

**GLOBAL
PARTNERSHIP
FOR THE
PREVENTION
OF ARMED
CONFLICT**

Edited by Goele Scheers

Assessing Progress on the Road to Peace

Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THIS ISSUE PAPER 5

INTRODUCTION 7

1. AID FOR PEACE: PLANNING AND EVALUATION IN CONFLICT ZONES *LUC REYCHLER* 9

2. CIVIL SOCIETY: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING
ACTIVITIES *JOS DE LA HAYE* 18

3. THE EVALUATION OF CONFLICT PREVENTION PROGRAMMING: CHALLENGES FOR GPPAC *PETER
WOODROW* 22

4. COMPLEXITY AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL CHANGE NETWORKS *RICARDO WILSON-GRAU* 28

5. MEASURING SUCCESS IN COMPLEX SETTINGS: THE EXPERIENCES OF GPPAC WITH PLANNING,
MONITORING AND EVALUATION *GOELE SCHEERS* 38

6. THE LAC PLATFORM'S APPROACH TO MONITORING AND EVALUATION: SOME REFLECTIONS
ANA BOURSE 47

7. NANSEN DIALOGUE - DIALOGUE IN PRACTICE: CHALLENGES FOR EVALUATION *DANIJELA
GALOVIC AND GORAN LOJANCIC* 51

CONCLUSION 57

THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR THE PREVENTION OF ARMED CONFLICT 59

ABOUT THIS ISSUE PAPER

Within the field of conflict prevention, there is still a quest to find appropriate methods and ways in dealing with planning, monitoring and evaluation. This issue paper - the fifth in a series of studies into issues related to conflict prevention and peacebuilding - brings together the experiences of academics and practitioners dealing with planning, monitoring and evaluating conflict prevention activities. This paper has been made possible with the financial support of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. If you have any questions related to the paper, please contact the European Centre for Conflict Prevention, the Global Secretariat of GPPAC through Goele Scheers (g.scheers@conflict-prevention.net).

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is a worldwide civil society-led network aiming to build a new international consensus on peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict. It was established in 2003 in response to the call of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his 2001 report *Prevention of Armed Conflict*. GPPAC works on strengthening civil society networks for peace and security by linking local, national, regional, and global levels of action and effective engagement with governments, the UN system and regional organisations.

The Global Partnership is structured through fifteen regional networks, each of which has developed an action agenda to reflect regional principles and priorities. The Regional Action Agendas fed into *People Building Peace: A Global Action Agenda for the Prevention of Violent Conflict* which outlines key priorities for change, and involved more than thousand organisations worldwide in its drafting. The final document was presented to the UN in July 2005, during the Global Conference From Reaction to Prevention: Civil Society Forging Partnerships to Prevent Violent Conflict and Build Peace, organised by GPPAC in partnership with the UNDPA at UN Headquarters.

Since the Global Conference, GPPAC has entered its implementation phase. Each of the regions has its own Regional Work Plan, which fed into the Global Work Plan 2007-2010, focusing on five key areas: Awareness Raising, Interaction and Advocacy, Network Building, Knowledge Generation and Sharing, Early Warning and Early response. As part of this process, GPPAC is developing a Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) system. Many challenges had and still have to be faced in this process.

INTRODUCTION

This paper evolved out of the experiences of GPPAC in setting up a planning, monitoring and evaluation system. During this process, discussions about monitoring and evaluation took place within the network. These discussions revealed that many of the civil society organisations are facing challenges in monitoring and evaluating conflict prevention activities; most of them are still looking for effective tools and methods to assess the results of their work. We hope that the information in this paper will help them and others in this field to find suitable ways to plan, monitor and evaluate conflict prevention activities.

The first chapter of this paper presents two instruments. One is the 'Aid for peace' approach. First, an analytic tool for pre-assessing peacebuilding interventions is outlined. It describes how to analyse the peacebuilding needs in a country, area or region and assess the relevance of a proposed intervention, the risks it runs and its potential peacebuilding effects. The second instrument concentrates on planning activities for a coherent peacebuilding architecture.

Chapter 2 describes "how civil society is an added value in assessing the impact of an intervention in an area affected by violent conflict". It focuses in particular on the data gathering process with the involvement of civil society organisations.

Chapter 3 - The evaluation of conflict prevention programming: Challenges for GPPAC - explains the approach of the Reflecting on Peace Practice Project (RPP) to assessing the impact of conflict prevention activities. The chapter defines conflict prevention and presents an overview of the generic RPP principles, process and criteria for the evaluation of peace-building programmes. The second part of the chapter develops

specific criteria and questions to be answered in the evaluation of conflict prevention efforts. The last part outlines how the generic and specialised approaches might be applied to GPPAC.

Chapter 4 lays out the challenges faced in planning, monitoring and evaluating for results in international social change networks and suggests ways for addressing these challenges.

The following four chapters outline practical experiences with planning, monitoring and evaluation from GPPAC members. Chapter 5 describes the experience of the GPPAC Global Secretariat in setting up a planning, monitoring and evaluation system for the network. It outlines the challenges faced along this process as well as the solutions that were found. This is followed by a chapter that explains the challenges faced by CRIES, based in Argentina, in coordinating the Latin American and Caribbean Platform for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding network. In particular the need to ensure high levels of involvement of the network members in registering progress from activities to objectives is highlighted. The chapter emphasises the difficulty of attribution of outcomes and especially of impact (versus outputs, which are easy), using the donor-imposed logical framework and reporting templates. In contrast, important lessons have been learned with the alternative M&E system developed by CRIES. Finally, the last chapter explains the Nansen Dialogue methodology to achieve communication in which all sides understand 'the other'. Furthermore, the author describes the system of monitoring and evaluating that is user-friendly, participatory, results as well as process oriented, focussed on meso-level changes in relationships between people and changes in institutions.

1 AID FOR PEACE: PLANNING AND EVALUATION IN CONFLICT ZONES¹

By Luc Reychler*

The last ten years many efforts have been made to get a better understanding about planning and evaluation of interventions in conflict zones:

(a) peacebuilding interventions, and (b) development, humanitarian or sometimes just ‘aid’ interventions.

The first type of interventions aims to directly contribute to peacebuilding in a country or area. These types of interventions can be on the policy level (such as official or unofficial mediation or facilitation efforts or official post-conflict efforts such as Truth Commissions), or on the program or project level (such as disarmament, demobilization or reintegration of ex-combatants, negotiation or conflict resolution training, peace education, empowerment of civil society peace groups or activities to deal with destroyed relationships, of people after armed conflicts such as reconciliation or dialogue projects). The second type of interventions has primary objectives other than peacebuilding but take place in areas affected by armed conflict or in the aftermath of war. The primary objective of these interventions is the development of a country or region or to reduce human suffering. When these interventions take place in conflict zones they need to a) reduce the conflict related risks, b) to ensure that they will not have unintended negative effects on the conflict dynamics, and c) assess if the intervention can indirectly contribute to peacebuilding through their development and humanitarian activities.

The ‘Aid for peace’ approach is an analytic tool, developed by Paffenholz and Reychler, for planning,

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¹ This article highlights the core concepts in Thania Paffenholz and Luc Reychler’s book ‘Aid for peace: a guide to planning and evaluation for conflict zones, 2007, Nomos, Baden Baden, Germany, and preliminary research findings of Luc Reychler, Arnim Langer and Jan Carmans on the coordination and coherence of complex peacebuilding interventions at the Center for Peace Research and Strategic Studies, University of Leuven. luc.reychler@soc.kuleuven.be

assessing or evaluating peacebuilding, development or humanitarian interventions. The purpose of applying the framework to peacebuilding interventions is to:

- a) assure the peacebuilding relevance of the project;
- b) improve the effects of the intervention on peacebuilding (in terms of outcome and impact);
- c) avoid unintended conflict risks, and
- d) contribute to the development of a systematic planning, monitoring and evaluation procedures for peacebuilding interventions.

The aim of the ‘Aid for peace’ approach in development and humanitarian work is to:

- a) ensure that the intervention will not have unintended negative effects on the conflict dynamics;
- b) reduce the risks an intervention might encounter in areas of armed conflict;
- c) assess if the intervention can also have positive effects in peacebuilding in addition to the development or humanitarian goals, and
- d) embed considerations of peace and conflict dynamics into standard development and humanitarian planning, monitoring and evaluation procedures comparable to the gender or environmental lens.

The aid for peace approach consists of four parts (see figure 1):

- A. An analysis of the peacebuilding needs in country, area or region.
- B. An assessment of the peacebuilding relevance of the planned or existing intervention.
- C. An assessment of the conflict risks (expected or manifest effects of the conflict on the intervention activities).
- D. An assessment of the expected or manifest effects of the interventions on the conflict dynamics and the peacebuilding process (peace and conflict outcomes and impact).

Part A: Analysing the peacebuilding needs

The analysis of the peacebuilding needs in a particular country or area provides the foundation for subsequent parts of the analytics framework. The peacebuilding needs are assessed in four consecutive steps:

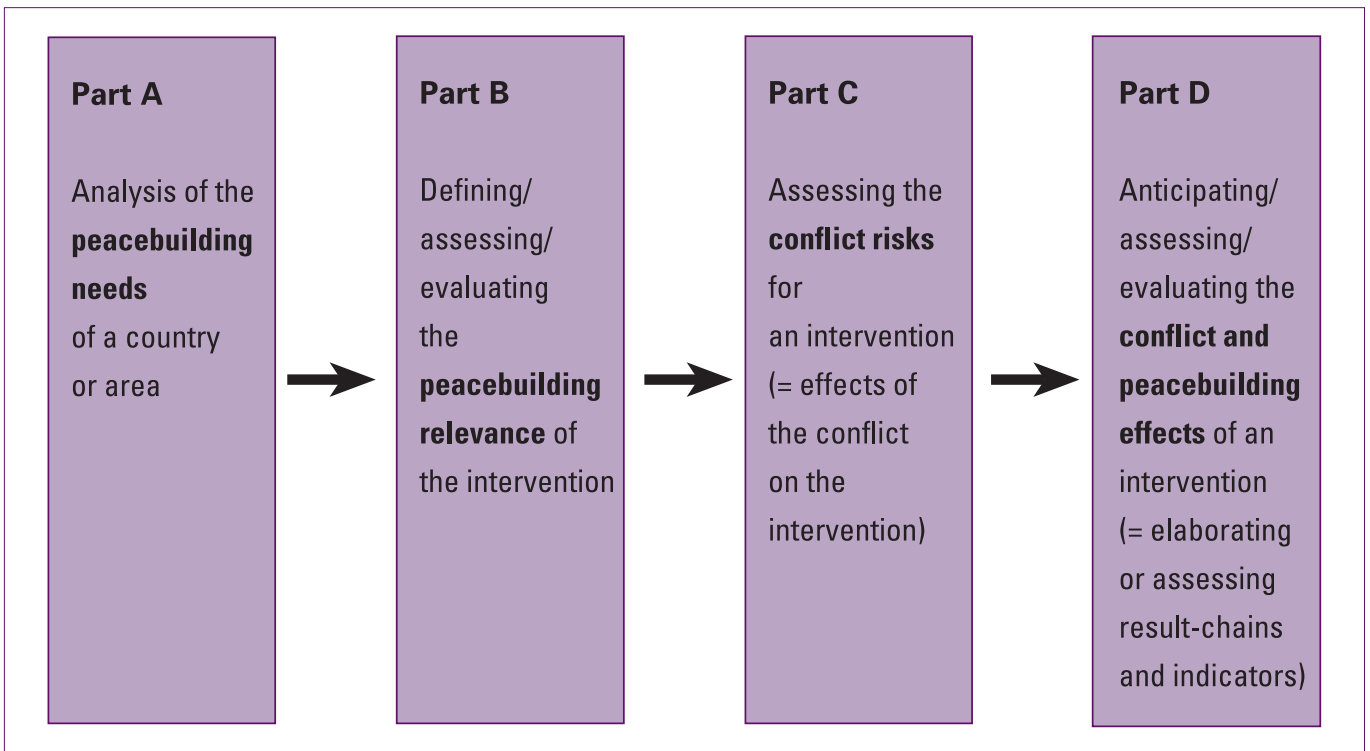


Figure 1. ABCD of the Aid for Peace framework

1. *Analysing the conflict and peace environment.* The objective of the first step of the peacebuilding needs assessment involves analysing both the conflict dynamics and the peacebuilding process of a country or area. The analysis can be made at the macro-, sector- or micro level and focuses on what happened as well as on what is currently happening. When applying on the program level, we briefly analyse the overall conflict and peace situation, but focus mainly on the conflict and peacebuilding situation in the geographic area of an intervention.
2. *Anticipating conflict dynamics and peacebuilding.* The situation in a conflict zone is subject to rapid change; peacebuilding, development and humanitarian aid actors must anticipate possible developments in the conflict dynamics and peacebuilding process. Understanding and envisioning different possible future scenarios helps intervening actors to be more flexible in adapting their interventions as new situations arise. Advance thinking also enhances the capacity of such actors to react more systematically to changed contexts.
3. *Identifying the peacebuilding deficiencies:* clarifying

stockholder's vision for peacebuilding. To identify the peacebuilding deficiencies that prevail one has to:

- define the peace one wants (i.e. explain or develop a vision for peacebuilding). Without clearly and transparently defining a vision of the peace one wants to build one cannot easily define strategies and activities for peacebuilding intervention. Without a clear idea of the end state it's difficult to conduct an analysis of the peacebuilding deficiencies.
- specify the conditions that would enhance the peacebuilding process, and
- compare the present with the envisaged situation of peace.

4. *Identifying and specifying the peacebuilding needs.*

After the peacebuilding deficiencies have been analysed, we can now specify the short, medium and long term needs for peacebuilding by comparing the ideal situation (vision) with the reality on the ground.

Part B : Assessing the peacebuilding relevance

The aim of this part is to assess whether the overall direction of a planned or ongoing intervention (policy, program and project) corresponds to the country's

1 AID FOR PEACE: PLANNING AND EVALUATION IN CONFLICT ZONES

peacebuilding needs as mapped in part A. A peacebuilding relevance assessment is done by:

- comparing the objectives and main activities of the planned or existing intervention with the identified peacebuilding needs;
- examining how and to what extent they are consistent with these needs, and
- avoiding duplicating other actors' past and present activities and incorporating lessons learned into the intervention design.

Part C: Assessing the conflict risks

The objective is to identify existing problems and risks which the intervention(s) in zones of armed conflict face, i.e. assessing or anticipating the effects the conflict has on the intervention. For planning a new intervention, the conflict risk assessment anticipates potential conflict-related risks for the intervention. All checklist focus on questions of security, the political and administrative climate, the relationship to partners and stakeholders, and the relationship to the parties in conflict and other intervening actors.

Part D: Assessing the conflict and peacebuilding effects

The objective of the fourth part is to assess the effects of the planned or ongoing intervention(s) on the conflict and peacebuilding situation. In other words, we want to translate our hypotheses of change into operational categories in order to find out what kind of intended effects can be expected in the future, what kind of effects are taking place at present, and/or what effects have already taken place as a consequence of the intervention(s) both in terms of the immediate local and the wider conflict and peace situation. To ensure a proper assessment of the conflict and peace effects, two things are necessary. First, a peacebuilding base line study must be made prior to the intervention in order to make for and after comparisons possible. Second, during the planning phase stakeholders need to make their hypotheses of change operational and agree on the result chains and indicators to be used for assessment purposes. Result chains and indicators facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of the effects of the intervention.

The 'Aid for peace' approach is the result of more than ten years research and experience on the assessment of the conflict and peace impact of interventions in conflict zones. The challenge is to mainstream the above mentioned conflict and peace lessons into the cultures, structures and procedures of the organisations intervening in conflict and peacebuilding zones. This is a complex challenge that needs adequate time, intellectual, financial and human resources, and most of all commitment and motivation.

Improving coordination and coherence in peacebuilding²

Peacebuilding is about complex change; it involves concurrent activities by many people in different sectors, at several levels and in different time frames. It is a multi-level, multi sector, multi-layer and multi time activity. Peacebuilding is a tough call. It involves high-stake decisions that must be made when information is ambiguous, values conflict, and experts disagree. One of the biggest challenges in the fog of the peacebuilding process, is to coordinate the activities into a coherent peacebuilding process. The level of coherence is influenced by a series of decisions, choices and judgments that have to be made about:

- (a) the peace to be established (the end state);
- (b) the situation before the intervention (the base line);
- (c) the context;
- (d) the peacebuilding process;
- (e) who is involved - the peacebuilding regime, and
- (f) the evaluation criteria for monitoring progress.

a. The end state

The first requirement for developing a coherent peacebuilding process is the existence of

- 1 a common, clear and compelling vision of the future, and
- 2 a valid theory on how to build that peace.

