emotional state, to take part in Building Bridges. Such an assessment will inform thinking about the amount and nature of preparation a victim will need in order to safely take part in, and benefit from, the programme. An assessment checklist, designed to assist facilitators/programme organisers in conducting the first contacts with victims, in order to get information that will help determine their readiness for the programme and what is required to prepare them, has been devised by the project team and is available on the Building Bridges website. In what follows, we focus on some key issues.

The attitude of victims towards offenders is likely to vary. Some victims may appear to be in a vengeful state of mind, and express aggressive or hostile attitudes towards offenders. This is not a bar to participation provided victims agree to, and are likely to comply with, the following two basic ground rules of the Building Bridges Programme:

1. Anything said during a Building Bridges programme should be kept confidential.

¹⁴ See, for instance, United Nations, Office on Drugs and Crime, *Handbook of Restorative Justice Programmes* (Vienna, 2006), especially chapter 5, available at http://www.unodc.org/pdf/criminal_justice/06-56290_Ebook.pdf.

¹⁵ For a brief and excellent account of the experience of crime victims, and of the phases involved in recovery from this experience, see chapter 2 of Howard Zehr’s important book *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice*, 3rd edition (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2005). This chapter, indeed the entire book, should be read by everyone involved in organising and delivering the Building Bridges programme.

2. Participants should behave *respectfully* towards all other participants at all times.

So victims who are in a ‘vengeful’ state of mind may well be suitable for a Building Bridges programme, but will need a lot of careful preparation. Similar considerations apply to victims who wants to meet with offenders in order to impress upon them how bad their behaviour was. In general, it is important to bear in mind that Building Bridges is not necessarily looking for people with a forgiving attitude, or who want to take part in the programme for purely altruistic reasons. After all, a central purpose of the programme is to help transform those who take part in it.

A rather different issue that may arise in first contact with victims is that they tend to downplay the effects of the crime upon them, or even regard themselves as deserving whatever bad effects they suffered. Here again, it is crucial to understand that crime often affects its victims in complex ways.¹⁶ Victims may still be confused about how they feel about what happened, or find it difficult to express their true thoughts and feelings. The general point is this: it is worthwhile spending a significant amount of time with victims in order to determine how prepared they are for a Building Bridges programme and what further preparation they may need.

One issue which may become evident in initial contact with some victims is that they are prone to express prejudicial attitudes towards others (e.g. express racist or sexist attitudes, or be condescending towards people with disabilities). Here, the crucial question to ask is whether such victims are likely, with careful preparation, to be able to abide by the basic ground rules stated above. The purpose of assessing the emotional state of victims is *not* to screen victims so that only those with ‘correct’ attitudes take part. Only those who do not agree to, or are very likely to be unable to comply with, the basic ground rules, even with extensive preparation, should be considered unsuitable.

A further issue to be considered carefully is a recognisable risk of *re-traumatisation*. This may occur when emotions which seem ‘still too fresh’ come up in the preparatory interview. Also, if the crime experience has not yet been processed, and victims have too many questions, they may need other forms of support before they can safely take part in a Building Bridges programme.

If victims of sexual crimes wish to participate in a Building Bridges programme, very careful consideration needs to be given to how this might affect the way the victim’s story impacts upon offenders, and also to the additional forms of victim support that will need to be provided. There are several reasons for this: (1) offenders tend to look down on sexual offenders, and by hearing a story of a victim of sexual crime it is hard for them to relate that to their own offences;(2) with regard to perpetrators of sexual crimes, hearing a victim of a similar crime could help, but often for those offenders it is hard to see what they did wrong, so there can be negative dynamics in the group; (3) victims of sexual offences need specific forms of victim support, which the general Building Bridges programme is unable to provide. So, additional forms of appropriate support will need to be found and provided, alongside the programme.

