Z. Melinda Witter,

As an academic, professional trainer and practitioner of conflict mitigation, community and human development, Ms. Witter has over 28 years of professional experience in designing and directing large international development programs for USAID, World Bank and a diversity of professional associations and nonprofits. Her specialty focuses on conflict resolution and peace building initiatives, community development, training and education, *Appreciative Inquiry*, media initiatives and youth programs. She is deeply familiar with the dynamics of the Middle East region, encompassing ten years of Kurdish, Iraqi and Near East research and field consultancy ranging from ethnic and religious conflict resolution, tribal mediation, civil society and organizational development, economic development, and cross-cultural communications including use of music and cultural art exchange.

Ms. Witter's life’s research and work experience has brought her to 38 countries. This includes living in Iraq for the past five years, where she researched and authored *Islamic Approaches and Principles of Dialogue* (2006) for the development of integrated frameworks to peace building and dialogue. In addition to directing international development programs, the past four years research includes application and program design using drums for youth and community peace building programs, that’s transformed from “Drumming for Peace” in 2004 to the current program, “Ashti Drums.” Ms. Witter has been deeply involved in music since a young age including formal music education, and she carries the love of music and sound throughout her life and within the design of her peace building programs. She has conducted over 22 drum circles in Iraq, including women, youth and mixed ethnic and religious groups.

Ms. Witter holds an Executive Master's degree of International Service from The American University in Washington, D.C. with a concentration in conflict reconciliation, nonviolence, dialogue, and Iraqi/Kurdish studies. A partial list of articles and papers include; *Iraq International Educational Leadership Role in Dialogue*, *Nonviolence and Peace building Initiatives, Contemporary Responses to Terrorism among the Abrahamic Religio-Political Movements: An Invitation to Dialogue*, *Equality in Islam and the Women of Oman*, and *Western Stereotyping of the Middle Eastern Woman* and *Appreciative Inquiry in Iraq Kurdistan*. Currently she is the Deputy Country Director for several media development programs in Iraq, managing the women in media program and she is working on numerous articles, photo journalism projects.