What kind of peace does one want to achieve? What conditions need to be established to build the desired

² Luc Reyckler and Jan Carmans, Reyckler Luc & Carmans Jan, *Violence Prevention and Peacebuilding: a research agenda*. Leuven: Cahiers of the Center for Peace Research and Strategic Studies (CPRS), vol. 74, pp. 52.

1 AID FOR PEACE: PLANNING AND EVALUATION IN CONFLICT ZONES

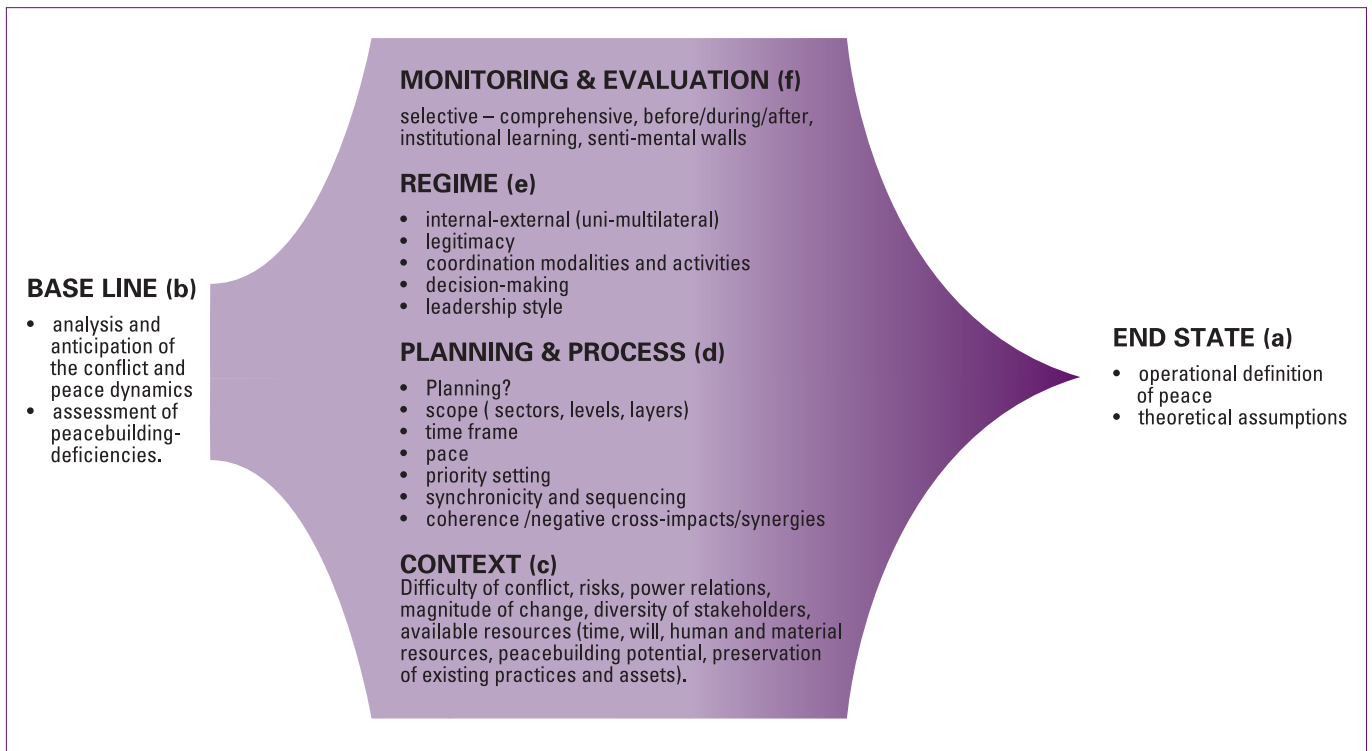


Figure 2: Key judgments in the peacebuilding process

peace? In many peacebuilding interventions, the end state is left vague and undefined or the parties involved are driven by competing or incompatible futures. Frequently the underlying theoretical assumptions on how to build the peace are not made explicit, are of questionable validity, or the parties make use of different conflict prevention or peacebuilding theories.

b. The base line

A second cluster of judgments that influences the coordination and coherence of the peacebuilding process relate to the assessment of the peace and conflict situation before the intervention starts. Any study or planning of peacebuilding demands an analysis of the baseline. This implies an analysis of the conflict and the violence, the peacebuilding efforts, the anticipation of possible future developments, and an assessment of the peacebuilding deficiencies. To assess the peacebuilding deficiencies, one compares the current conflict situation with the preferred peaceful situation and identifies areas that need to be remedied. This allows for choosing priority areas of intervention and selecting relevant concrete measures. The coherence

of the peacebuilding efforts will be determined by the answer to questions as: Is the conflict analysis accurate? Is the analysis of violence broad enough? Is the anticipation of future developments timely and reliable? Is the peacebuilding deficiency- and potential assessment comprehensive? Do the answers of the actors involved in the peacebuilding process converge or diverge?

c. The context

All the above-mentioned choices are constrained or enhanced by the features of the peacebuilding context. Successful peacebuilding depends on the development of a context-sensitive approach. The lack of universal formulae and the complexity of conflict necessitate a great deal of context sensitivity. This involves a deep appreciation of the impact of the context on the peacebuilding process and vice versa. Contextual judgment is more important than knowledge of the ten best peacebuilding practices in other situations. The contextual features are: the difficulty of the conflict and risks, the power relations, readiness for change, scope, time, preservation, diversity, and power.

1 AID FOR PEACE: PLANNING AND EVALUATION IN CONFLICT ZONES

The difficulty of the conflict. Some conflicts are more difficult to transform than others. They have been given a variety of names, such as deep-rooted conflicts, protracted, or intractable conflicts. Recently, systematic comparative research has been undertaken to distinguish easy from difficult conflicts.

The conflict risks. An important part of the planning and implementation of violence prevention and peacebuilding efforts, is anticipating possible negative impacts of the conflict environment: the conflict risks.

Power relations and asymmetries. Who are the major stakeholders? How much power do they have? Who are the stakeholders whose support must be canvassed? This implies a good understanding of the power relations, especially of the power asymmetries between the major stakeholders in the conflict and peacebuilding process.

Magnitude of change. Radical change, reconstruction or realignment. Does the peace one wants involve a radical transformation or a reconstruction or realignment of the situation. Transformation is a change which cannot be handled within the existing paradigms; it entails a change in the assumptions made and the 'way of doing things as usual'. It is a radical change in the end goal. Realignment, on the other hand, involves a change that does not involve a substantial reappraisal of the central assumptions and beliefs within the conflict zone. It may involve major changes structurally, such as a reduction of corruption or more privatisation, but it does not radically change the previous system. It is more about reconstruction than building something totally different (like the European Union after 1945). The selection of the end state determines the magnitude of the change. Does the change affect the whole country as well as all sectors and levels, or does it only impact part of the country or a particular sector?

Diversity of the stakeholders: Is the group of actors involved in the peacebuilding process diverse or relatively homogeneous in terms of its values, norms, and attitudes? Are their many cultures or subcultures within the country? What are the conflicting and common interests?

Available resources:

(a) time - How much time does the peacebuilder have to achieve peace? Is he/she operating in the middle of a crisis or is it perceived as long-term peacebuilding process? Are the stakeholders expecting short term results from the intervention?

(b) human and material resources - Are there enough human and natural resources to build peace? How does the peacebuilding potential look like?

(c) preservation of practices and assets - To what extent is it essential to maintain continuity in certain practices or preserve specific assets? Do these practices and/or assets constitute invaluable resources, or do they contribute towards a valued stability or identity within a country?

d. The peacebuilding process

The fourth part of peacebuilding architecture involves choices about the process or 'how to build peace'. The following choices must be considered.

The scope of peacebuilding process: which sectors (diplomatic, political, economic, security, social-psychological, etc.), levels (international, regional, national, regional and local) and layers of the conflict (public behaviour, perceptions, attitudes and feelings) are handled in the peacebuilding process. Have the policy objectives been well defined? Do the interventions respond the deficiencies? Do they respond to some or all the deficiencies? Is it a partial or comprehensive peacebuilding policy?

The time frame of the peacebuilding process: entry and exit, perceived phases in the process, the framing of the peacebuilding from a linear, circular, or procedural perspective.³

The pace of the peacebuilding process: changes can be implemented, either in an all at once, big bang fashion,

³ People who take a linear perspective act as though they have reified time: they plan to finish the peacebuilding at a particular time. People with a circular time perspective tend to act when things have to be done; putting off as much as possible, but doing what has to be done. People with a procedural time perspective focus on completing the process, no matter how long it takes.

or in a more incremental, step by step, stage by stage fashion. The interventions in Bosnia and the regime change war in Iraq were handled in a big bang fashion, but each turned into ‘operation creep’. Most intervention tends to take time and is handled in incremental ways.

Priority setting: In the different phases of the conflict transformation, which tasks get priority (allocation of human and material resources and time)? Although there is a consensus on the need of ‘complementarity and comprehensiveness’, several actors tend to stress the importance of their own intervention more than the others. Different approaches can be distinguished:

- 1 Security approach. Without basic security, peacebuilding goes nowhere. Addressing insecurity is seen as key to successful post war peacebuilding.
- 2 Development approach. Economic development is the key to success; it should be prioritized. Economic vulnerability should be tackled from the beginning.
- 3 Social-civil approach. Social welfare and civil society are of vital importance to regenerate societies and peacebuilding.
- 4 Political economy approach. The political economy of civil wars, which is considered to be a key source of ‘protractedness’ in many of today’s conflicts, remains unchallenged by current peace-building approaches. Good peacebuilding must therefore include disincentives for those benefiting from war in order to reduce their influence over the process.
- 5 Political approach. The political and institutional deficits must be remedied. Building political capacity must be the ultimate goal.
- 6 Psychosocial approach. Both justice and reconciliation are fundamentally significant goals that need to be addressed in the design of successful post conflict peacebuilding processes and mechanisms, especially in the aftermath of genocide. R. L. Rothstein points out that “since there is obviously an important psychological or emotional component of protracted conflicts, there is [...] likely to be an equally important psychological or emotional component to their resolution”.

Synchronicity and sequencing: Are all the tasks implemented at the same time or is there a clear

sequencing of the efforts? Are all the efforts made simultaneously and given a varied amount of attention (time and human and material resources) in different phases? This is one of the least systematically researched key components of the peacebuilding process. Several approaches can be distinguished:

- a the free for all approach: the underlying assumption is that more peacebuilding interventions will add up to more peace;
- b the ideology driven approach, based on a belief in the primacy of security, development, democracy or other types of interventions in peacebuilding;
- c the power driven approach which claims that power makes or breaks peace;
- d the theory driven approach, based on the research of successful and unsuccessful sequencing of different activities within and between different sectors.

Negative and positive cross-impacts or synergies: How much attention is given to the positive and negative cross impacts of efforts in different sectors and at different levels? Have the impacts been assessed proactively? What is being done to create synergies? Peacebuilding is a complex system, the dynamics of which do not obey hierarchical linearities. The assessment of cross sector and cross level impact is not new. Everyone makes an implicit assessment of the impact of one’s efforts. These assessments are influenced by the analysts’ or decision-maker’s theories of war and peace.

e. The peacebuilding regime(s)

Choices need also to be made about the management of the peacebuilding process. The options are different regimes or sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which the expectations of the actors involved in the peacebuilding process converge.⁴ Peacebuilding regimes can be compared on several dimensions:

Inclusiveness of the peacebuilding process. Who is involved in the peacebuilding process? Is the

⁴ John Baylis and Steven Smith, *The globalisation of world politics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001.

1 AID FOR PEACE: PLANNING AND EVALUATION IN CONFLICT ZONES

peacebuilding an externally and/or internally driven process? There is a broad consensus on the need to involve inside and outside actors in most peace settlements. Without local ownership, it's difficult to develop political responsibility; the wrong lessons could be remembered by local population and the legitimacy of the transition process fall.

Internal and external legitimacy of peacebuilding process? How and to what extent are the efforts morally supported by the people in the conflict region (internal legitimacy) and by the international community?

Coordination modalities. Are the external activities coordinated? Is the external action unilateral - multilateral? How is the action coordinated? By means of formal organisations and/or informal networks? One or more? Map the networks. Are non-governmental actors involved? Which network(s) has the lead? Is there competition within or between the networks? What activities do the international networks or organisations undertake? Are there networks involved at different levels and in different sectors? Are there specialized networks? Is there one comprehensive network, supervising all the work? Do they cooperate by exchanging information, consulting, joint planning, and/or coordinating the implementation? What level of cooperation and common policy is achieved with respect to the end state, baseline, context, process, peacebuilding regime, and evaluation?

Decision making. How are decisions made? Proactive or reactive? Democratic, inclusive, bottom up versus undemocratic, exclusive, top down? Elicitive or prescriptive? Coercive or peaceful? What strategy formation process is used? How does one choose the courses of action to build peace and the objectives formulated in the previous phase? S. Hart identifies five modes of strategy formation processes. His typology is built around who is involved in the strategy formulation and in what manner.⁵ In the *command mode*, a strong leader controls the process. The strategy is a conscious, controlled process that is centralized at the top. The end state, the base line, and alternatives are considered, and an appropriate course of action is decided upon and

implemented. This strategy formation mode can vary from being directive to coercive (using power to impose change).⁶ The *symbolic mode* involves the creation, by the actors who take the lead, of a clear and compelling vision and mission. The major task is to motivate and inspire and to provide the necessary focus to guide the creative actions of the actors involved. Education and communication are core activities. This mode requires a great deal of participation and commitment. The *rational mode* is a theory driven strategy formation. Strategy is developed through formal analysis (and information processing) and strategic planning. The *transactive mode* is based on interaction and learning rather than on the execution of a predetermined plan. Strategy is crafted based upon an ongoing dialogue with the key stakeholders. Cross-sector and cross-level communication among the actors involved is very important in this mode. The last mode of strategy formation is the *generative mode*. This mode depends on the autonomous initiatives of the actors involved in the peacebuilding process. The donor community selects and nurtures initiatives with high peace potential. These 'ideal' types are not exclusive. In many cases, one notices a combination of several of these modes. The choice is influenced by several factors: the power relations between the actors, the level of complexity of the peacebuilding plan, the heterogeneity of the conflict environment, the phase the conflict is in, etc.

What type of leadership guides the peacebuilding process? Peacebuilding leadership distinguishes itself by the way they lead the conflict transformation process. They envision a shared, clear and mutually attractive peaceful future for all who want to cooperate; they do everything to identify and get a full understanding of the challenge with which they are confronted; they frame the conflict in a reflexive way; their change behaviour is adaptive, integrative and flexible; they are well acquainted with non-violent methods; they use a mix of intentional and consequential ethics; and objectives; and

5 Kurt Verweire and Lutgart Van den Berghe, *Integrated performance management*, Sage publications, London, 2004, pp. 110-112.

6 Julia Balogun and Veronica Hope Hailey, *Exploring strategic change*, Prentice Hall, Norfolk, 1999.

are courageous men or women with a high level of integrity.

f. Evaluating peacebuilding and institutional learning

The last part of peacebuilding architecture involves choices about the criteria to be used for assessing success and about personal and institutional learning.

Criteria for assessing good and successful peacebuilding. ‘Aid for peace’ presents a set of criteria that could be used for the evaluation of peacebuilding intervention:

- peacebuilding relevance. To what extent do the objectives and activities respond to the needs of the peacebuilding process?
- peacebuilding effectiveness. To what extent were the objectives achieved?
- impact on macro-peacebuilding. Have processes and initiatives been instigated which have an impact upon the macro-level peacebuilding process?
- sustainability of long-term peacebuilding. Which steps have been taken or are planned to create long-term processes, structures and institutions for peacebuilding?
- participation and ownership of national/local stakeholders. Have the most important program partners been involved in planning and implementation? Have those involved been selected according to the criteria of inclusiveness, inter-group fairness, and gender-balance?
- coordination and coherence with other initiatives. Has the intervention in question cooperated with other actors or/and planned their activities in a coherent and complementary manner.
- efficiency, management and governance. How efficient is the general management of the intervention (steering, management, organization, structures, processes)?

Institutional learning

What efforts have been undertaken to learn from past experiences? Is there a positive learning climate? Is the lessons-learned process effectively organised? Have individual and collective sentimental walls been identified and dismantled?

Exchange of knowledge. How effective is the exchange of knowledge between the decision-makers, practitioners, researchers and people in general?