Recruiting Victims

Recruiting suitable victims is one of the biggest challenges facing anyone seeking to organise a Building Bridges programme. It is important to be imaginative and creative in recruitment approaches, whilst at the same time staying firmly within the bounds of what is ethical. It is important to respect the rights of victims who do not want to be contacted, or who make it clear

¹⁶ Zehr, *Changing Lenses*, chapter 2 (see footnote 16 for full citation)

that they are not interested in taking part in the programme. Crucially, Building Bridges works on the principle of *voluntary* participation. Victims must make a free and informed decision on whether to participate. What follows are some typical methods of recruiting victims used by programme organisers (P.O.s):

a Self-referral

A victim refers herself/himself to the programme. For example, a victim might contact the programme organiser, having heard about the programme through the media, an article, or other marketing activities. To maximise the potential of recruiting victims through this route, it is crucial to have multiple and effective methods by which victims can contact the programme organisers (email, telephone, letter, etc.).

b Personal contacting

In this option, programme organisers contact single victims who might be known to staff members, telling them that for the current programme victims are still being sought.

c Selection from a well-known pool of victims

Some programme organisers have pools of victims with whom they frequently work. Advantages of this method include the fact that the victims are well known to programme organisers and that preparatory work can be reduced to a minimum. However, over-reliance on this method has a significant shortcoming: one of the core goals of Building Bridges is to bring healing and justice to as many victims of crime as possible. This goal will clearly not be achieved if one only includes a small pool of victims who have already experienced the healing effects of the programme.

d Professional referral bodies

A professional body, such as the police or members of the judiciary, refer a victim to an intermediary, such as a victim association or a professional network for facilitators, and the intermediaries then contact programme organisers with a view to arranging for them to meet with the victim. It may be useful to try to form cooperation agreements with such bodies.

e Word-of-mouth referral

A direct form of referral takes place if a former victim who takes part tells other victims about the programme.

f Victim conferences/events

Some programme organisers visit events or conferences or victim's associations and recruit victims there.

Facilitators may however face difficulties, including a lack of contact with or support from victim associations. Some may over-rely upon informal relationships with individual professionals in therapeutic or victim-support fields. As such it is critical that programme organisers and facilitators seek to develop stable contacts with victim associations, setting up written agreements with them, trying to work on mutual benefits and closer cooperation structures.

Preparing Victims

As emphasised earlier, victim preparation is an essential element of the Building Bridges programme. A preparation checklist, designed to assist facilitators/programme organisers to prepare victims of the programme, has been devised by the project team and is available on the Building Bridges website. In what follows, we focus on some key issues.

There are two levels of preparation:

- The preparation process is handled with a single appointment with the victim (selective preparation).
- The preparation process is handled with multiple appointments with the victim (intense preparation)

The methods of preparation may include interviews, telephone calls, or single/multiple appointments. If appointments are multiple, it is unusual for more than three appointments take place.

The main aims of preparatory work with victims are:

- to ensure that victims understand the nature of the programme, what it can achieve, what it cannot achieve, and what their role will be;
- to assess the expectations of victims from the programme;
- to answer any questions the victim may have concerning the programme.

Offenders

Contact and assessment

With a few exceptions (see below) the Building Bridges programme is suitable for almost any offender. The key consideration in recruiting offenders is that participation must be voluntary and informed. The purpose of Building Bridges must be explained carefully to offenders. In particular, it should be recognised that many offenders may be apprehensive about taking part in the programme, and especially about being confronted with victims of crime. Hence, it is important to get across to them what the purpose of programme is, and also what it is not. Offenders need to understand that victims are not taking part in the programme in order to punish them or to seek revenge. It should be explained that the purpose of the programme is to help them to reflect upon their past offending behaviour, to get a better understanding of its impact upon victims, and to discuss what they might do to make amends and put things right. Offenders need to understand that the programme will be challenging, but also supportive. It is crucial, in the recruitment process, that offenders have the opportunity to ask questions about the process and to have them answered.

As with all participants, offenders must agree to, and show that they are likely to comply with, the following two basic ground rules of the Building Bridges programme:

1. Anything said during a Building Bridges programme should be kept confidential.
2. Participants should behave *respectfully* towards all other participants at all times.

A key concern in Building Bridges is to prevent any re-traumatisation of victims, so offenders must be carefully assessed and prepared to ensure that this does not happen.

Very special care needs to be taken when offenders who wish to take part in the programme may be prevented, by reasons of mental or emotional disorder, from safely taking part in it. Here, the principle of diversity and equal opportunities needs to be considered alongside concerns about the safety of all participants and the risks of re-traumatisation of victims.

Sex offenders are not generally not suitable for the Building Bridges programme, unless the programme is specially designed for sex offenders and specially trained volunteers are available to facilitate it. A group that contains a minority of sex offenders can be problematic.

Recruiting offenders

Methods of recruiting offenders to participate in a Building Bridges programme will differ, depending on whether the programme is to be run within a prison (or other custodial institution) or as a peace circle (outside prison).

