



## Center for Conflict Studies: Driving Positive Change Through Applied Conflict Resolution

Conflicts are inevitable phenomena, often viewed negatively because of their propensity to turn violent. The Center for Conflict Studies (CCS) at the Middlebury Institute instead views conflict as a vehicle for change, focusing on the study and application of the right tools for managing conflicts effectively and positively. The center emphasizes bridging research and practice to better understand and manage conflicts and to transform inequalities and social injustices. The CCS's programs and publications contribute to the theory and practice of the field of conflict studies, and to strengthening the network of scholars and practitioners in the field. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, the center hopes to provide rich, empirically tested materials to policy makers.

**Dr. Pushpa Iyer led students on a field course to study Challenges to Peacebuilding in Mindanao, the Philippines, in January 2015.**



The CCS provides students with the opportunity to engage in hands-on projects, accomplishing meaningful work in the field while at the same time enriching their professional and academic experience. The Institute focuses on critical issues at the international, regional, and community levels. The work of the CCS both complements and supplements the Institute's existing academic programs, providing space for students, faculty, scholars, and practitioners to approach critical global challenges—social, political, and economic—as vehicles for change.

Founded in 2011 by Dr. Pushpa Iyer, the CCS advocates for nonviolent change. Its mission is to gather, disseminate, and act upon knowledge gained through

- providing a platform where the voices of all, but especially those of the marginalized, oppressed, and unprivileged, are heard;
- exchanging information and ideas between the community of scholars and the community of practitioners working on issues of conflict and peace;
- supporting and participating in individual, community, institutional, and national efforts to end violence and build peace; and thus to better manage and resolve conflicts and simultaneously to contribute to the furthering and strengthening of the field of conflict studies.

### Objectives

The center's objectives are to advocate for nonviolent social change through research and practice; to support and conduct empirical research that furthers understanding of conflicts; to support and develop context-specific tools that can be used to manage and resolve conflicts; to create a network of practitioners and scholars to share knowledge, information, and expertise on conflicts; and to disseminate information gained through research and practice to relevant institutions and policy makers.

### Areas of Focus

The center's programs revolve around three focus areas:

**Understanding Conflicts:** Identifying the sources, root causes, parties, and dynamics of conflicts are key steps in working towards a resolution. Through research, we hope to further our understanding of the nature, variety, and types of conflict situations in the world around us. We place a special emphasis on research that furthers understanding of violent conflicts. Thus, studies that focus on armed actors—both state and nonstate—are of great interest to us.

### CCS in Washington

The Center for Conflict Studies will expand its operations to the Washington, D.C., area in January 2016. Director Pushpa Iyer will be based in the Middlebury in D.C. office at 1400 K Street and will coordinate CCS activities in the Capitol region.



Dr. Pushpa Iyer and students in Mindanao, the Philippines.

**Developing Tools and Skills to Resolve Conflicts in a Nonviolent Manner:**

The field of conflict studies has many tools to deal with conflict, including mediation, negotiation, facilitation, and dialogue. However, there are many other methods, such as a society’s traditional methods of dealing with conflict, that often receive little or no attention. Research that furthers the toolbox of conflict resolvers will receive the center’s support.

**Peacebuilding in Postwar Societies:**

Societies emerging from violent conflict are faced with the mammoth task of building or rebuilding infrastructure, relationships, and systems to create conditions that will prevent conflict from re-emerging. Research that focuses on the many aspects of building peace will receive the center’s attention. This may include, but is not limited to, justice, trauma healing, dealing with history and memory, security reforms,

development, gender, governance, and peace agreements and implementation. Research on the challenges faced by state and nonstate actors involved in peacebuilding is also of interest to CCS. The center is particularly interested in the intersection of conflict, security, development, and peace.

**Programs, Services, and Resources**

The CCS offers a wide array of programs, services, and resources. Programs are centered around the following:

**Certificate in Conflict Resolution:**

This certificate program (open to both degree and nondegree students) is integral to the center’s mission and objectives. Students seeking a certificate in conflict resolution from the Middlebury Institute learn to do in-depth analysis of conflicts and develop conflict-resolution skills.

**Visiting Scholars:** The CCS Visiting Scholars program is open to PhD candidates and other scholars and practitioners in the field of conflict studies. Visiting Scholars are expected to write a report at the end of their

fellowship, which will be published under the center’s Pathfinder series.

**Research Projects:** The center sponsors research projects on a variety of subjects relevant to peace and conflict. All research is empirical and culminates in a working paper published under the center’s Pathfinder series.

**Education and Training:** The center conducts education and training programs on issues of conflict, peace, development, and social justice. The methodology for these courses brings the students to the field, or field experiences to the classroom via three programs: Challenges to Peacebuilding, The Praxis of Conflict Transformation, and the Summer Peacebuilding Program. In addition, the Peacebuilders Fellowship provides fellows the opportunity to work in the field specifically on issues related to water conflicts.

**Publications:** The CCS has two regular publications: the annual magazine *Reflections*, presenting commentaries on conflicts around the world from practitioners and academics, and *Wandering Thoughts*, an online forum of opinion pieces on current events and issues.

**Annual Conference Series:** The CCS holds a conference in Monterey every year in November on a conflict- and peace-related theme. These conferences are open to scholars and practitioners from around the world.

**Vision**

To develop societies in which conditions to prevent all forms of violent conflict are present and where transformed individual, community, and institutional relationships make peace just and sustainable.

“Knowledge as action; action as change. We at the CCS believe that when humans reach the point where knowledge brims over, action is inevitable. Our task is to create the space and the resources for knowledge acquisition.”

— Professor Pushpa Iyer, Founding Director