Conclusion

Building sustainable peace is an essential part of the agenda of the 21st century. As every civilising achievement of humanity, it will require the tireless commitment of countless people often at great personal costs. With the words of M.L. King: “It is no longer a choice between violence and non-violence. In this world it is non-violence or non-existence.” This will exact radical changes of:

- (a) our understanding of sustainable peacebuilding, and
 - (b) of the incentive system of war and peace behaviour.
- Radical changes are needed in the re-search and practice of violence prevention and peacebuilding. Some aspects of the new thinking were summarized in terms of 5c’s and two analytic tools were introduced:
- (1) the ‘aid for peace ‘approach for planning and evaluation in conflict zones, and
 - (2) ‘judgment approach’ for probing problems of coordination and coherence.

Equally important are improvements in the knowledge management. Exchanging, organizing, synthesizing and disseminating knowledge remains a major problem. The field of violence prevention and peacebuilding is plagued with ‘islands of knowledge’ of decision-makers, practitioners, researchers and civil society.⁷ Radical changes are also necessary in the payoff matrix of waging war or waging peace. Despite the fact that most people benefit profit from peace, influential minorities continue to profit from violent conflicts. Despite the growing appeal of violence prevention and peacebuilding initiatives, the stakes of manipulating and exploiting emotions such as fear, hatred and disgust remain very high. The military-industrial complex, that President D. Eisenhower warned against before he left his office in 1961, has expanded and morphed in a huge security-industrial complex. Naomi Klein labels it a disaster-capitalism complex, in which all conflict and

⁷ See discussion paper of Rene Bouwen, Jacques Haers, Elias Lopez and Luc Reyckler ‘ Knowledge and peacebuilding: the Rhombus model, Master Conflict and Peacebuilding (MaCSP), University Leuven, Belgium, 2006.

1 AID FOR PEACE: PLANNING AND EVALUATION IN CONFLICT ZONES

disaster related functions (waging war, destroying, securing borders, lobbying, spying on citizens, torturing, rebuilding cities, treating traumatised soldiers) can be performed by corporations and consultants at a profit.⁸ The civil society must not only increase its peacebuilding efforts, but should also guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence by the conflict profiteers. This requires collecting and distributing intelligence about these shadows of war⁹ (the profits and the conflict profiteers). In addition to

setting up a better accounting system, legal measures are needed to raise the accountability. Only an alert and knowledgeable civil society can decrease the incentives for war and increase the incentives for violence prevention and peacebuilding.

⁸ Naomi Klein, *Disaster capitalism: the new economy of catastrophe*, essay in Harper's magazine, October 2007.

⁹ Carolyn Nordstrom: *violence, power, and the international profiteering in the twenty-first century*, 2004, University of California press, Berkeley.

2 CIVIL SOCIETY: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING ACTIVITIES

*By Jos De la Haye**

Evaluating the conflict impact of a third party intervention, especially in areas affected by conflict, is an art. It combines the complexities of working in an area affected by conflict, with the issues related to evaluation per se.

Ever since the start of the academic debate on conflict impact assessment during the mid-nineties (Bush, 1996 and Reychler, 1996) there has been a controversy as to whether or not it is possible to assess the impact of an intervention in an area affected by conflict, let alone the question of how one can assess the actual impact of conflict.

As a strong believer of the fact that it is indeed possible to assess the conflict impact, this article illustrates how civil society is an added value in assessing the conflict impact of an intervention, in an area affected by violent conflict.

Strengths of civil society organisations

The civil society arena is populated by an array of diverse actors, including formal and informal associations, organisations and movements. Foster and Mattner (2006 : 2) define civil society organisations as the wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organisations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interest and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious and philanthropic considerations. As such it depicts a broad range of organisations, such as community groups, women's associations, labour unions, indigenous groups, youth groups, charitable organisations, foundations, faith-based organisations, independent media, professional associations, think tanks, independent educational organisations and social movements. In this regard one could easily refer to John Paul Lederach's peace-building pyramid, which has become a leading reference for most practitioner approaches to peace-building (De la Haye, 2007 : 13).

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The additional strength of CSOs - as compared to governmental organisations - is that they are well embedded into the society, and therefore are an important source of information. More importantly, they have become key people when working on conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Foster and Mattner (2006) identify seven peace-building roles of civil society: protection, monitoring and early warning; advocacy; socialisation; social cohesion; intermediation and facilitation, and service protection. What is relevant here is the acknowledgement of civil society to be well placed to set up early warning mechanisms and conflict analysis. People based in a society and those specialising in the country / region are often best placed to identify the root causes of conflict, the motivations of those who are driving it, but could also suggest specific actions that can be taken to shift its dynamics in a more peaceful direction (Barnes, 2006 : 47).

What do we want to learn from peace and conflict impact assessment?

This article does not elaborate on the conceptual debate on outcome, impact, peace and conflict impact (the concept used in this article), or contribution. We look into it from the lens of a programme developer or a programme design point of view. What matters then is to know how the intervention is perceived by the communities living in and around the operational area of the intervention. Did the intervention make a difference that is significant enough to continue the programme? Is there a need to re-orient or re-design the programme? To answer this question it is crucial to understand the effects (outcomes and impact) of the planned or ongoing intervention(s) on the conflict and peacebuilding situation and dynamics, or in other terms, the 'Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment' (as defined by Paffenholz and Reychler, 2007 : 22).

Questioning the significance of a programme to the peace process is a very complex and delicate matter. 'The peace process' needs to be unpacked. Which component or components of the peace process could realistically be influenced at the first place? Some people even question whether it is possible to assess

2 CIVIL SOCIETY: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING ACTIVITIES

impact at all. As we will explain it is feasible to assess the peace and conflict impact of a programme, that is if we acknowledge some constraints.

Scale matters

The debate on evaluation in the peacebuilding field tends to focus on the effect an intervention has on the 'peace writ large' (e.g. macro-level peace process, Paffenholz and Reychler, 2007 : 41). It is, however, extremely important to take into account and link the scale of the operational level of the intervention with the respective scale of the conflict-level. For example, considering conflict resolution skills training in Angolan IDP camps, the impact of these efforts on the national conflict-level might be disappointing. The potential impact on resolving the conflicts regarding local issues in and around the IDP camps is far greater.

The devil is in the uncertainty

We acknowledge though, that nobody knows exactly where the impact ends. This ever-present uncertainty can actually increase the impact of the intervention. Each actor is guessing about the possible repercussions of their choices, taking calculated risks and making mistakes. Program developers base their decisions on their own perceptions and estimates based on the consequences they might suffer. Lacking certainty about future outcomes, they may base these estimates on a fairly realistic analysis, simple prejudice, a reactive/reflex action attempt to avoid repeating past mistakes - or any number of other psychological factors. To minimise the level of uncertainty one could apply a perception-based analysis of the peace and conflict impact of the intervention, as perceived by the communities in and around the operational area of the intervention. These perceptions may significantly indicate the trend of impact of the intervention - whether it is moving towards or away from peace, as defined at the operational level of the intervention (which is not necessarily similar to the peace writ large). For this, an adequate information strategy is required.

Information strategy

The precondition for any effective impact assessment is a constant process of information-gathering, analysis and programme design - three interdependent and cyclical processes. The information-gathering process informs an analysis, which in turn is used to create or amend a programme strategy. Each amended strategy inevitably raises new questions, demanding additional investigation and analysis. For the purpose of this article we concentrate on the gathering process, in particular, the relevant role of civil society organisations.

Gathering-information process is key

Good information is not just about facts and events.

Current facts are good, but the opinions, perceptions and subjective analysis of other parties must also be included, with each source that is being judged for its validity and wisdom (De la Haye, 2004 : 4; Mahony, 2006 : 38). The process demands a complex network of sources - some public, others confidential.

Where to get this information?

In addition to desk research (e.g. reports, journals, newspapers etc.) data collection mission teams should conduct interviews, group meetings, or workshops with a variety of different actors, who are relevant for the respective conflict impact assessment. It is important to talk to a good ratio of (potential) beneficiaries of the programme/project. (Paffenholz and Reychler, 2007 : 125)

One should draw from a wide variety of sources, including:

- consultation of internal and external reports and briefings papers;
- consultation of recent research publications;
- local organisations who investigate and analyse conflict;
- formal communication with officials of states, militaries and armed groups;
- domestic and international experts with a long history of analysing conflict or the relevant national institutions - virtually every conflict terrain in the world has been intensely studied and analysed, but these experts are seldom asked to advise.

How to get this information?

Triangulation of data gathering is a method often applied in evaluations organised in areas affected by violent conflict. Triangulation involves comparing and contrasting information received from one source to similar information received from another, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the interaction between the intervention and the conflict dynamics. (De la Haye, 2006 : 23)

Considering the kind of information that is required (cf. above) and the qualities of civil society organisations (cf. above) it is obvious that one should try as much as possible to make use of representatives of civil society during peace and conflict impact assessment missions. Representatives of civil society organisation are very well embedded in different layers of society; at the very grassroots level but also at the decision-making level at local and national level. Additionally, civil society organisations cover a wide range of thematic expertise, so it not only involves peace-building work but also relates to socio-economic, cultural, etc. dimensions of society and therefore the peace process. As a result civil society organisations are in the front seat and can have a decent comprehensive overview of the dynamics. In fact many practitioners strongly argue for the involvement of a range of local actors as a way of ensuring that the analysis of the conflict, and therefore the analysis of the effectiveness of a conflict prevention and peacebuilding activity are accurate (Oxfam, *The Good Enough Guide*, 2007, Oxford Oxfam; OECD, *An Approach to DAC Guidance for Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities*, 2007 : 41).

On the other hand, one has to acknowledge the risk for potential biased and distorted findings that could arise from participatory evaluation methodologies, when local people are, themselves, involved in a conflict. The literature, however, provides some guidelines on how to gather information with caution. First, every source must be evaluated for accuracy, bias and judgement, and not automatically dismissed or accepted. Even a biased source may have important information, and a trusted source may provide a mistaken analysis. Second, the evaluators must avoid appearing to be too inquisitive,

which could give rise to accusations of spying. Third, where necessary, great care must be taken with confidentiality and protection of sources. In addition, one can minimise the risk of perceived and real bias by:

- being geographically accessible to all key groups;
- taking care that its methodologies and language skills do not implicitly favour or give greater access to one group over another;
- ensuring balance in any aspects of mission staffing that might project a signal of bias externally;
- protecting independence from the political agendas of the sponsoring states; sustaining transparent and respectful relationships with different sectors of society; and
- avoiding too much contact with any one group.

When it comes to selecting people to consult, it is always a good practice to have representatives of following categories (or at least from the first three):

- those who implement the activity (e.g. staff);
- beneficiaries of the intervention (e.g. recipients or clients);
- ‘independent’ observers - those not actively involved in the intervention process, but have an understanding of its objectives and the broader context of the conflict. Such people might include local actors (e.g. government officials, mayors, judges, teachers, businessmen, etc) and international actors (e.g. representatives from international agencies on the ground).
- potential beneficiaries in comparable areas where the intervention could have been implemented though it was not actually done so. This group could be considered as a comparison group (De la Haye and Denayer, 2003 : 57-60). For example, in Central Bosnia-Herzegovina, this method helped to assess that the project itself had contributed to a peace added value since the positive changes had not occurred in those areas where the organisation had not been operational (De la Haye, 2002).

To qualify as an observer two criteria must be fulfilled. First, the observer should have no connection to the project implementation process (e.g. no vested interest in whether the project is appraised positively or

2 CIVIL SOCIETY: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING ACTIVITIES

negatively). Second, the observer should have an understanding of the dynamics of the situation to accurately judge the mutual impact of the project and the conflict dynamics. Note the important nuance on the 'observant' as it implies that an observer for one project could be considered a beneficiary for another project. For example, teachers are typically beneficiaries of education projects, while the mayor might serve as an effective observer to the education project. Conversely, for a good governance project the roles might be reversed (De la Haye, 2006 : 24).

Conclusion

Representatives of civil society are at the centre of the daily ups and downs of a peace process. As a matter of fact, they become a key source of information when it comes to assessing the indication of a trend of the peace

and conflict impact. Whether as a beneficiary of, or as an observer to the intervention, representatives of civil society are of great importance to the peace and conflict impact evaluator. Of course, one must always be aware of the dangers of bias, but triangulation of information-gathering and information analysis should effectively limit these risks.

In fact, from a program design perspective, it is relevant to know how the intervention is perceived by the communities in and around the intervention's operational area. In that regard, the perception of representatives of a wide range within civil society facilitates the understanding of the tendency of the peace added value that the intervention has. Thus a considerate selection of people reflecting civil society is important for peace and conflict impact assessments.

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3 THE EVALUATION OF CONFLICT PREVENTION PROGRAMMING: CHALLENGES FOR GPPAC

By Peter Woodrow*

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is dedicated to the concept of preventing violent conflict around the world. Its primary goals are associated with reducing the resort to violence in resolving international and intra-state conflicts. In this regard, then, GPPAC has a natural interest in how to evaluate conflict prevention activities - in order to examine both its own activities and those of others in this field.

This article is based on the experience of the Reflecting on Peace Practice Project (RPP), one effort of CDA Collaborative Learning Projects of Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. RPP is a global effort to learn from and improve the effectiveness of peace efforts of all types. As with all CDA projects, RPP draws on the direct experience of many practitioners working in the field in multiple conflict zones around the world. Usually, the first step for a CDA collaborative learning initiative is to develop a series of case studies, and then proceed with cross-case analysis through consultations, review of preliminary conclusions through a series of workshops with practitioners, culminating in a report and activities to disseminate what has been learned.

RPP began in 1999 and, following the pattern described above, continued through publication of a report in early 2003.¹ This first phase has been followed by a 'utilisation phase' which continues to the present. Although the utilisation phase has undertaken various forms of dissemination and testing of phase one conclusions, the project has also been developing additional lessons in four key areas of inquiry:

- a) developing a better understanding of what constitutes good conflict analysis and its connection with programme strategies;
- b) an exploration of the cumulative effects of multiple peacebuilding efforts in a single conflict zone (as opposed to the contribution of single efforts);
- c) clarification of how programmes can be better linked across levels and sectors for enhanced impacts; and, finally
- d) how to undertake rigorous evaluation of

peacebuilding programming, especially regarding their impacts.

This article is informed by the efforts of RPP on impact evaluation, in particular work performed on behalf of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Development Assistance Committee, the large organisation of donor governments and international organizations. In the spring of 2006, OECD/DAC commissioned RPP to research and write an 'approach paper' concerning how to evaluate peacebuilding and conflict prevention programming - as a joint initiative of the DAC's Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation Network and the Evaluation Network.² In addition, CDA has performed various programme and project evaluations of peacebuilding work and engaged with practitioners in the field regarding programme planning/design, evaluation and monitoring.

What is conflict prevention?

It should be noted, from the start, that relatively little attention has been paid to how specifically to evaluate conflict prevention activities; much more effort has been expended in developing frameworks and tools for evaluating broader peacebuilding programming and policies. At least part of this is due to widespread lack of clarity about what is meant by 'conflict prevention' and sloppy thinking about what kinds of programme efforts actually contribute to the prevention of violence.

Generally, the academic literature and practitioners recognise three types of conflict prevention projects, programming, or policies:

* Reflecting on Peace Practice Project, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects

1 *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*, Mary B. Anderson and Lara Olson, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2003. Available on the CDA website: www.cdainc.com.

2 *Encouraging Effective Evaluation of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities: Towards DAC guidance*. Available on the CDA/RPP website (see footnote #1) and the OECD/DAC website: www.oecd.org/dataoecd/14/24/39341279.pdf.

3 THE EVALUATION OF CONFLICT PREVENTION PROGRAMMING: CHALLENGES FOR GPPAC

1. Structural prevention: Early interventions that address ‘contradictions’ in society that represent a risk of eventual violent conflict.
2. Operational prevention: Crisis interventions intended to de-escalate impending violence.
3. Prevention of recurrence: Programming in post-war (‘post-conflict’) situations aimed at preventing new cycles of violence.

The efforts of conflict prevention advocates, including most early warning and early response (EWER) systems, have focused primarily on urgent efforts to avert crisis or to prevent escalation. The concept of truly early intervention - usually to address structural issues - has received relatively little careful analysis. As a result, many in the development, peace and even humanitarian assistance fields have assumed and claimed that their programmes in poverty reduction, good governance, human rights, and so forth contribute to structural prevention. In a similar vein, many of those same actors engaged in ‘post conflict’ (more accurately post-war or post-violence) efforts have assumed that their efforts contribute to preventing a recurrence of violence, although, again, there has been little careful analysis, or rigorous evaluation, of the true contribution of such efforts to peace, as opposed to development or humanitarian goals.

The contexts for the early structural prevention, crisis management and post-war prevention of recurrence efforts are significantly different - and many of the programme modalities and actors are different as well. Therefore, each type of conflict prevention will likely require somewhat different monitoring and evaluation approaches.