Recruiting offenders inside prison

In order to recruit prisoners within a prison it is necessary to work in cooperation with the prison authorities. A first step is usually to discuss this with the person(s) in charge of the prison, at the same time as permission is being sought to run the programme within a prison.

In seeking participants, seek advice and assistance from professional staff working in the prisons (especially psychologists, educators, and those responsible for faith provision and pastoral care). Recruitment methods could include:

- giving a presentation of the programme for a group of prisoners;
- the use of flyers and posters;
- an entry in an education/training book (where prisoners can pick courses) if one exists;
- asking previous participants to spread word about the programme and its value.

Recruiting offenders outside prison

For programmes run outside of prison it can be both more difficult to make contact with offenders, and it may be harder to persuade offenders to participate. Hence, it is important to establish strong links with agencies which have more regular contact with ex-prisoners. These include:

- associations with responsibility for the care and resettlement of ex-offenders;
- probation services;
- social assistance organisations;
- those running prisoner aftercare programmes.

Once the challenge of contacting ex-prisoners has been overcome, a range of methods, similar to those used for recruiting offenders within prison, should be used.

Preparing offenders

A great deal has already been learned, by those running STPs, about best practice for preparing offenders for programmes such as Building Bridges. The following guidance draws upon that experience.¹⁷

- Offenders should have the opportunity to meet with the facilitator and ask, and have answered, any questions that have about Building Bridges and their role in it.
- One crucial goal of this process is to establish a relationship of trust between the facilitators and the offender-participants.
- It is useful to have a preparatory meeting with all offender-participants, to explore why they decided to take part and their hopes and expectations for the programme.

¹⁷ Hence, what follows is based heavily in *Sycamore Tree Project: Programme Guide* (Washington DC, PFI: 2010), p. 3.

- The timetable for the sessions should be explained and discussed, and offender-participants should confirm that, unless there are unforeseen and exceptional circumstances, they can and will attend every session.
- It is crucial to get offenders to understand that many of the victim-participants will also be very apprehensive and nervous about taking part in the programme. Also, for courses run within prisons, try to get across the point that the victim-participants are likely to be less familiar with the prison environment.
- Explain clearly all of the ground rules for participation in the programme.

Chapter 5

The Building Bridges Programme: Suggested Structure

The Building Bridges programme can be run in a variety of ways – there is no set programme. However, in this chapter, we will provide some very basic example of a programme structure. The purpose of doing this is to enable those who wish to run the Building Bridges Programme to envision what it might look like in practice and to have a basic structure as a starting point. Organisers of specific programmes will, of course, want to or need to adapt and develop this structure in order to create a programme appropriate for particular settings or circumstances. This is fine and indeed expected; the only constraint is that the programme should embody the key features of Building Bridges and be organised around its core values. Before setting out this structure, we will first set out a number of general guidelines for those organising a Building Bridges programme. We wish to emphasise strongly, however, that – other than the essentials - these are merely guidelines. In practice, programmes are likely to vary considerably due to local circumstances, various constraints, and so on. Crucially, it is more important that a programme is designed to achieve the goals of Building Bridges, and to adhere to its core values, than it is to adhere to a definite structure.

General guidelines

Essentials

Before the actual course starts, the leader of BB course must be sure that the following acts have been completed:

1. Recruitment of participants and volunteers.
2. Preparation of participants.
3. Send information about the programme to the prison authority (where the programme is run within a prison).
4. Obtain the necessary permissions for the course. Such permits shall specify the dates of the sessions, the list of the participants, the room for the course and the tools you may need to use within the project. Communicate with prison or other facility about participants, importation of course material, and planning.
5. Inform organisations and stakeholders of which the potential participants become familiar with the programme.

Facilitation and programme preparation

- There is usually one facilitator, supported by a small number of co-facilitators (see chapter 3).
- The facilitator, in advance, should divide tasks among team members, and prepare them for leading (small) groups.
- Appropriate arrangements should be made for PowerPoint presentations, video clips, reading - and homework material, drinks and snacks, breaks, etc.

Duration and spacing

- A Building Bridges programme usually consists of 5-8 sessions.
- The most common 'spacing' of the sessions is one per week.
- The usual duration of each session is two hours.

Participants

- The usual number of offenders (or ex-offenders) who take part in each programme is 6. However, this can vary considerably.
- Ideally, the number of victims taking part in the programme will match the number of offenders.
- Offenders and victims should undertake to attend every session.

