

CANADA'S TOP 40 UNDER 40 AWARDS

Scott Gilmore, 37**Executive director and co-founder
Peace Dividend Trust, Ottawa**

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Scott Gilmore had a light bulb go on almost a decade ago, when he was in East Timor as part of a United Nations mission to restore peace and stability to this small Asian nation as it fought for independence from Indonesia.

Mr. Gilmore had rented a burnt-out house from a local resident and observed how his landlord, suddenly flush with rent money, began hiring neighbours, first to drag the remains of a wrecked bus into his yard and then to rebuild the bus.

"With my rent money, he was able to get a bus route going in the community and after a year he had three buses and was the single largest employer in his neighbourhood," recalls Mr. Gilmore, who had joined the peacekeeping mission while on a leave of absence from the Canadian diplomatic service. "He accomplished all this on the back of the rent money coming from one person."

So what was Mr. Gilmore's bright idea?

Shortly after he started working for the UN operation in East Timor, Mr. Gilmore began to feel frustrated by what he saw as fixable inefficiencies in the peacekeeping and humanitarian industries.

In particular, he and his fellow peacekeepers were troubled by the common practice by embassies, aid agencies, and military forces on the ground to bring in supplies and personnel from other countries; it was an expensive practice and both supplies and people often arrived late.

So when he saw what his rent money was doing for his landlord and the community he was living in, he thought: Didn't it make more sense for peacekeeping and humanitarian missions to look at local sources? "It just seemed so logical," says Mr. Gilmore, who lives in Ottawa with his wife and their three young children. "Goods and international staff were being flown in from overseas while local residents were watching all this activity and so many of them are unemployed."

A number of Mr. Gilmore's fellow peacekeepers in East Timor had similar ideas and soon they were discussing ways to fix many of the problems they saw in the field.

They eventually shared some of these ideas with senior UN officials.

"They said 'Great idea, but we don't have the resources to go into communities to find local entrepreneurs to provide these supplies and services,'" says Mr. Gilmore. "Then, around 2003, they said that if we set up an organization that would pilot these ideas, they would support it."

With funding from the World Bank and the governments of Canada, Great Britain and Australia, Mr. Gilmore and his colleagues formed the Peace Dividend Trust and quickly dispatched people to 10 peacekeeping mission sites around the world to find out how peacekeeping money and aid monies were being spent.

"With the data from this research, we tested our pilot project in Afghanistan where we set up a team in Kabul to find local goods and services — like bottled water or chain link fences — that could be purchased by the Canadian embassy and U.S. military," Mr. Gilmore explains. "And then it was as a matter of giving those names to the procurement officers."

These initial efforts have borne quantifiable results, says Mr. Gilmore. For instance, local businesses in Afghanistan have won more than \$46-million in contracts for goods such as bottled water, fruits and vegetables, office supplies and furniture.

But introducing procurement officers to local suppliers isn't the only function of the Peace Dividend Trust. Mr. Gilmore and his team have also created peacekeeping manuals that set out the steps that need to be taken to start a mission in a new site.

They are also creating a Lonely Planet-style pocket guide for workers in war zones.

Mr. Gilmore says he often marvels at how far Peace Dividend Trust has come since that light bulb moment in East Timor. In addition to Afghanistan and East Timor, the organization now works in Sierra Leone and has offices in Ottawa, New York, London, Kabul and Dili in Timor.

"There are times when you're in the moment," says Mr. Gilmore, "and you think, 'How did I end up standing on a sidewalk in Kabul or in a jungle in Timor?'"

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