RPP approach

Before we take up the question of how to evaluate conflict prevention efforts in specific, we will discuss a general approach to the evaluation of all conflict prevention and peacebuilding programming. This approach, in its essence, constitutes the recommendations of RPP to the OECD/DAC, and has been incorporated, in large measure but with some

variance, into the official DAC Guidance.³ Of necessity, this is a brief summary. For the full text, see the documents cited in the footnotes.

Fundamental principles

It is important that all evaluations, reviews, programme assessments (etc.) observe a few important principles:

- *All* programmes operating in conflict areas must be held to standards of conflict sensitivity, including the evaluations of such programmes.
- Evaluations are interventions in themselves - and should be treated as such. (That is, evaluators must pay attention to the potential positive and negative impacts of performing the evaluation on the programme, on the participants and on the conflict itself.)
- It is important to differentiate the functions of monitoring and evaluation, noting specifically that indicators are useful for monitoring purposes, but evaluations should look at broader intended and unintended effects.

Process elements

RPP recommended to the DAC that all evaluations of peacebuilding/conflict prevention programmes (or policies...) include a mix of the following elements, customised to fit the context, programme and donor needs:

1. obtain or perform an up-to-date conflict analysis;
2. identify the vision or strategic direction of the initiative;
3. organise a self evaluation process;
4. examine the effort against various criteria (see below);
5. identify and assess the operating Theory of Change;
6. gather data/information on the programme’s functioning and effects from a variety of sources;
7. assess outputs, outcomes and impacts (short- and long-term);
8. assess for conflict sensitivity;

3 *Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities: Working draft for application period.* OECD DAC Network on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation and the DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2008. Available on the OECD/DAC website: http://www.oecd.org/secure/pdfDocument/0,2834,en_21571361_34047972_39774574_1_1_1_1,00.pdf

3 THE EVALUATION OF CONFLICT PREVENTION PROGRAMMING: CHALLENGES FOR GPPAC

9. examine the interaction between programming and policies and evaluate the relevance of policies that lie behind programming;
10. engage in a process to apply the recommendations and lessons from the evaluation/review.

Most of these elements are straightforward, and are often found in frameworks for the evaluation of other types of programming. We should note two elements that are less common: the necessity of performing a conflict analysis and of identifying the Theory of Change of the initiative.

In earlier phases of RPP, practitioners agreed that all programmes should perform some form of conflict analysis in the planning/conceptualization stage - and, as noted above, RPP has been working to clarify what constitutes good analysis and how to connect analysis to programme strategies. In this context, however, we have asserted that an individual or team performing an evaluation of a peacebuilding effort should do a conflict analysis as well. This will prove particularly important for assessing the relevance and impacts of a programme - as discussed below in the section on Criteria. The DAC Guidance includes references to various methods of conflict analysis, and RPP itself has produced an approach to analysis that attempts to address some of the critiques of conflict analysis methods.⁴

Peace practitioners select methods, approaches and tactics that are rooted in a range of ‘theories’ of how peace can be achieved in a specific context. Such theories can take the simple format: “We believe that by doing X (action) successfully, we will produce Y (movement towards peace).” In many, perhaps most, cases these theories are not conscious. Rather, they are embedded in the skills and approaches that peacebuilding practitioners and policy makers have learned, the capacities and ‘technologies’ of their organisations, attachments to favourite methodologies, and the perspectives various decision makers bring to the peacebuilding process. We have found it extremely useful to make explicit the operating Theories of Change - in the context of programme design, as well as during an evaluation.

In fact, RPP has found that one key to ensuring programme effectiveness - which also affects ease of evaluation - is *getting the design right*. In our experience, this means that programme planners must:

- conduct a rigorous **conflict analysis**;
- articulate the **theory of change** and test its appropriateness to the context;
- formulate clear and reasonable **goals and objectives**;
- address **key driving factors** of the conflict (not derived from the intervention methodology⁵);
- **link programs** at different levels and sectors;
- **integrate monitoring and evaluation** from the beginning.

An evaluation should assess these elements of programme planning and implementation, as well as the short-term and long-term impacts of these processes on the conflict environment.

Criteria

RPP recommended that the DAC adopt a number of criteria that can be applied in evaluating conflict prevention and peacebuilding programmes. The first five of these, Relevance/Appropriateness, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability, are the standard DAC criteria for development programmes, and have also been applied to humanitarian assistance programmes, with some modifications and additions.⁶ These have been adapted for use in evaluating peacebuilding efforts through the articulation of a series of focused questions under each category.⁷ The additional four suggested criteria, Linkages, Coverage, Consistency with peacebuilding values, and Coherence, were more controversial among the DAC membership and associated experts.

4 See ‘Advancing Practice in Conflict Analysis and Strategy Development,’ Peter Woodrow, RPP, 2006. Available on RPP website: www.cdainc.com.

5 For instance, an organisation might decide to develop a community mediation system, but this does not automatically make community-level disputes a driving factor of national level political conflict.

6 See Beck, Tony (2006), *Evaluating Humanitarian Action Using the OECD-DAC Criteria: An ALNAP Guide for Humanitarian Agencies*, ALNAP/ODI, London.

7 For a full list of the suggested questions, see the RPP Approach Paper cited above and/or the DAC Guidance.

3 THE EVALUATION OF CONFLICT PREVENTION PROGRAMMING: CHALLENGES FOR GPPAC

1. **Relevance/Appropriateness:** Is the intervention based on an accurate analysis of the conflict, and does it therefore address key driving factors or key driving constituencies of the conflict? Is it working on the right issues in this context at this time?
2. **Effectiveness:** Has the programme achieved its stated (or implicit) purpose, or can it reasonably be expected to do so, on the basis of its outputs?
3. **Efficiency:** Does the intervention deliver its output and outcomes in a cost-effective manner (results against costs)?
4. **Impact:** What are the primary and secondary, direct and indirect, positive and negative, intended and unintended, immediate and long-term, short-term and lasting effects of the effort?
5. **Sustainability:** Will new institutions or improved relationships persist? Will the parties to a negotiated agreement honour and implement it?
6. **Linkages:** Are initiatives at various levels (individual, base communities, provincial, national, regional, international) linked with each other and to efforts in other domains (across sectors, methods or constituencies)?
7. **Coverage:** Is sufficient attention being paid to emerging violence and conflict prevention in all potentially violent regions? Do programmes/policies cover all conflicts or are there 'hidden conflicts' that receive little or no attention?
8. **Consistency with Peacebuilding Values:** Are the means of the intervention consistent with peacebuilding ends? Is staff sensitive to others, unbiased in their judgments, and respectful of people with different opinions or approaches?
9. **Coherence:** Are efforts to coordinate/align peacebuilding programming or policies (across agencies, donor governments, partner governments) resulting in improved effectiveness and greater positive impacts on peace or not?

Specialised application

The processes and criteria presented above represent a generic approach to the evaluation of all peacebuilding programmes. As with other specialised areas (security sector reform, political dialogues, conflict resolution

training...), we must identify specific questions and criteria for evaluating conflict prevention efforts.

The *primary broad evaluation inquiry* for conflict prevention programmes would be:

Is the effort making a contribution to preventing violence, by intervening swiftly to avert escalating violence, or by addressing long term structural factors that are, in the context, highly relevant to positive or negative intergroup relations?

Additional general questions:

1. How has the programme/initiative identified and supported local capacities or factors for peace? Were there effective interactions between insiders and outsiders - and what were they?
2. Were there effective linkages among various actors at different levels: civil society organisations, governments, regional organizations, UN? Were there linkages across sectors (security, governance, development...) and across social groups? Between groups with power/authority and the broader population? Which linkages or interactions proved effective or not?
3. What were the incentives, constraints, capacities, risks, and entry points for different actors in the context and particular stages of conflict? How did these affect the initiative being evaluated?
4. Which programme methodologies were used by the initiative, and which of these proved effective? What were the outcomes and impacts on direct and indirect participants?
5. What kinds of conflict analysis were performed in designing and/or redesigning the effort? Were the choices of programme strategy and any subsequent changes of direction informed by conflict analysis? How?

In addition to these broad lines of inquiry, evaluators should address questions associated with the different stages of conflict.

Evaluation questions for operational prevention efforts (urgent crisis intervention)

1. What were the constraints for the implementing agency(ies) in this situation, and to what extent were these overcome? How?
2. What is the evidence in this situation regarding the ‘ripeness’ of the conflict and timing of intervention activities?
3. If this society was able to back away from the brink of violence, what factors enabled it to do so? To what extent did these factors operate effectively without external support? To what extent and how did external support contribute to or support these factors?
4. How deep did prevention strategies go? Did they achieve a temporary respite from violence only, or were more fundamental driving factors of conflict addressed? Was conflict suppressed or transformed and how?
5. In this specific context, what does the evidence show about the interactions among principles of sovereignty, the responsibility to protect, and regional/international treaties and obligations as applied to crisis intervention?

Evaluation questions for structural prevention efforts

1. With regard to the particular initiative (policy, programme, project...) being evaluated, to what extent did this constitute a ‘normal’ development effort with added elements to address potential conflict? If so, what were the added elements? Or was it assumed that the development effort, in itself, constituted structural prevention? How?
2. Did planners perform any kind of conflict analysis or assessment of risk, in order to focus the effort on key factors of potential violence? Did the initiative mitigate or reduce risk factors, causes of conflict, or sources of division, or reduce the impact/prominence of such elements?
3. Did the programme designers use a conflict sensitivity ‘lens’ in planning the effort? What programme elements were added or changed (if any) to make it more conflict sensitive? To what effect?
4. By definition, structural prevention promotes some degree of change and, therefore, challenges systems

of privilege and power. How did the programme/initiative handle the potential for catalysing violent reactions as a result of such challenges? Were there any inadvertent negative consequences from the initiative?

Evaluation questions for post-violence (‘post-conflict’) prevention efforts

1. How did those planning the initiative identify the agenda for conflict prevention? What was the assessment regarding the degree to which the fundamental social structures and relationships in the society had changed due to the experience of war/violence, the peace process or other initiatives? Are the factors that led to violence still present in society, and does the programme attempt to address these? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. What does this programme experience show regarding the relationship between the processes of making peace (dialogues, negotiations, signing of accords, etc.) and post-conflict peacebuilding? How did the nature of the peace process and subsequent events (degree of participation, openness, attempts to gain support, role of spoilers, treatment of ex-combatants) influence the environment for peacebuilding and the programmatic strategies?
3. Given an understanding of the factors that might lead to renewed violence, what is the evidence that these have been reduced? How?

Application to GPPAC

Based on the above generic and specialised approaches to the evaluation of peacebuilding and conflict prevention programmes, we can now explore how all of this might be applied to GPPAC and its efforts. The balance of this paper is a series of questions that represent challenges for GPPAC, as it seeks to comprehend its effectiveness in promoting the concept and practice of conflict prevention.

Conflict analysis/problem analysis

What is GPPAC’s analysis at the global level? What is the problem we are trying to address? Do we have a shared understanding of what needs to change?

3 THE EVALUATION OF CONFLICT PREVENTION PROGRAMMING: CHALLENGES FOR GPPAC

The strategy dilemma

- What are the implicit and explicit strategies that GPPAC is using? At the global level, at the regional level, at the programmatic level?
- Are the following the implied GPPAC strategies? How do they contribute to conflict prevention?
 - Build strong regional networks
 - Develop civil society capacities in early warning/early response
 - Engage in learning and exchange across global regions
 - Promote greater awareness regarding the concept of conflict prevention among all population groups and policy makers
 - Advocate policy changes and preventive actions by other actors (governmental, multilateral institutions, etc.) as potential partners

Theories of change

- What are the underlying Theories of Change in the broad GPPAC strategies and in specific programmes?
- Are the following the implied GPPAC Theories of Change?
 - If we build strong regional networks, linked through a global network, it will increase the ability of civil society to contribute to preventing violent conflicts.
 - If civil society undertakes effective preventive actions, it will encourage/induce governments and inter-governmental organizations to take action.
- What other theories are we operating under?

Programme logic

- Do the various elements of GPPAC programming ‘add up’ to conflict prevention?
- Is there a strong logic that links activities to objectives to broader goals to the vision of GPPAC? Have we ‘connected the dots’ in a rigorous way?

Monitoring indicators

- What gross global indicators can track progress (by ALL actors) in preventing violent conflict?

- Possibility: Research shows that there are only 1-3 new violent conflicts each year. Can we set a goal to reduce this average?

Summary of challenges for GPPAC

- Do we have a shared analysis at the global level?
- Are we clear on our broad strategies?
- What are our Theories of Change?
- What is our programme logic?
- Do we have useful indicators at the whole-of-GPPAC level?

A final word

At present GPPAC is pouring considerable resources into building regional and global capacities of the civil society network of individuals and groups dedicated to conflict prevention. Thus, when we come to evaluating GPPAC, it will be important to examine at least two dimensions:

- 1 the functioning and efficiency of the regional and global networks; and
- 2 the relevance and impacts of the networks in implementing and/or advocating effective conflict prevention activities in relation to specific emerging violent conflicts.

Most of the discussion in this article has addressed the second programmatic dimension of evaluation. GPPAC evaluators would need a somewhat different set of criteria and processes for assessing the organisational efficiencies and effectiveness of the network. A well-functioning network is an instrument, but it is not the end in itself. Therefore, an evaluation of GPPAC should not limit itself to organisational questions. We have set ambitious goals for the prevention of armed conflict and must hold ourselves accountable to those goals.

4 COMPLEXITY AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL CHANGE NETWORKS

By Ricardo Wilson-Grau*

This article will sketch the special challenges of planning, monitoring and evaluating for results in international social change networks in general, and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) in particular. Three challenges are addressed and suggestions made on how they might be met.

The challenges and the solutions come from two sources. One is the author's recent experience in supporting networks based in Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America in planning their strategies, implementing those plans, monitoring their progress and evaluating their results.¹ The second is the knowledge and experiences that the members of the small community of network consultants share with each other. These practitioners are generating a growing body of literature on network capacity building and evaluation that is rich in general lessons learned to date. Nonetheless, relative to other areas of organisational development, the theory and practice of international social change network management is in its infancy. Consequently, the ideas presented in this article are necessarily tentative. They are made in full awareness that there is probably much more occurring and being learned outside of the author's experience and the grey and published literature to which he has access. What is a 'network'? The phenomenon has different names - coalition, partnership, alliance, union, league, association, federation, confederation, as well as network, which is the generic name used in this article. What distinguishes international networks is that they are groups of *autonomous* organisations (and perhaps individuals) in two or more countries or continents that share a purpose and *voluntarily* contribute knowledge, experience, staff time, finances and other resources to achieve common goals. When those goals are to modify economic, political, social or cultural structures and relationships, as is the case of GPPAC, then it constitutes what I refer to as an international social change network, and hereafter simply as Network. During the 1990s, Networks became an increasingly important means of social synergy and for some a

central characteristic of the world today.² By 2000, one calculation was of 20,000 transnational civic networks active on the global stage.³ These formal or informal structures bring together diverse social actors to enable them to pursue common goals. In a globalising world with increasingly effective means of communication, a Network offers unique political and organisational potential. Networks such as GPPAC can influence society in ways that are impossible for individual actors.

A Network typically performs a combination of two or more of these functions:⁴

- *analyse global problems* from local, national and regional perspectives and knowledge;
- filter, process and *manage knowledge* for the members;
- *promote dialogue, exchange and learning* amongst members;
- *shape the agenda* by amplifying little known or understood ideas for the public.
- *convene* organisations or people;
- *facilitate action* by members;

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- 1 This article builds on but is substantially different from "Evaluating International Social Change Networks: A Conceptual Framework for a Participatory Approach", Ricardo Wilson-Grau with Martha Nuñez, *Development in Practice*, April 2007. Available from ricardo.wilson-grau@inter.nl.net
- 2 Manuel Castells considers that we live in a Network Society "made up of networks of production, power and experience, which construct a culture of virtuality in the global flows that transcend time and space". Castells, M. *The information age: economy, society and culture* Vols I and II, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.
- 3 Edwards, M. and J. Gaventa, *Global Citizen Action*, London: Earthscan and Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001.
- 4 Adapted from Richard Portes's, Steven Yeo's and Wolfgang Reinicke's functions classification: Yeo *Creating, Managing and Sustaining Policy Research Networks*, preliminary paper, 2004; Yeo, Evaluation of the SISERA network for IDRC, Preliminary report, 2004; Portes and Yeo (2001) *Think-net: the CEPR model of a research network CEPR*. (Prepared for Workshop on Local to Global Connectivity for Voices of the Poor, 11-13 December 2000, World Bank, Washington, D.C), 2001; Reinicke et al, *Critical Choices: The UN, Networks, and the future of global governance GPPI*, Global Public Policy Institute, 2000.