The 'active', involved and participatory nature of Building Bridges

- Whilst there will usually be some formal presentations and 'teaching', the sessions should consist mainly of discussion (in small sub-groups or the whole group) and story-telling.
- As well as discussion, it is useful to have some activities.

The setting

- A room large enough to accommodate all participants and facilitators is required.
- There should be flexible furnishing to enable small-group and whole-group discussions to take place, as well as presentations.
- Where the programme is run in a prison, clear and carefully thought through arrangements will need to be made to ensure that victims and facilitators can come into the prison safely and that there is a clear procedure for this.
- Where the programme is run in a prison, clear and carefully thought through arrangements will need to be made to ensure that offenders are able to participate fully in the programme. This should be discussed in detail beforehand with a relevant member of the prison staff.

Certificates

- Each participant who completes the programme should receive an appropriate certificate of participation after the final session.

The 'trajectory' of Building Bridges

As in other restorative justice processes, Building Bridges is structured to bring participants along a particular trajectory. Early on, the emphasis is upon the understanding, acknowledging and accepting responsibility for the harm and trauma caused by criminal wrongdoing. As the programme progresses the emphasis shifts more and more towards positive steps that can be taken to repair that harm and to heal people and relationships harmed by crime. Although the dynamics of each programme may vary, it is important to conclude on a hopeful, positive, and celebratory note. By the conclusion of the programme, participants should ideally sense that positive change in people and relationships is possible.

Basic (adaptable) programme structure

The actual duration of the course will depend upon a number of factors. In the following diagram, to give some examples of the nature of the programme, we set out a number of different possible programme outlines.

<i>5 weeks</i>	<i>6 weeks</i>	<i>7 weeks</i>	<i>8 weeks</i>
1. RJ – victims and offenders	1. RJ – victims and offenders	1. RJ – victims and offenders	1. RJ – victims and offenders
2. What is crime?	2. What is crime?	2. What is crime?	2. What is crime?
3. Responsibility and confession	3. Responsibility and confession	3. Responsibility and confession	3. Responsibility
4. Forgiveness and reconciliation	4. Forgiveness	4. Forgiveness	4. Confession
5. Step forward, celebration with guests	5. Reconciliation, take the next step	5. Reconciliation	5. Forgiveness
	6. Celebration with guests	6. Take the next step	6. Reconciliation
		7. Celebration with guests	7. Take the next step
			8. Celebration with guests

Objectives of the stages

RJ – victims and offenders	To explore the experiences and needs of victims and perpetrators of crime, and to introduce restorative justice as a way of viewing and responding to crime and all those involved.
What is crime?	To explore different ways of understanding crime, including what it means to understand crime through the lens of restorative justice.
Responsibility	To explore what it means to take responsibility for committing an offence, and the challenges involved.
Confession	To explore the meaning, power and importance of confession and repentance.
Forgiveness	To explore the meaning, power, and importance of forgiveness.
Reconciliation	To understand the impact of reconciliation and explore ways of restoration of crime for all parties.
Next steps	To move toward healing and restoration and to explore the steps that are needed in the lives of the participants.
Celebration	To reflect upon and to celebrate the new awareness that group members have about crime and healing.

Chapter 6

Follow-up Work with Victims and Offenders

Following a Building Bridges programme, a number of follow-up activities should be undertaken. It is important to recognise the importance of the period shortly following a programme for all participants. In this chapter guidelines are given for considerate aftercare.

Offenders might want to meet with their actual victims and explore ways in which they might repair the harm caused by their offence. If they express such a wish, they should be informed very clearly about whether this is possible and, unless the organisers of the Building Bridges programme also do this, referred to an agency with experience of organising direct victim-offender encounters for restorative justice dialogue.

Victims may want to become involved in victim support work. Again, they should receive guidance on how to become involved.

Besides referring, organisations running Building Bridges may consider which follow-up support they can provide or set up themselves, e.g. establish a form of official victim support, offer buddy projects by volunteers, or even develop a follow-up course that can be given on an individual basis by volunteers to participants. In this follow-up course the participant can review what is learned, discuss, and reflect upon any changes gone through, and to discuss plans for the future.

