

A CONVERSATION WITH



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There Can Be No Peace without Development

As the Alan B. Slifka Chair of the graduate programs in coexistence and conflict, how do you define your mission?

There are still too many violent conflicts in the world. Our humanity cannot accept this indignity. Our responsibility is to bring lasting peace in conflict-affected areas, but how? We need a new generation of professionals who can leverage the strategies and skills that have proven effective. In a nutshell, peace-leading is the mission of our school. Our programs aim to wage peace globally and locally, by preparing peacemakers to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts. Our students and our alumni become agents of change, from conflict to coexistence.

How do you see your role as a professor at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management?

Every faculty member at the Heller School is a bridge-maker between theory and practice. We go to the field not simply to study it, but to advance the cause of social justice. Personally, on the theoretical side, I have developed worldwide programs in research and education to further responsible leadership. On the practical side, I have been involved as a mediator, locally in Burundi and the Congo, and globally as facilitator of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding.

How do you build peace?

Peacebuilding involves transforming a conflict-affected society and achieving peaceful coexistence. We start with the social reality, then we analyze it, extract the best practices, and learn from failure. We then bring these experiential theories to our students, who return as reflective practitioners to the field. In this way, more finely tuned practices emerge, which in turn further a more sustainable peace.

What will a student learn from your programs?

Our students, who are 80 percent international, spend one year in residence at Heller. They study with experts in the fields of conflict strategies, dialogue and mediation processes, civil society movements, race relations, international politics, human rights, and ethnic conflict. Students then spend three months in the field, in governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental organizations. This fieldwork is more than an internship; it links theory and practice. Students enter an organization, audit their courses of action, and assess the results. Our future graduates' observations help conflict practitioners and then bring stronger, more informed skills and strategies back to the Heller community, through their field thesis and the capstone.

What about the dual degree with the program in sustainable international development?

There is no development without peace, and no peace without development. That is why Heller offers the unique option of a dual master's degree with the program in sustainable international development. Through an additional year in residence, students develop the skills necessary to undertake and engage in development and aid work under conditions involving violent conflict.

Where do the alumni of your program work?

Our graduates work with organizations as diverse as the USAID Democracy and Governance Program in Southern Sudan/Abyei; the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission in Rwanda; the EastWest Institute/Institute for Stability and Development in Serbia; and the Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia in Tajikistan. They all strive to build a more peaceful world. We are all very proud of them.

The Heller School
for Social Policy and Management

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