4 COMPLEXITY AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL CHANGE NETWORKS

- *build community* and often a movement by promoting and sustaining the values and standards of the group of individuals or organisations within it;
- *mobilise and rationalise the use of resources* for members to carry out their activities;
- *strengthen international consciousness*, commitment and solidarity.

This special nature and combination of functions that characterise a Network leads to three challenges for planning, monitoring and evaluating.

The complex, open and dynamic challenge

A Network is characterised by its complexity, openness and dynamism and, in addition, operates in a similarly unpredictable environment. ‘Complex’ means that the relationships between the members and the global, regional, national and often sub-national Network co-ordinating structures, which are the essence of a Network, are massively entangled. There is an enormous number of interdependent variables in the external environment - political, economic, social, cultural, technological, ecological - and among the Network’s participants that influence its activities. GPPAC, for example, has hundreds of stakeholders⁵ working through the global secretariat with a dozen staff and 15 regional initiators and three dozen national focal points representing member organisations. Amongst the stakeholders are seven government donors and one non-governmental donor. These stakeholders have varying missions, ways of working, forms and sizes - national and multilateral government and civil society.

The relations between these autonomous, voluntary Network actors are very open. Their behaviours are dependent on the diverse contexts in which they are

embedded and where they act. That is, factors outside the boundaries of a Network such as GPPAC may have as much influence on behaviour as the social actors within it. What appears to be relevant may become irrelevant, and the accidental may become causal. Furthermore, participants enter and exit with sufficient fluidity so that commonly it is difficult to identify at any given moment all who are involved.

In addition, the relationships amongst Network participants are dynamic. The interplay of a large and diverse number of Network actors strongly influences them and their environment. The change is constant but discontinuous and the interaction generates new patterns of relations. New structures are established and old ones disappear. The Network promotes and is nourished by the enthusiasm and energy characteristic of its voluntary nature. It benefits from the dynamism to the extent to which the Network is able to balance the diverse contributions of members with joint, sustained collaboration.

Because of the complexity, openness and dynamism, a Network’s activities and results also tend to be highly unpredictable. Multi-level and multi-directional causality drives interaction in a Network, as well as in the environment in which it operates. It is messy, not orderly. Sometimes the part determines the whole. Sometimes the whole determines the part. Sometimes, parts determine each other.

In these circumstances, the demands on members and on the Network to change course, often dramatically and at short notice, increasingly overrun planning, monitoring and evaluation processes and procedures. Conventional means for managing for operational effectiveness and efficiency and progress towards goals, are not simply difficult but often useless.

Networks are unique organisations

The second evaluation challenge is that Networks are unique organisations that contrast to a large degree with the corporate, governmental or civil society organisational structures of their members. To paraphrase systems thinker Russell Ackoff: *A Network*

⁵ The 2005 Global Conference convened by GPPAC and the UN Department of Political Affairs brought together 900 people from 118 countries. The next year, the GPPAC study *Networking for Peace: Opportunities for the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict*, surveyed 260 people directly involved in GPPAC and 360 indirectly involved on the state of GPPAC. Respectively, 84 and 115 answered the extensive (58-question) survey, with 13 of the 15 regions having a 25% or better rate of response.

4 COMPLEXITY AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL CHANGE NETWORKS

is not the sum of its parts. It is the product of the parts' interaction.

A Network is loosely organised and non-hierarchical, with authority and responsibility flowing from and around autonomous members. Accountability is highly diffuse for what happens, what is achieved and by whom. Within a Network, all but a few accountabilities constantly shift. For example, the organisational chart on the left is common for government, business or civil society organisations.

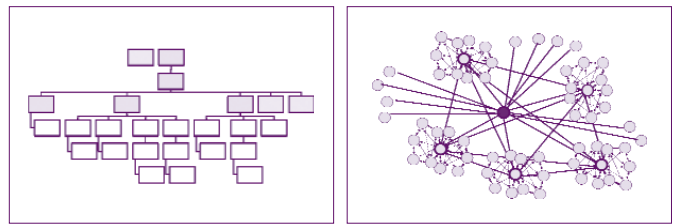
The Network's own organisational chart, however, is quite different, similar to the diagram on the right. This is further complicated because networks share accountability for many actions with allies outside the Network.

The difference between a Network and other organisational forms, however, is more than the structure of relationships of power, money, information, co-operation and activities. The nature of those relationships is also unique in two other important ways: democracy and diversity.

Democracy is a necessity because the principal actors in the Network are voluntary, autonomous organisations. In relation to the Network, so too are the individuals that participate on their behalf; the majority are not employees of the Network. Hierarchical management and command and control simply do not work well with these social actors. Democratic management and participation are the keys to empowerment, ownership and concerted, common action in a Network. GPPAC is no exception. In the 2006 study *Networking for Peace*, amongst numerous positive points, one of the five issues with which stakeholders were dissatisfied was 'internal democracy':

"An issue raised repeatedly is that of internal democracy within the network. Although stakeholders understand that the process could never have started in a purely democratic way and that the way Regional Initiators were selected, for example, was only logical, they feel that it is now time to establish more

*democratic procedures in order to enhance the legitimacy of the network's structures. In addition many people complain of a lack of transparency - about what the procedures are, why some are selected to attend meetings and others not, and what GPPAC is doing at the global level and on whose authority. There is insufficient communication about such matters."*⁶



The causes for dissatisfaction can always be addressed but the concern for democracy is ever present in Networks. Thus, Networks operate more through facilitation and co-operation around the activities of its organisational components than by directing programmes and executing projects. Success depends on equity in the relations and exercise of power within the Network. Leaders are expected to stimulate and strengthen the active participation of all members and effective work in alliances.

Therefore, members' participation in decision-making is the best guarantee that the decision will be implemented. Echoing the views of the Canadian International Development Research Centre's Evaluation Unit, the willingness of the members of a Network to monitor and interpret success (along with planning, implementing and adjusting activities) constitutes ownership in a Network.⁷ The planning task is to enable each one of these heterogeneous actors to make a creative and constructive contribution. The monitoring and evaluation task is to assess how well the actors are interacting, understand and learn from the mistakes and successes of their co-operation.

Another unique difference of a Network compared to other organisational forms is the great *diversity* amongst

⁶ Ibid, page 43-44.

⁷ IDRC Evaluation Unit, *Annual Report 2005*.

4 COMPLEXITY AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL CHANGE NETWORKS

its members, of course within the unity of their common purpose. Part of the genius of this organisational form is that its members share common values and a collective purpose but have different visions and strategies on how to achieve change. The motivation of the principal actors - the members - in joining a Network is wide ranging. Some may be more interested in receiving information or the tools it generates while others join for the political spaces and relationships a Network offers. Many but perhaps not all may wish to be institutionally associated with the common, larger purpose or community. In situations of social or political conflict, the motivation may be simple protection. The conviction that they cannot achieve meaningful political objectives by working alone drives some Network members. In sum, the strength and sustainability of a Network depends to a significant extent on its usefulness to its members, who may very well have different interests and needs in belonging to the Network.

The example of GPPAC in Southeast Asia is illustrative. There are national focal points in Burma, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Between them, there are large differences among members in terms of representation in GPPAC, organisational capacity, civil society traditions, the social, cultural, economic and political contexts, financial resources, organisational capacity, and capacity to communicate in English. It is not a surprise that there are diverging expectations about the role GPPAC should be playing.⁸

In sum, because Networks are such unique organisations that demand empowerment of the enormously diverse actors within it, the task of planning, monitoring and evaluation is also unique. Essentially, it is all about participation. As one group of network thinkers say: “We have a profound belief that participation is at the core of what makes a network different to other organisational/process forms.”⁹

Network stakeholders expect conventional forms of management

The third challenge of planning, monitoring and evaluating in Networks is that stakeholders think of the

Network from the perspective of their own government agency, civil society organisation or business. More specifically, they want Networks managed as they are accustomed to in their own organisation’s programmes and or projects.

In addition, cause-effect attribution is thorny in all social change endeavours but especially so in Networks. Their political purpose is to influence the structure, relations and exercise of power, from the national (and sometimes the local) to the global. These achievements rarely are attributable solely to the activities of the Network. Usually they will be the fruit of a broad effort with other social actors. Frequently, results will be collateral and unintentional. Therefore, establishing reasonable links of cause and effect between a Network’s activities and the political results it aims to achieve is of another order of attribution than that faced by the organisations that make up its membership or for consultants accustomed to assessing other types of organisations.

Understandably, steering committee or board members and donors want to see quick progress and clear results for money and time invested in the Network ‘project’. Consequently, they exert project-minded, cost-benefit pressure. The familiar project planning, monitoring and evaluation approach runs along the linear, causal chain: inputs ‡ activities ‡ outputs ‡ outcomes ‡ impact. They expect efficiency in the inputs ‡ activities ‡ outputs sequence, and they want to know that this sequence effectively leads to outcomes and impact. Are we doing well? Was our hypothesis valid? Did we do the right thing in a worthwhile way?¹⁰

The other four negatives aspects of GPPAC identified in last year’s study echo these questions in a more specific manner:

⁸ See *Southeast Asia case study for the network strengthening review of GPPAC*, Willemijn Verkoren, Draft, 24 August 2006.

⁹ Church, Madeline, et al, *Participation, Relationships and Dynamic Change: New thinking on evaluating the work of international networks*, Development Planning Unit, University College London, 2002

¹⁰ See the *Very Brief Introduction to M&E Systems Design*, PowerPoint presentation by Jim Rugh, CARE, and his book *RealWorld Evaluation*, <http://www.sagepub.com/book.aspx?pid=11577>.

1. Why is there so little concrete action and implementation of plans, ‘too much talk, and too little action’?
2. Why is there a lack of continuity in GPPAC’s processes? In most regions there have been few and irregular meetings. In between meetings there has been little follow-up and interaction.
3. Why is there little common agreement and understanding of GPPAC’s aims, priorities and strategies?
4. Why is fundraising so limited at GPPAC’s various levels?

These are all valid, understandable questions but for a Network, they are problematic for two reasons. First, when a Network carries on projects, typically managed by a global, regional or country secretariat, the project mode of planning, monitoring and evaluation may be appropriate. When, however, the focus is the operation of the Network as a whole, project or programme methodologies do not work. Why? Well, for three reasons that flow from the challenges presented above.

1. Networks are in the category of organisational forms that Michael Quinn Patton calls ‘non-linear, dynamic social change agents’.¹¹ They make interventions based more on values than hypotheses. Their activities take place in complex situations without predetermined, predictable, or controllable results. Even the ‘right’ inputs-activities-outputs equation is often uncertain, because what works and does not work sometimes only emerges as the interactions of the Network unfold.
2. In a Network’s activities and results - all immersed in fluid relationships amongst members and the unpredictable struggle for social change - cause and effect is rarely known and frequently not knowable, and then usually in retrospect.
3. The time horizon of a Network is long-term and especially uncertain. The farther out the time horizon, the more uncertainty increases. Opportunities and risks proliferate, and with more time, these variations magnify uncertainty.

For these reasons, sometimes the environment in which Networks operate is so volatile that project management

may not work even for short-term secretariat projects. The project approach is even less appropriate for the management of a programme of projects or for the Network as a whole. Nonetheless, that is what stakeholders tend to expect. A recent study of undertaken by the European Centre for Development Policy Management’s drawing on the existing literature on networks and capacity development, as well as several case studies of successful network experiences, summarises the expectations of one of the most important Network stakeholders:

“...donor interventions with networks are mainly in the form of projects, usually of limited duration, that rely on input-output models (e.g. logical frameworks) and measure success in relation to the attainment of clear, measurable results. The characterisation of networks offered by workshop participants and reflected in this paper suggests a need for approaches that better reflect the dynamic, fluid qualities of networks and the importance of participation, process and attention to how capacity issues play themselves out in networks.”¹²

In conclusion, do these challenges imply that managing with accountability and achieving results is impossible for a Network? Definitely not. Effectiveness and efficiency in a Network simply require innovative approaches.

11 EVAL-SYS listserv exchange titled “Patton on Complexity”, 25 Mar 2006, eval-sys@lists.evaluation.wmich.edu.

12 *Networks and Capacity*, Suzanne Taschereau and Joe Bolger, ECDPM, Discussion Paper No. 58C, February 2007. Available at www.ecdpm.org.

13 There are five principles now generally associated with results-based management

1. At all phases - from strategic planning through implementation to completion and beyond - focus the dialogue on results
2. Align actual programming, monitoring, and evaluation activities with the agreed expected results.
3. Keep the results reporting system as simple, cost-effective, and user-friendly as possible.
4. Manage for, not by, results, by arranging resources to achieve outcomes.
5. Use results information for management learning and decision-making, as well as for reporting and accountability.

Source: OECD, *Management for Development Results - Principles in Action: Sourcebook on Emerging Good Practices*, 2006, pages 10-13.

14 Be very selective, however, of results-based instruments. Logical Framework Analysis is one of the most popular instruments but in this author’s experience is wholly inadequate for Networks.

4 COMPLEXITY AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL CHANGE NETWORKS

Planning, monitoring and evaluating for results in a Network

The reason for being a Network is to contribute to change. Therefore, it is of fundamental importance for a Network to organise its activities to generate results.

Results-based management¹³ can be useful if applied creatively and flexibly in the light of the three challenges outlined above.¹⁴ In the Chart - Results, Results, Results, the conventional definitions are customised for a Network, taking into account the special planning, monitoring and evaluation challenges.

Results, Results, Results

OECD-DAC ¹⁵	International networks ¹⁶
<i>Outputs</i> The products, capital goods and services which result from a development intervention; may also include changes resulting from the intervention which are relevant to the achievement of outcomes.	Operational outputs: The processes, products and services that are an immediate result of the activity of the Network. A Network controls its outputs.
<i>Outcome</i> The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs. Outcomes are the observable behavioural, institutional and societal changes that take place over 3 to 10 years, usually as the result of coordinated short-term investments in individual and organizational capacity building for key development stakeholders (such as national governments, civil society, and the private sector).	Internal, developmental or 'organic' outcomes: The changes in the behaviour, relationships, or actions of the Network's members that strengthens and develops their collective capacity to achieve the Network's political purpose. The changes are a result - partially or fully, intentional or not - of the activities of the Network. External or 'political' outcomes: These are changes in the behaviour, relationships, or actions of individuals, groups or organisations outside of the Network involved in activities related to the Network's political purpose. The changes are a result - partially or fully, intentional or not - of the activities of the Network. A Network influences outcomes.
<i>Impacts</i> - Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.	Impact: Long-term changes in the relations and exercise of power in society as expressed in the political purpose of the Network. A Network contributes indirectly to these intended impacts.

15 Sources: OECD, Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management, 2002, and OECD, *Management for Development Results - Principles in Action: Sourcebook on Emerging Good Practices*, 2006

16 Source: Adapted from Sarah Earl, Fred Carden, and Terry Smutylo; *Outcome Mapping - Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs*; IDRC, 2001, available at www.outcomemapping.ca.

4 COMPLEXITY AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL CHANGE NETWORKS

Operational outputs are common to most types of organisations and therefore not exceptional. Their importance for a Network revolves around accountability. A Network can only be held strictly accountable for what it controls: generating processes, services and products (through its own activities). Equally important, these outputs may or may not lead - immediately or eventually, directly or indirectly, wholly or partially - to outcomes.

The ultimate purpose of a Network's activities and products is to contribute to enduring, structural *impact* in society. Since a Network's aim is to change relations and structures of power but is made up of diverse organisations with their own missions and objectives, the problems in evaluating impact are double-edged.

First, how do you set your sights on changes in the structure and relations of power in circumstances characterised by uncertainty and unpredictability? The changes a Network seeks occur in heterogeneous contexts, are indefinite in time, and depend on the actions and decisions of many more actors than the members of the Network.

Second, when there is a change that represents impact: Who can assume credit for the change? Who is accountable for what changes (and does not change), and to whom and how? These problems of attribution and aggregation mean that a Network only indirectly contributes to impact. What then must a Network assess to identify what it has contributed to enduring, significant change?

The solution is to focus on the results that are up-stream from impact - on outcomes understood as changes in the behaviours, actions, and relationships of social actors within the Network's sphere of influence. Outcomes bridge between a Network's activities, services and products, and the impact it desires. Since the desired social change is brought about by social actors working within and influenced by the Network, this definition of 'outcome' developed by IDRC is most useful.¹⁷ Adapted to the needs and circumstances of a Network, there are two types of outcomes.

The *internal, organic outcomes* refer to the developmental changes in the stakeholders of the Network and especially its members and staff. One of the principal results of great validity and importance for a Network is its existence and permanence over time. This is an unconventional criterion for an achievement. A for-profit business can rarely justify itself by the number of employees it hires; its margin of profit and return on investment is the principal measurement of success. Sometimes the major achievement of a government may be simply to have finished its term of office, but usually its results are evaluated in terms of the quantity and nature of its contribution to the common good. An NGO does not exist to exist; the NGO must benefit other people.