Follow-up work with victims

Providing follow-up to victims is a key aspect of Building Bridges, and a critical success factor for the increased focus on victims in restorative justice processes. How victims are supported after a Building Bridges programme will naturally differ from country to country. In some countries there will be no structural support for victims and facilitators may not know if and how victims can be further guided, whilst in others, support systems such as referral systems and introductions to victim associations exist.

The range in support provisions by the organisation that facilitates Building Bridges, runs from *low-intensity*, where victims may be integrated into newsletter mailing lists and contacted by telephone to ask how they are doing after the Building Bridges programme, to *high-intensity*, where victims are offered ongoing cooperation, personal counselling, and/or referrals to victim support centres if needed. Further activities may be initiated such as visiting schools together and talking in front of students about their experiences of victimisation and restoration.

Follow-up work with offenders

Facilitators should seek to ensure that the impacts of a Building Bridges programme on the (ex)-offender are maintained after the programme has ended. This requires the provision of follow-up work; the importance of this cannot be emphasised enough. The long-term healing and reintegration of offenders may well depend on how (ex)-offenders' practical and emotional needs are addressed in the follow-up phase.

Offenders should have the opportunity to review what has been learned from the sessions of the programme, and should have the opportunity to explore their feelings and emotions regarding the changes they may have gone through during and after their participation in the programme.

Follow-up might also present the opportunity to discuss future plans, to provide a longer-term vision for the (ex)-offender for truly integrating positive changes into their lives. Facilitators and programme managers should be aware of this and put in place processes allowing this longer-term vision to be addressed.

Offenders may wish to undertake other follow-up activities. For example they may wish to keep in touch with the victims they have worked with, or even to meet the victim of their crime. They may wish to get involved in a restitution project or victim offender mediation.

Offenders may continue to need guidance or someone to talk with. Facilitators should be prepared, where appropriate, to refer (ex)-offenders to a professional counsellor, social worker, pastoral worker or other relevant professional groups.

Offer the opportunity for participants to request meetings

Set up a system where victims and (ex)-offenders can make ‘formal’ requests to meet with facilitators or team members during the time after the Building Bridges programme.¹⁸ This should follow an established process.

- The participant, whether victim or (ex)-offenders should be aware of their entitlement to request a meeting, and this should be stated in the victims’ literature, information for (ex)-offenders, programme posters or through personal advice.
- The participant should know how they can arrange this, either by telephone, email, or personal request. Victims should be aware that they can also bring supporters (friends or family members) to any meeting, and this should be emphasised as normal practice. The (ex)-offender should be made aware of their possibilities for arranging such a meeting, subject to the individual restraints of their situation.
- When a request is made, the programme organiser is obliged to record the request. In order to do so, the organiser needs to develop a system for recording requests and updating relevant information, such as: the responsible person; when the meeting takes place; who was present; what the outcome of the meeting was; if there were any further referrals; if so, to whom; and if any additional follow-up is required on the part of the programme organiser. Not only does this make follow-up with participants more easy to monitor – for example it may be that (ex)-offenders move to different parts of the prison, or to other prisons entirely, in which case it would be easy to lose track of any requests and actions, and for victims it can be just as easy for requests to get lost – but it also demonstrates to the participant that their needs are being taken seriously by facilitators and programme managers, and ensuring that they do not lose the ‘voice’ that the programme has worked so hard at trying to establish.

¹⁸ By ‘formal’ we mean that the process should be formally established. However, for those seeking such a meeting the process should have an informal feel to it. There should not be such formality that it acts as a barrier to those seeking such a meeting.



Figure 2 – A systematic process of follow-up support

Facilitators should have systematic approaches to dealing with victim-support and (ex)-offender support after a Building bridges programme within the context of their own national setting. This may be achieved by adhering to the following guidelines¹⁹.

Follow up on agreements, notification, and feedback to participants

Both victims and (ex)-offenders need to feel that they are being taken seriously, and that the services being provided to them are reliable and outcome-oriented.

- Agreements on action should be sufficiently logged (see figure 2) and there should be systems in place to ensure that these actions are followed up by a defined and agreed-upon deadline. Failure to follow-up on agreements will marginalise the victim, and make them feel unsupported.
- When action has been undertaken, a defined process should be followed to ensure that the victim is informed about the action, along with any other relevant information. This process may be defined on a national level, but may be integrated into meetings with participants, it may involve phone calls, or written correspondence.
- Facilitators and team members should always ensure to probe for victim feedback for each action, to determine if the participant is satisfied with the action, if they require further action, and if so, to discuss what.
- This should be logged in the participants' records for reference and potential follow-up.