Networks, however, are both a means and an end in themselves. Admittedly, this is an inherent contradiction but also a challenge: "There is a tendency for Networks to focus not on tangible impacts, but rather simply on the exercise of validating their own existence."¹⁸ Nonetheless, if the Network functions efficiently and effectively, it strengthens and develops the web of relationships that are at its core. That is, the existence of the Network is an inter-active, innovative process with added value for its members. The concept of organic outcomes resolves this dilemma of ends and means. A network develops by changing the behaviour, relationships, or actions of its members, as they reinforce each other and advance together with joint strategies to achieve their common purpose. They do not just improve but develop - they change their way of thinking and doing.

Ultimately, of course, the success of a Network depends on the external achievements that are a Network's reason for being. A focus on the *external* or *political outcomes* resolves this need because it is social actors who will bring about the long-term changes in the structure, relations and exercise of power in society.

17 The IDRC's Outcome Mapping methodology is a results-oriented methodology that is readily adaptable for Networks' planning, monitoring and evaluation needs. See www.outcomemapping.ca.

18 Riles, A., *The network inside out*, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2001.

4 COMPLEXITY AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL CHANGE NETWORKS

There are at least three dimensions to external, political outcomes:

1. *Results*: The changes the behaviour, relationships or actions of one or more social actors in the direction of the impact the Network aims to achieve: Who changed what, when and where?
2. *Process*: Those incremental, often subtle but vital changes will be part of a pattern of change generally involving a variety of social actors doing something differently. What is the pattern and how is it leading to the desired change?
3. *Context*: A change in a social actor in country A does not necessarily have the same significance as a similar change in country B. Therefore, what is the significance of each outcome?

Of course, it must also be clear what activities, products and services of the Network influenced each outcome, and how.

Participatory, developmental planning, monitoring and evaluation for Network results

For Networks that wish to focus on outcomes, and not simply on their Network activities, it is vitally important to take full account of the messy, multi-level and multi-directional causality of the process and environment of implementing, monitoring and evaluating its strategic plans. These circumstances are so complex, open and dynamic that a Network is limited in what it can do to plan synergies between desired outcomes and the activities to achieve them. The number and levels of relationships between social actors is enormous, as is the influence of factors such as different national economies and political systems. Those relationships are fluid and permeable, reconfiguring as new actors and factors enter, leave or play larger or smaller roles. Furthermore, all those relationships are constantly changing, often very fast indeed.

A second consideration is the need for highly participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation in a Network. Involving as many stakeholders as wish to be involved promises a variety of significant advantages. The Network will:

- forge broad commitment to a common strategy;
- mobilise maximum resources, especially those of its members;
- identify achievements more quickly and more comprehensively;
- enhance learning about success and failure, more than serving as a mechanism of operational or budgetary control;
- appraise collectively the progress towards the political purpose and the development of the Network itself;
- serve as a mechanism for accountability to internal and external stakeholders;
- preserve the historical memory of the common processes that gave birth to and sustain the Network;
- do justice to the core qualities of democracy and participation and strengthen internal processes.

These two considerations underscore that the emphasis for Networks should be on shorter-term monitoring rather than long-term planning and critical, judgemental evaluation. For this, the increasing application of complexity science to the challenges of social change organisations, offers important insights.¹⁹

Conventional strategic planning predefines specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound outcomes and a schedule of inputs, activities and outputs to achieve them. This approach ties down the capacity of a Network to respond and innovate, above all when the Network commits itself to achieving those predefined results to demonstrate success to its stakeholders, notably donors who require planning with logical chain models and analyses. In one study of social change sponsored by McGill University and DuPont Canada, the authors conclude, “...to know step by step, in advance, how the goals will be attained [is] an approach doomed to failure in the complex and rapidly changing world in which social innovators attempt to work.... In highly emergent complex

¹⁹ See, for example, the Plexus Institute’s application of complex systems to health care (www.plexusinstitute.org) and *The new dynamics of strategy: Sense-making in a complex and complicated world*, C. F. Kurtz and D. J. Snowden, IBM Systems Journal, Vol 42, No 3, 2003 www.cognitive-edge.com.

4 COMPLEXITY AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL CHANGE NETWORKS

environments, such prior specification is neither possible nor desirable because it constrains openness and adaptability.”²⁰

One alternative is for a Network to keep its planning process light and imaginative. The Network would take advantage of the always limited time available for maximum participation and concentrate on reaching broad agreement on which social actors it wishes to influence. The Network would be less concerned about precisely what changes it expects to see and focus on what it will do to influence those social actors, and who will participate and how.

On the other hand, a Network would invest heavily in monitoring as in an on-going, ‘formative’ evaluation mode - collecting and assessing data continuously in order to adapt and improve the Network’s strategies in the light of changing circumstances. Also known as ‘developmental evaluation’, this mode “in its essence is about learning what works, acknowledging what doesn’t work and learning to tell the difference.”²¹ In Network monitoring of this nature “control is replaced by a toleration of ambiguity and the ‘can-do’ mentality of ‘making things happen’ is modified by an attitude that is simultaneously visionary and responsive to the unpredictable unfolding of events.”²²

The focus would also be different from conventional monitoring. A Network would not scrutinise what it did (and did not) do, but instead rigorously observe the individuals, groups, and organisations the Network wishes to influence. This monitoring would be through participant observation because in addition to perhaps an external evaluator-facilitator, the observers would be stakeholders who interact and relate to the social actors they wish to influence.²³ They seek both expected (or desired) and unanticipated consequences. The goal is to recognise and understand the outcomes that emerge and how the Network influenced them. The emphasis of this type of monitoring is, in IDRC’s words, “on improving rather than on proving, on understanding rather than on reporting, and on creating knowledge rather than on taking credit.”²⁴

Of course, there are moments for a Network rigorously to evaluate what has been achieved in order to judge the overall value and significance of the Network’s work in order to inform and support major decision-making. But, this ‘summative’ Network evaluation would be different too. A Network would invert the customary mapping of what outputs lead to what outcomes. That is, first the outcomes that the Network influenced are identified, either through the on-going monitoring or at the time of a periodic formative evaluation. The Network would then identify which of its activities and outputs influenced those outcomes, partially or totally, intentionally or not. There will be activities that will never lead to outcomes, which is inherent to the complex, open and dynamic reality in which a Network must work. Some outcomes will be a direct result of the Network’s influence and others only indirect, and that is normal. Some changes in social actors may be undesirable or unintentional, and that is life.

Thus, summative evaluation in a Network too is about learning first and foremost. “Accountability shifts from compliance to learning: not just any learning, but learning that bears the burden of demonstrating that it can, does and will inform future action.”²⁵

In this mode of planning, monitoring and evaluation, the involvement of external evaluators can facilitate a participatory process and ensure checks, balances, and the objectivity of the process. Even in the formal,

20 Frances Westley, Brenda Zimmerman, and Michael Patton, *Getting to Maybe: How the World Is Changed*, Random House Canada, 2007, pages 170 and 237.

21 *Ibid*, page 176.

22 *Ibid*, page 20.

23 “Evaluators have traditionally been admonished to remain external, independent and objective, but complexity based developmental evaluation recognises that data collection is a form of action and intervention, that the act of observation changes what is observed and that the observer can never really remain outside of and external to what he observes.” *Ibid*, page 239.

24 Sarah Earl, Fred Carden, and Terry Smutylo; *Outcome Mapping - Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs*; IDRC, 2001, page 21.

25 *Getting to Maybe, op. cit*, page 240.

26 Paul Engel, Charlotte Carlsson and Arin van Zee, “Making evaluation results count: Internalising evidence by learning”, in *Policy Management Brief Policy Management Brief*, No. 16, August 2003.

4 COMPLEXITY AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL CHANGE NETWORKS

summative evaluations, the greater the involvement of the Network's staff, members, allies and donors, and the more the evaluators serve as "facilitators in a joint inquiry rather than experts wielding 'objective' measuring sticks",²⁶ the greater will be the quality and validity of the evaluation. Perhaps most importantly, through their participation the stakeholders, and especially the membership, will develop the understanding and the commitment to implement the conclusions and recommendations.

In conclusion, international social change networks are growing in importance. As with other civil society actors, they are under great from pressure within and

without to demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness in generating results. There is increasing recognition that managing, assessing and understanding them presents fresh new challenges to all the stakeholders involved. The voluntary and diverse membership and geographical spread multiply the complexity, uncertainty and unpredictability of what they do and achieve. Effective and useful planning, monitoring and evaluation of Networks engage stakeholders and thus enhance learning, as well as inform the internal and external decision-making processes.

5 MEASURING SUCCESS IN COMPLEX SETTINGS: GPPAC'S EXPERIENCES WITH PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

By Goele Scheers*

Developing a planning, monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) system for a global network is a challenge across the world. Moreover, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is working in the field of conflict prevention, an area that in itself is still struggling with finding adequate monitoring and evaluation methods. This article outlines how the GPPAC PM&E system has been set up, the challenges faced while developing the system and the way these challenges were addressed. As the GPPAC PM&E system is still being developed further, this article is based on the experiences of GPPAC so far and literature on evaluation, networks and conflict prevention.

Towards a learning oriented, participatory approach

GPPAC is often asked to demonstrate that its programmes result in significant and lasting change in the wellbeing of grassroots communities affected by violent conflict. This is not an easy task. In its initial phase, GPPAC was using the logical framework approach (LFA), a management tool that is widely used for planning, monitoring and evaluating development projects. However, the paths and processes leading to peace are many, varied and often do not fit well within planned timeframes. The use of the logical framework turned out to be rather difficult, mainly for three reasons.

First, the LFA is an approach based on linear thinking. Within a network, linearity is problematic. Global networks like GPPAC are complex systems that “are constantly changing and adapting to their environment”.¹ Additionally, the possibility to predict and control outcomes of peace work is very low, because the causes of conflict can change suddenly. M&E procedures therefore need to be able to adapt to these changes and take unexpected results into account.

A second obstacle was that the input the network members could have in the development of the logical

framework was limited and not useful enough to stimulate a learning process within the network.

Finally, it was extremely difficult to show the achievements of GPPAC in the logical framework. The type of results of conflict prevention work are often intangible results such as changing behaviours, attitudes and actions of people. Quantitative indicators do not easily capture this kind of intangible changes. Furthermore, the results of conflict prevention work often take the form of something not occurring (such as conflict escalation). However, how do you measure something that did not happen? It also proved to be challenging to make the added value of the network visible in the log frame and it was therefore left unvalued.

Consequently, GPPAC used the logical framework for proposal writing and reporting only and the main focus in the log frames had to be on that which GPPAC controls, on the outputs (e.g. number of seminars organised) and the data collect through the M&E process was only used to feed to donors. On the other hand, donors increasingly required evidence of the outcomes and impact of GPPAC's work.

Understandably, but erroneously, donors treated the network as an organisation with projects, requiring proposal writing and reporting according to strict linear models. GPPAC was doing its best to adjust to the systems of the donors, but the more donors, the more difficult this became. It became clear that it was time to look for other ways to plan, monitor and evaluate that would be more suitable for GPPAC.

The following steps have been taken so far in establishing the GPPAC M&E system²:

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1 Networks and Capacity, Suzanne Taschereau and Joe Bolger, ECDPM, Discussion Paper No. 58C, February 2007, p.4. Available at www.ecdpm.org.

2 Based on IFAD, A Guide to Project M&E, available on www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/index.htm

5 MEASURING SUCCESS IN COMPLEX SETTINGS: GPPAC'S EXPERIENCES WITH PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- defining needs and purposes of monitoring and evaluation for GPPAC and selecting an M&E approach;
- developing a planning framework;
- developing a monitoring framework and identifying M&E questions;
- planning data collection, analysis and critical reflection processes.

Defining needs and purposes

As a first step, the M&E needs and purposes of the network members were explored and these were taken

as a starting point for the M&E system. During one of its meetings the GPPAC International Steering Group decided that M&E within the network should not only be done for accountability towards donors, but also should aim to:

- Improve learning within the network - M&E procedures encourage network members and the Global Secretariat to learn from each other. In addition, M&E procedures should help GPPAC members to document better their experiences so they can contribute more effectively to knowledge sharing.
- Increase transparency and accountability - Network

About Outcome Mapping

Outcome Mapping is a systemic, participatory approach for planning, monitoring and evaluation developed by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Canada. Outcome Mapping is based on three main concepts:

1) Theory of change

Many M&E methods visualise change as linear, based on simple cause-effect relationships. Outcome Mapping recognises that change is:

- Complex (many actors and factors are involved)
- Continuous (not limited to the life of a project)
- Non-linear (unexpected results may occur)
- Cumulative
- Beyond the control of the programme (but subject to its influence)
- Two way: the programme is both 'agent of change' as well as 'subject to change'

2) Sphere of influence

Outcome mapping focuses on those individuals, groups and organisations with whom a programme interacts directly and with whom the programme anticipates opportunities for influence. Outcome mapping hence clearly defines the limits a programme has.

3) Outcomes as behavioural changes

Outcome mapping focuses on one particular type of results: outcomes as behavioural change. Outcomes are defined as changes in the behaviour, relationships, activities or actions of the people, groups and organisations with whom a programme works directly. Through outcome mapping, development programmes can claim contributions to the achievement of outcomes rather than claiming the achievement of impacts. Although these outcomes, in turn, enhance the possibility of impacts, the relationship is not necessarily one of direct cause and effect. Instead of attempting to measure the impact of the programme's partners on development, Outcome mapping concentrates on monitoring and evaluating its results in terms of the influence of the programme on the roles these partners play in development.

5 MEASURING SUCCESS IN COMPLEX SETTINGS: GPPAC'S EXPERIENCES WITH PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

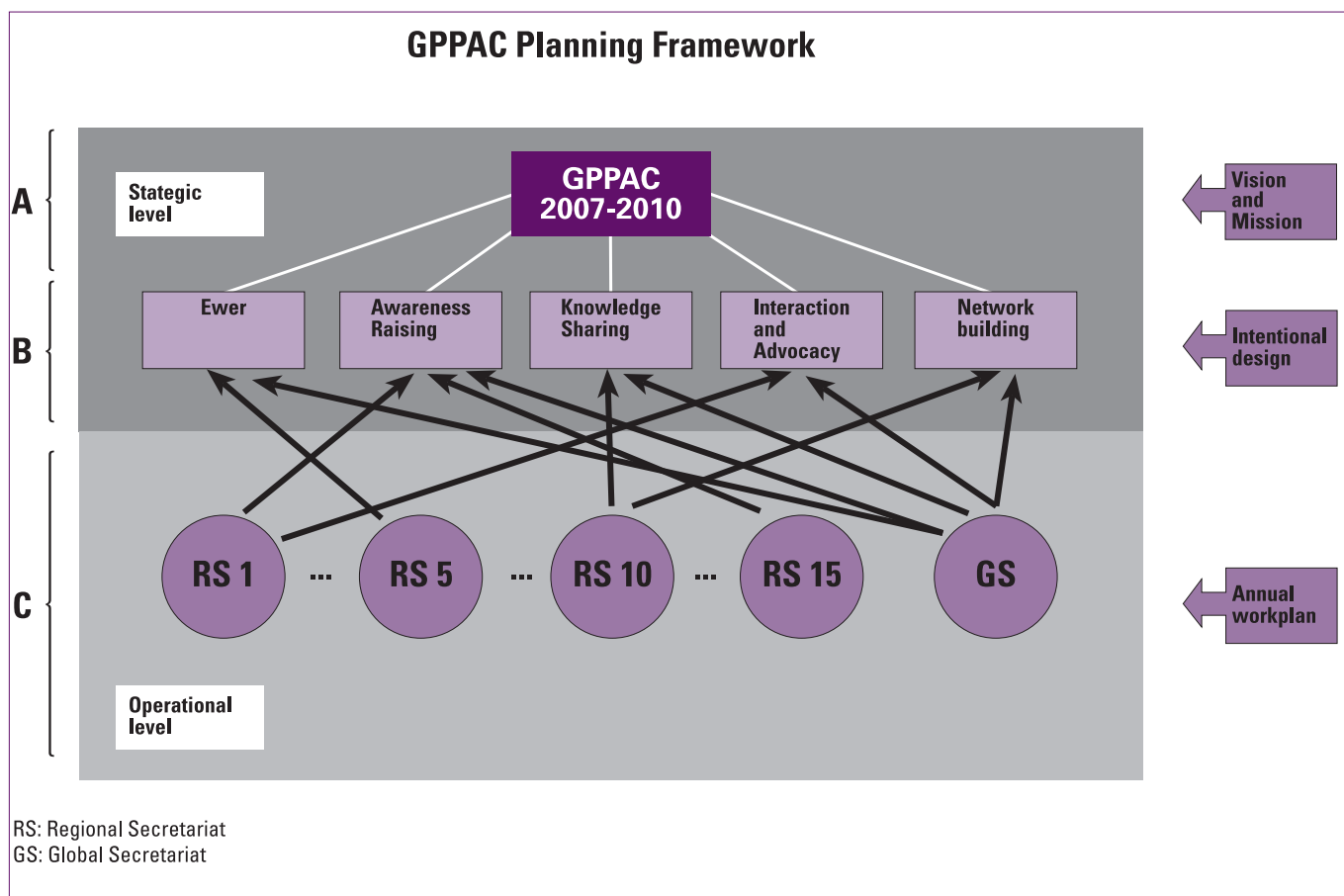
members get a better idea of everybody's involvement in the achievement of GPPAC's goals and the flow of money. Through M&E procedures, reliable information can be gathered that can be used for legitimisation of action towards all actors involved (target group, donor, etc.).

- Improve effectiveness and quality - The outcomes of the monitoring and evaluation process are used to improve the GPPAC programmes and track progress from activities to goals. Furthermore, it offers the possibility to integrate the experiences of the network members on the functioning of the network and track improvement over time.
- Enhance lobby and advocacy activities - Through making the achievements more visible it would add credibility and weight to GPPAC's lobbying and advocacy work.
- Contribute to conflict prevention theories and mechanisms - Through M&E procedures cases and experiences are collected through best practices,

which can work towards the development of conflict prevention theories and improve the mechanisms for conflict prevention.

Based on the M&E needs and purposes of the network, the GPPAC's Global Secretariat invested a considerable amount of time in searching for an M&E method that would respond to these needs, address the difficulties faced with the log frame and be applicable to a global network. After extensive research, it was decided to use outcome mapping as the basic approach for the M&E system. Outcome mapping³ is a participatory approach to planning, monitoring and evaluation developed by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Canada. The Global Secretariat adapted the method to meet the needs for GPPAC. Outcome Mapping was

³ For more information on Outcome Mapping, see www.idrc.ca/evaluation and Sarah Earl, Fred Carden, and Terry Smutylo; *Outcome Mapping - Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs*; IDRC, 2001



5 MEASURING SUCCESS IN COMPLEX SETTINGS: GPPAC'S EXPERIENCES WITH PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

found useful because of its focus on learning, the use of outcomes as behavioural changes and because it is a flexible and systemic approach.

Developing a planning framework

The figure on page 40 shows the planning framework of GPPAC. On the strategic level, the GPPAC mission and vision were defined. To achieve its vision and mission GPPAC developed five programmes: Awareness Raising, Interaction and Advocacy, Network and Capacity Building, Knowledge Generation and Sharing, Early Warning and Early response (EWER). An *intentional design*⁴ for each of the five programmes was formulated. Defining the *boundary partners*, being those individuals, groups, and organisations with whom the programme interacts directly to effect change, was an important though not easy step in this process. In a network like GPPAC, those who implement the work and those who benefit from it are massively entangled; often the same organisation is both. Notwithstanding the fact that this step took a considerable amount of time, it was instrumental for specifying the actors that GPPAC is trying to influence and separating these from the partners GPPAC needs to work with, but not necessarily wants to change (*strategic partners*). The formulation of *progress markers*, a set of graduated indicators of changed behaviours for a boundary partner, helps GPPAC in making the progress in influencing the boundary partners visible.

On the operational level, each GPPAC regional secretariat defines which activities it will implement in order to contribute to the achievement of the outcome challenges set on the strategic level for the network as a whole. The Global Secretariat has a big task in preparing the long-term as well as annual planning process within the network. In a network such as GPPAC, discussing and negotiating objectives and priorities can take up a substantial amount of time. The GPPAC global planning process is highly participatory. Before a global network plan can be developed, consultations take place on the national and regional levels. The fifteen GPPAC regions develop regional work plans and based on these work plans, the International Steering Group develops a global work plan.

Developing a monitoring framework

GPPAC programmes aim to influence specific *boundary partners* at different levels (network, system and societal), so that they can contribute in the best way possible to achieve GPPAC's vision. The main aim of the M&E procedures is to identify the changes in behaviour of these boundary partners with respect to conflict prevention and in identifying the extent to which this process of change has been supported or influenced by GPPAC through a predefined set of strategies, outputs and activities for each programme that has been agreed in each GPPAC region.

The M&E procedures are expected to be implemented by the GPPAC governing bodies in collaboration with the network members. The organisations that are part of GPPAC, including those who participate in the governing bodies, have their own internal management and M&E procedures. The challenge in this regard was and still is to streamline the M&E procedures of the network members with the ones developed for the network as a whole, to avoid creating too much extra work for the network members, but at the same time generate the information needed to fulfil the agreed monitoring purposes.

The different levels of the M&E system are shown in the figures on page 42.

Figure 1 shows the different levels for monitoring and evaluation in GPPAC. GPPAC has *governing bodies* that coordinate and steer the activities of *the network members*. The network is aiming to change the *political and social system* and - in the end - create changes in *society*. Consequently, these levels are reflected in the monitoring and evaluation system of the network. Figure 2 shows these levels.

4 The planning stage of Outcome Mapping, where a programme reaches consensus on the macro level changes it would like to help bring about and plans strategies to provide appropriate support. GPPAC followed four steps of the intentional design: formulating the boundary partners, outcome challenges, progress markers, strategy maps⁵ Wilson-Grau, R., *Complexity and International Social Change Networks*, chapter 4 of this issue paper

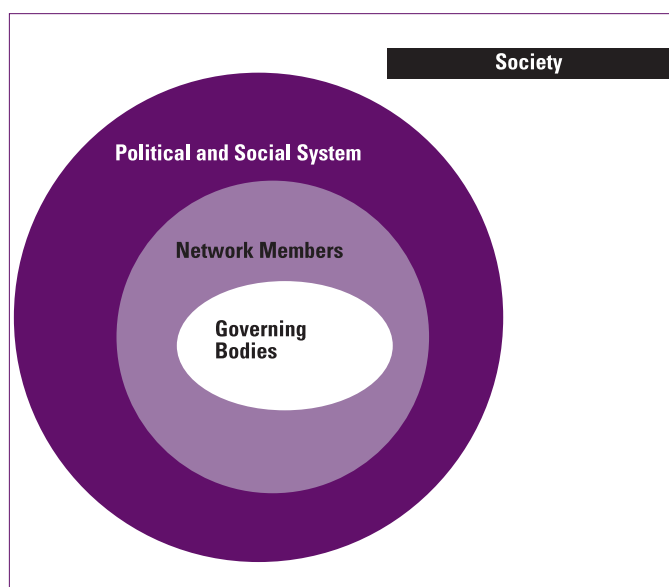


Figure 1: Monitoring and Evaluation levels in GPPAC

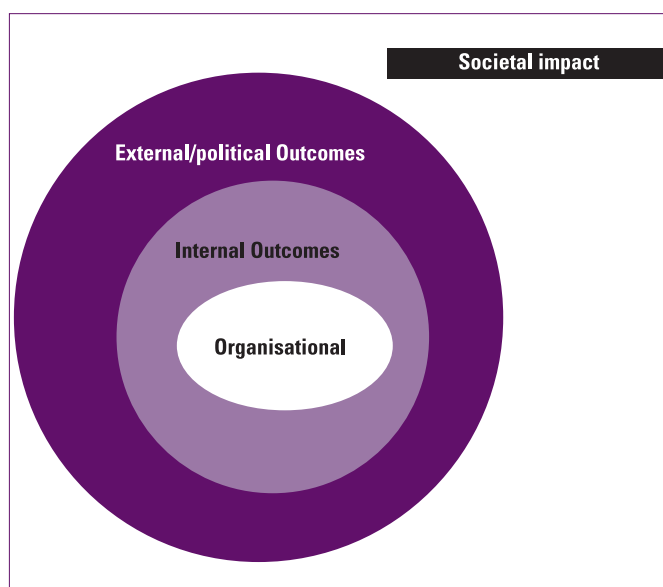


Figure 2: levels of change for GPPAC

Assessing organisational performance

It is vital for a network to assess the performance of its secretariat and other governing bodies, to be able to know if they are functioning efficiently and effectively. The main M&E question that GPPAC wants to answer at this level is: Are the governing bodies performing well enough to steer the network? The GPPAC Network and Capacity Building programme monitors the performance of the governing bodies: the International Steering Group, the Executive Committee, the Regional Secretariats and the Global Secretariat.

Assessing the influence on the network members

One of the functions of GPPAC is strengthening the capacity of its members. Results on this level will therefore focus on the network members themselves. In other words, this is the influence the network is having on its own members. Ricardo Wilson-Grau defines the outcomes on this level as internal outcomes, organic or developmental outcomes⁵. Through these outcomes, the capacity of the network members is being strengthened to be able to achieve the network's purpose. Within each of the five GPPAC global programmes, there is a focus on strengthening the capacity of the network members.

A network will first need to strengthen its own members, before it is able to reach out to actors outside of the network. Young networks like GPPAC, will therefore have a bigger focus on the network members before it is able to reach out to external actors. The M&E question to be answered at this level is: do the networks members have the capacity to contribute to achieving the network's purpose?

“All complex systems [...] share behaviours that cannot be explained by their parts.” Therefore, “[In] Complex systems, relationships are key.”⁶ The strength of GPPAC lies in the interactions among its members. The energy of these interactions flows through the network, holds it together and ensures its sustainability. Hence, network capacity and performance cannot be understood or fostered simply by making sure that each component does its part.” The capacity in networks is “greater than the sum of its parts”.⁷ Consequently monitoring and evaluation activities need first to include measuring the level and quality of the interaction between the network

5 Wilson-Grau, R., Complexity and International Social Change Networks, chapter 4 of this issue paper.

6 Frances Westley, Brenda Zimmerman, and Michael Patton, *Getting to Maybe: How the World Is Changed*, Random House Canada, 2007, p. 7

7 Trescherau, S. Ibid, p.4.

5 MEASURING SUCCESS IN COMPLEX SETTINGS: GPPAC'S EXPERIENCES WITH PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

members. In the GPPAC M&E procedures, there is a big focus on the interaction between the network members. Secondly, the results of the monitoring and evaluation of the network members need to be shared with each other, to make visible what the network as a whole is achieving.

The relationships on this level are complex. In GPPAC, the Global Secretariat might carry out capacity building activities for network members. However, network members can also conduct capacity building activities for other members. The different networks members may be receiving actor at one point in time and intervening actor at another point in time. Causality and accountability are fluent and multi-directional. The challenge here was to find out who is accountable to whom and where the lines of reporting were to be drawn. In addition, some actors might have a contractual relationship, but this is not necessarily the case. Hence, the network members need to participate voluntarily in the M&E process.

Apart from monitoring the capacity of the network members and their interaction, GPPAC is also monitoring outputs. The question to be answered on outputs is: are we delivering the outputs that we agreed upon?

Assessing the influence on the socio-political system

Aside from strengthening its own members, most networks (though not all) would like to influence actors outside of the network and change the socio-political system. Outcomes achieved on this level are referred to as external or “political” outcomes⁸. This level is where the added value and the achievements of the network as a whole become visible. M&E here goes further than assessing the activities of the individual members, but looks at the changes the network was able to make due to the combination of different efforts.

GPPAC aims for a fundamental change in dealing with violent conflict, a shift from reaction to prevention. To make this shift happen, GPPAC reaches out to the UN,

governments and the media to try to change their behaviour. At this level, the question that GPPAC is trying to answer through its monitoring and evaluation procedures is how the boundary partners are changing their behaviour and how the activities of the network contributed to changing the behaviour of these actors outside the network.

Assessing the societal impact

Finally, a network wants to bring about lasting changes in the lives of peoples. Within the field of conflict prevention, this level (peace writ large) is intensively debated, because the complexity of peace work makes it impossible to assess impact. To achieve peace, many different players work at many different levels in a variety of ways.⁹ The Utstein study states that: “So far as we know, there is no way to assess the impact of individual projects and we should therefore stop trying to do it.”¹⁰

GPPAC ultimately wants to bring change in the lives of people “by striving for a world in which people and governments elect non-violent means, rather than armed conflict, to achieve greater justice, sustainable development, and human security”¹¹. It is however an impossible task to prove that this ultimate change was brought about due to the work of GPPAC. In GPPAC, a diversity of individuals, organisations and actors interact to support a shift from reaction to prevention. “Impacts” therefore are usually the product of a confluence of factors for which no single agency or programme can realistically claim full credit. The attribution gap is huge. By selecting Outcome Mapping as the basis for GPPAC’s M&E system, the focus of GPPAC is on outcomes defined as behavioural changes. These outcomes are within the sphere of influence of the network. With regard to the M&E process, the focus is

8 Wilson-Grau, R., Ibid

9 See e.g. Anderson, Mary B., *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*, CDA, 2003, p.9

10 Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004, *Towards a Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding: Getting Their Act Together*. Overview Report of the Joint Utstein Study of Peacebuilding, p. 53

11 GPPAC Charter, approved by the ISG in Nairobi, March 2006

5 MEASURING SUCCESS IN COMPLEX SETTINGS: GPPAC'S EXPERIENCES WITH PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

rather on how GPPAC is *contributing* to this impact, than on *proving* that GPPAC activities led to this change.

Planning data collection, analysis and critical reflection processes

In October 2007, representatives from the Regional Secretariats participated in a GPPAC seminar on monitoring and evaluation. During this seminar, the regional secretariat staff intensively discussed the monitoring process. More specifically, the participants looked at the different users of the M&E information for GPPAC and discussed how and by whom the information would be collected, compiled and analysed. Furthermore they discussed how critical reflection processes on the results of the M&E process could take place. The table on page 45 en 46 provides an overview on output level for the users donors and regional liaison officers.

Based on the information gathered so far, two monitoring formats were developed. One to assess the changes in the behaviour of the boundary partners (outcomes) and the contribution of GPPAC to these changes (strategies, outputs and activities). The formats were developed by adapting the Outcome Mapping monitoring journals. The formats are designed to be completed in a participatory way by each region for each programme they are contributing to. Once the information is gathered, it should follow the information flows to reach the users in the spaces that were defined for reflection, analysis and decision making to improve programme performance and network functioning. Finally, based on the information gathered and analysed the ISG will identify specific programme issues or experiences that have the potential to influence policies, support advocacy work or serve the improvement of conflict prevention theories. The topics identified will be analysed in depth to be able to capture GPPAC's best

practices, cases or knowledge in key areas to fulfil its mission.

Conclusion and future challenges towards a system approach

GPPAC has gone a long way in developing an M&E system for the network, but more work needs to be done. Notwithstanding the difficulties with monitoring and evaluation for conflict prevention as well as for global networks, most organisations still use traditional M&E methods. In the light of the challenges faced as described above, I strongly believe that monitoring and evaluation for conflict prevention as well as for global networks needs to move away from linear methods. Useful new methods as e.g. Most Significant Change¹² and Outcome Mapping have been developed and attempts have been made to bring a network perspective into the logical framework¹³. I believe that monitoring and evaluation in these fields requires being creative and innovative. Combining and adapting methods can lead to an adequate approach responding to the needs of an organisation.

Nonetheless, this not only requires flexibility from the organisations or networks, but also from the donor side to recognise the specific needs for M&E within both these fields. Too many organisations rigidly use linear M&E tools simply because they are most commonly used or because they are required by donors. Continued work needs to be done in enhancing the learning opportunity of M&E, because M&E is too often reduced to a reporting tool.