Referrals

It is important to provide referrals or other forms of assistance, should they be required by the victim or (ex)-offender, or deemed appropriate by the programme organiser. Referring a victim to a suitable after-support service requires a full understanding of:

- the victim's needs at this stage of their recovery;
- exactly what is on offer in the national setting;
- how best to align victims needs with a potential victim service.

Referring an (ex)-offender to a suitable after-support service requires a full understanding of:

¹⁹ These guidelines have been adapted from the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs (2000) *Guidelines for Victim-Sensitive Victim-Offender Mediation: Restorative Justice Through Dialogue*. Available online at https://www.ncjrs.gov/ovc_archives/reports/96517-gdlines_victims-sens/ncj176346.pdf (last accessed 23.10.14)

- the (ex)-offender's needs at this stage of their recovery;
- exactly what is on offer in the national setting;
- how best to align (ex)-offenders needs with a potential support service;
- any legal and custodial restrictions in place that could affect referral;
- any existing referrals (such as drug and alcohol services) which they may be subject to outside of the Building Bridges programme.

Programme organisers, facilitators and other team members should be sensitised to the emotional, psychological, and humanistic needs of individuals so as to be able to decide where they can best be referred to, if indeed further referral is deemed appropriate. This can be done by asking open questions, and listening carefully to responses, respecting the views and feelings of the victim or (ex)-offenders. It is important to put the participant and their feelings at the centre of the discussion, to ensure their empowerment and self-determination. Questions may include:

- How do you feel about the situation now?
- How do you foresee the next steps?
- What are your fears or worries now?
- What do you think you need to improve your own situation now?

Whilst these examples indicate the kind of questions that could be asked, facilitators and other team-members should be skilled and experienced enough, and exercise a high degree of emotional intelligence, adapting their approach to the emerging needs and emotional state of the victim, and ensuring that the victim feels empowered to make their own decisions.

Understanding available service provision for victims and (ex)-offenders

Programme organisers, facilitators and other team members should be sufficiently informed about all possible support services for victims and for (ex)-offenders in their national setting, including:

- what the service offers;
- what benefits it may provide;
- what criteria a service user may need to fulfil;
- what the referral procedure is.

This may be compiled in a *referral handbook* in each country, and then used as the basis for training relevant people.

One important set of services that participants should be made aware of are those offering victim-offender mediation or conferencing, in which a victim might have the opportunity to meet with his or her own offender, and vice-versa, should the participant desire this.

Aligning needs with referral options

Victims and (ex)-offenders should be made aware of all of the options available, and the facilitator's role is to enable them to take a step in the direction they feel is best for them. They should be fully advised on the options, according to what is available in the national setting. Facilitators can make suggestions, based on experience, of what might benefit the participant given their current needs, although the final decision should remain with the individual (although

there may be more obligations on the (ex)-offenders part, depending on the situation of their custody or other legal requirements).

Ensure sufficient training and development of facilitators and team-members on victim sensitisation

Regular training and development on topics of victim sensitisation will help to promote better practices amongst Building Bridges facilitators and team members, and help to strengthen a positive reputation of Building Bridges as a victim-friendly service.

- Programme organisers can develop their own development programmes based on experience.
- Programme organisers can seek collaboration with third-party victim support services within their country (or where possible on a European level) to develop and provide training seminars, workshops and other programmes. The added benefit of this is the enhanced cooperation between the Building Bridges programme and other critical stakeholders in victim-support.
- Regular contact with victims, perhaps through scheduled telephone reviews or ‘catch-ups’ will help to develop enhanced victim-sensitisation through exposure and enhanced experience, although programme organisers should determine good-practice protocols and risk-assessment tools to prevent these phone calls having any negative impact on victims.

Follow-up for the programme

In addition to follow-up with the participants, facilitators and programme coordinators should seek to undertake planning and review meetings to internally evaluate the programme, exploring strengths and weaknesses of the programme, identifying what worked well and what could be improved upon. This refers not only to the ‘human dimension’ of the programme, i.e. evaluating how the programme impacted on participants, but also to the ‘organisational dimension’, whereby facilitators and programme coordinators can explore the opportunities for further collaboration and cooperation with critical stakeholders. This will help facilitators and programme coordinators to better plan for future programmes and interventions, and for long-term growth of the programme in various contextual settings.