Susan Trescheriau rightly concludes that working with networks requires:

- A shift in mindset - including adopting a system perspective, a willingness and ability to look for synergies, openness to shared responsibility, and accountability, and relinquishing a certain degree of control, and
- a shift in approach-avoiding blue print strategies, moving to long-term perspectives on change, and relying on more qualitative approaches, such as for assessment, monitoring and evaluation.”¹⁴

12 Davies, R. Dart, J. *The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique. A Guide to Its Use*

13 Rick Davies, *Moving from Logical to Network Frameworks: A modular matrix approach to representing and evaluating complex programs*, available at <http://www.mande.co.uk/>

5 MEASURING SUCCESS IN COMPLEX SETTINGS: GPPAC'S EXPERIENCES WITH PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Outputs	
Name of user: Donor	X Inside GPPAC network X Outside GPPAC network
What do they need the information for?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of funds they gave • Further funding • Accountability towards tax payers and parliament • Justify allocation of funds • Ensure carrying out of programs
What info do they need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative & financial report • Results of M&E • Progress reports and plans for adjustment • Obstacles in achieving the activity
When do they need this info?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After implementation of program but before they need to report on it • Ahead of donor deadlines • While activities are ongoing, regular reports
What are the characteristics of this information (sort of info): formal, informal, quantitative, qualitative, etc....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal (report) • Informal (email) • Financial report • Qualitative and quantitative
How are we going to capture the information?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial & budget reporting • Evaluation forms (as part of the report) • Media press release • Feedback from the focus groups/beneficiaries • Feedback from local network • Observation & participation
Who will capture the information?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing team (grassroot level) • Facilitators of meetings (e.g. trainers) • The Global and Regional Secretariats • Regional Liaison Officers and programme coordinator
How are we going to put the information together?	Activity reports from different regions/networks to be put into a uniform template (used globally)
Who will put it together?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional staff • People from target groups • Donors • Implementers collecting data • Coordinator of implementing team • RLO & Program Coordinator
How are we going to analyse this information?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare initial plans to results • Task force meetings

5 MEASURING SUCCESS IN COMPLEX SETTINGS: GPPAC'S EXPERIENCES WITH PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Outputs (continued)	
Who will analyse it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Global Secretariat • Regional Secretariat, RSG, Task forces, Program Coordinators • Regional Initiator
What do we do with this info once it is analysed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report presented to donor & to constituencies • Discuss report internally/with RSG focus group • Take into consideration for internal future planning • Annual report • Media highlights • Lobbying & advocacy • Global Secretariat passing analysis on to ISG, ExCom)
What are the spaces to discuss this (e.g. ISG, RSG)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Steering Groups • Task forces • Programme meetings • ISGs • Donor meetings

GPPAC's relationship with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign affairs (Dutch MFA) is a good example in this regard. With the start of the new co-financing system, the Dutch MFA required all applicants to fill out a cause and effect chain format. The ECCP as global secretariat of GPPAC entered into discussions with the Ministry on this issue. After approval of the funding proposal, the Ministry presented a new M&E approach to the Dutch NGOs, called 'tailor-made monitoring'. This approach takes the M&E systems of the Dutch NGOs as a starting point. In addition, the Ministry decided to look at networks as a separate category, recognising the specific needs of this group. The ECCP is now allowed to report to the Ministry by using Outcome mapping. In the period to come, there will be regular monitoring meetings between ECCP and the Ministry. However, The Dutch MFA is not GPPAC's only donor. Consequently, more work needs to be done in engaging in a dialogue with other donors. Furthermore, the lack of funding is a continued obstacle to further engage in high quality monitoring and evaluation.

The next step in further improving the M&E system for GPPAC will be the implementation of the M&E procedures on the regional levels of GPPAC.

As an international network working in the field of conflict prevention, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict was confronted with many challenges for developing M&E procedures. Outcome mapping has provided a useful framework for addressing these challenges. An important conclusion of introducing this approach so far is that setting up an M&E system for a network as well as for conflict prevention work requires looking beyond conventional methods for measuring results or at least being creative with these methods. Monitoring and evaluation should in the end be a learning process for both individual organisations and networks as well as for donors.

14 Trescherau, S., Ibid, p.17

6 THE LAC PLATFORM'S APPROACH TO MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Some reflections

By Ana Bourse*

The programme on The Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed and/or Violent Conflict in Latin America and the Caribbean which has been promoted by the *Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (CRIES)* since 2003, and which is tied to the initiative of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), aims at exploring the kind of meaningful contributions that non-governmental actors can make in the field of peace, security and conflict prevention in the region.

Ever since its planning phase, the initiative has combined networking, research, awareness-raising, dissemination, advocacy and capacity-building strategies and actions, oriented towards not only strengthening civil society organisations and networks, but searching for complementarities that would allow higher degrees of collaboration amongst different stakeholders in the conflict prevention and peacebuilding field at diverse levels.

As noted in Mariano Aguirre's external assessment report (2006), developing a violence and conflict prevention programme based on the contributions of civil society was a very ambitious challenge, especially in a region where, traditionally, NGOs have focused their attention on many different issues, but security and conflict prevention matters have been the exclusive concern of the state. Hence, the first inherently challenging undertaking for the implementation of the programme five years ago, consisted in the identification of grassroots organisations, NGOs, practitioners and academics whose expertise and agendas were related to peacebuilding and conflict resolution areas.

After networking and an inclusive and democratic consultation process, a series of subregional workshops were held in Central America, the Caribbean basin, the Andean Region and the Southern Cone, and a first

regional conference was organised. This activity helped to articulate concerns and common interests to build up a Regional Action Agenda, which would then feed into a Global Action Agenda, containing all the key aspects that were identified with regards to actions that should be taken to:

- a) prevent the outbreak of potential armed conflicts;
- b) gradually modify the root causes that give rise to structural violence and threaten the institutional stability and governance of the states of the region, and
- c) advance peacebuilding, understood as a regional and global public good.

Specific mechanisms

As the programme unfolded, a Latin American and Caribbean Platform for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (LAC Platform) was consolidated in October 2005, right after the GPPAC Global Conference at the UN Headquarters in July. Its participants shared the common objective of advancing the recommendations set in the *Regional Action Agenda*. The members of the network committed themselves to the promotion of both the Regional and Global Action Agendas because that would lead in the long term to the prevention of an outbreak, escalation or recurrence of an armed or violent conflict. But good intentions, a declaration of values and shared principles do not guarantee that the desired outcomes will be delivered. Consequently, they envisioned some specific mechanisms that would contribute to the realisation of their aspirations. Amongst these were the creation at different levels of a institutionalised fora for dialogue and the design of public policies linked to peacebuilding and conflict prevention, where different stakeholders would be invited to participate; the development of an early warning and early response system; and the setting in motion of a dissemination and awareness-raising

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6 THE LAC PLATFORM'S APPROACH TO MONITORING AND EVALUATION

campaign targeted at public opinion, governments and intergovernmental organisations and agencies about the importance of fostering a positive peace and changing the focus from reaction to prevention, to avoid the human suffering and social, economic, as well as environmental drawbacks, and other costs associated with the scourge of violence and armed confrontations.

From the outset, the Latin American and Caribbean initiative was shaped on the principle of a participatory methodology for the implementation of its pre-scheduled activities, but monitoring and evaluation regarding reporting to donors was strictly the responsibility of CRIES, as the coordinating organisation.

Although CRIES has a proven capacity in coordinating an open, fluid, and complex structure, the articulation of the LAC Platform caused some variations in the dynamics that had taken place in the previous phase of the programme, especially regarding managing, monitoring and evaluation aspects.

As a decentralised and self-managing network, the LAC Platform required higher coordination, but with responsibility flowing around its participants, and good levels of communication, mainly upon ICTs to keep all the partners updated on developments. In this sense, the General Secretariat, had to play an integrating role. Additionally, a Regional Steering Committee was established. Ever since then, the RSC has participated in the tactical and strategic decision-making, the setting of priorities, the continuous monitoring of the process, and the evaluation of the outcomes and results, in order to assess the lessons learnt, the constraints and limitations encountered, the opportunities faced and what needs to be re-strategised to move the programme further forward, in a highly uncertain and unpredictable environment.

The Regional Steering Committee, together with CRIES, which currently holds the Secretariat of the LAC Platform and is the Regional Initiator for GPPAC, formulated a regional work plan according to the priorities agreed on consensus amongst the network

members. This work plan not only has a series of scheduled activities, but also some outcome challenges and targets that need to be achieved through the collective effort of the LAC Platform constituents. Since the first work plan was drafted, its implementation, and experiences have been continually tracked and the results of activities have been documented and broadly shared, not only to show the achievements and the obstacles faced, but to make a contribution to the transparency and the internal and external accountability of the process. In this sense, the M&E has adopted the mode of an ongoing learning process.

Achievements

Nonetheless, the participatory M&E mechanism has only given its first steps in the region, more as the result of CRIES' experience and a natural interest and involvement of the network members, than of an in-depth reflection on how the work plan and the initiative as a whole need to be mapped and evaluated, or what system should be used to better acknowledge the progress from activities to overall objectives and long-term goals. Yet, this leads to the question of what has been achieved and by whom?

There are some shortcomings inherently linked to the M&E of peacebuilding and conflict prevention projects that will have to be faced, as well as donors' pressures to see results for the funds that they have invested, and that they should be accountable for; and, finally, about strengths and limitations faced by regional networks, which are different from those of local and national NGOs. In the first place, due to the nature of the undertaking, the LAC Platform needs to be aware that its achievements will rarely be attributed to its efforts, and that the impact of its activities will always be difficult to assess, because it will be the result of the intentional work or unintentional actions of diverse agents.

Within that framework, it is often difficult to comply with donors' efficiency expectations in the short term, unless one sticks to the project-based logical framework approach, which seems inadequate for a holistic peacebuilding and conflict prevention programme in

6 THE LAC PLATFORM'S APPROACH TO MONITORING AND EVALUATION

which a large number of stakeholders participate. Outputs and results from concrete activities are easily identified, but outcomes and impact of both the activities and the broader planning are impossible to assess within the time frame of the project, and they cannot be attributed exclusively to the LAC Platform's interventions. Furthermore, the question of funding sustainability arises, and there is a temptation only to acknowledge what was successful in order to secure future support. Sometimes, there is not even any opportunity to make a complete assessment of successes and undesired or unexpected outcomes in donor agencies' standardised reporting templates. Although some donors provide open questionnaires in their call for proposals which reflect their flexibility, others have developed online forms, which are the same for development, human rights, environment, peace and conflict prevention projects, local, national or regional initiatives presented by a single NGO or a complex regional or global network.

Taking into account the challenges outlined above and other complexities associated with the dynamics of a non-hierarchical platform, the internal assessment procedures of the Latin American and Caribbean network need to be better structured. A discussion on the existing M&E methodologies seems to be a precondition for that, followed by the choice of the most appropriate for the region or making the necessary adaptations to the one considered the most suitable model.

CRIES, as the Secretariat of the LAC Platform is willing to enhance this dimension of the initiative in the coming years, based upon the commitment of all its members, a capacity built to appraise collectively the results and outcomes of its actions towards the network goals. In this sense, the implementation of a GPPAC M&E system is regarded as an opportunity for learning from the global experience, to articulate the multi-level efforts, and build an efficient and effective monitoring and assessment mechanism for the LAC Platform.

Regardless of the constraints and challenges ahead, some lessons can be drawn from the past five years of

the programme's implementation. The LAC Platform has had to tackle obstacles regarding both regional civil society characteristics and the specific context of Latin America and the Caribbean. In terms of non-governmental organisations, the focus on conflict prevention issues in their agendas was not present, and it was difficult for academics to understand the approach to this field, while they kept concentrating their eyes on traditional security and defence matters when trying to discuss the prevention of violence and armed conflicts. In addition, the majority of Latin American and Caribbean states are reluctant to take conflict prevention from the field of rhetoric into concrete action, not to speak of opening institutionalised spaces for dialogue with civil society organisations and pooling capacities to develop jointly with other stakeholders public policies and action plans in the field.

Nevertheless, through its knowledge generation and advocacy work, the LAC Platform has been successful in mainstreaming conflict prevention issues into the Latin American and Caribbean political debate, as well as in the agenda of key multilateral institutions and civil society actors.

Strictly regarding M&E, the ongoing methodology that was implemented has been useful for the network. The 'developmental' evaluation and the use of qualitative indicators have allowed the LAC Platform to learn what works, what doesn't and to tell the difference (Westley, Zimmerman and Patton, 2007:176). This has contributed to the design of a realistic and flexible work plan, gradual strategies, and a clear picture of its 'can' and 'cannots' in terms of undertakings. Nonetheless, some ups and downs have appeared regarding the follow-up needed to be undertaken by the different taskforces within the Platform. This is not a problem linked to lack of motivation, but very much associated with insufficient funding.

The programme on The Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed and/or Violent Conflict in Latin America and the Caribbean has also been submitted to an external evaluation process. The intervention of a third party in the M&E was a positive experience,

6 THE LAC PLATFORM'S APPROACH TO MONITORING AND EVALUATION

helping to bridge the gap between how the LAC Platform 'sees' itself, and how others perceive it. The evaluator drew its conclusions and made recommendations based on a holistic approach to the whole programme to acknowledge its impact on the different stakeholders.

These external assessment exercises need to be conducted by people who know enough about the initiative and the activities carried out within its framework, or who are well aware of how the network works, its origins, governance structure, decision-making procedures and the nature of relationships between its member organisations. In other words, better assessment is made when an 'outsider' but yet close to the network is involved in the external evaluation. Otherwise, there exists the risk of not acknowledging what is important and not capturing the complexities inherent in the work of coalitions of this kind in the specific field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Entering a new phase

In 2008, the Latin American Platform for Conflict Prevention and Peace Building, as a coalition, is

entering a new phase, in which it will engage its capacities and experience in concrete actions in the field. It is expected to undertake further research and analysis; it will continue its advocacy and awareness-raising efforts; but will also focus on training and more capacity-building activities along with early warning and citizen's diplomacy workshops. Those challenges will necessarily impact on the wider community and other stakeholders. They will even require collaboration with other key actors, and well-designed strategies. All in all, there will be some calculated and desired outcomes, but many unexpected repercussions as well.

No one can precisely anticipate or measure where the impact will end. Nonetheless, a well-structured planning, mapping and evaluation system, and the correct allocation of resources to track progress and re-strategize can enhance the LAC Platform's work towards its goals in the coming years.

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7 NANSEN DIALOGUE - DIALOGUE IN PRACTICE: CHALLENGES FOR EVALUATION

Challenges for evaluation

By Danijela Galovic and Goran Lojancic*

How do we know what we have achieved? Are we doing the right things? These are the questions we frequently ask ourselves. When someone speaks with practitioners who work in different Nansen Dialogue Centers in the Balkan region the enthusiasm and belief in what they are doing is obvious. The answer that you usually get is: “We can see that dialogue is crucial and leads to other positive changes.” But the real challenge is to explain how we know that the change happened. How can we measure the effects of dialogue? How do we define change?

Dialogue is one of the most frequently used words in contemporary politics, almost as common as the words democracy or human rights. Whenever somebody enters into any kind of social crisis, it is quickly followed by the advice that “there is a need to open political dialogue” on that issue. Some people, who are maybe too fond in dialogue, argue that debate, although legitimate, is slowly moving back, alive only then and there when and where dialogue fails as a concept. Bearing in mind the reputation of the word dialogue, one might conclude that we are improving our ability to openly discuss sensitive issues in a non-violent, constructive and productive way. On the other hand, a simple calculation of the range, type and number of the social disputes in the contemporary world, suggests that our ability to discuss constructively matches our ability to produce difficult and dangerous subjects for those discussions.

Does this indicate the existence of some kind of controversial dichotomy? Not necessarily. Dialogue, as a very old concept, has very broad range of explanations and sometimes that makes it not very easy to maintain the focus on its practical use. In other words, wide range of opportunities that dialogue provides sometimes favours too many ad hoc activities based on positive assumptions about internal strength of dialogue itself as a concept, instead of using dialogue as a tool in conducting activities that can externalise impact of

dialogue further than among those who are participating actively in dialogue sessions. We believe that dialogue in itself, as an idea to set up the basis for initiatives for reconstruction, works by abolishing two important aspects of social conflicts: a system of parallel ‘truths’ on the one hand, and passive and receptive standing of the people involved in conflicts on the other. But that’s only the beginning.

Theses and methods

The Nansen Dialogue concept is mainly constructed from experiences in the field. “We see it as simply a way of communicating with a focus on understanding ‘the other’, rather than convincing him/her that you are right. This understanding is a prerequisite for successful mediations and negotiations (but it is not mediation or negotiation itself - *remark by the authors*). In the dialogue workshops we attempt to create a space of support and safety, where it becomes possible for the participants to honestly communicate their experiences, feelings and more rational thoughts”.¹

1. Bargaining with reality

This means that dialogue, in its purest form, tends ‘only’ to overcome differences in information systems inherited and embraced by different ethnic groups, systems based on a limited number of facts that distort reality into two or more different ethnic ‘realities’. These realities act like drivers on the highway - while legitimate in their own direction, they never meet with those coming from the other direction, and when they do it usually results in a tragic accident.

The importance of challenging this kind of behaviour tends to be neglected in favour of the constant promotion of the noble idea of turning towards a joint future and thinking about things that will come instead of the things that used to be. However, it is our

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1 Bryn, Steinar: “Engaging the ‘Other’ - The Nansen Dialogue Network in Balkans”, in: *People Building Peace II*.

experience that investment in sharing stories and conclusions from these two systems is worthwhile, mainly because most people believe that the ‘others’ have the same set of information but for some reason don’t want to accept it. While they operate in a mode of convincing, persuading, arguing who and how much is right or wrong, there is a constant tendency to ‘dig in the past’ for arguments about who will have the upper hand in a projected future. Effectively, this creates a pendulum of power, a very dangerous thought train which says that because “we were down in the past; we deserve to be up in the future”.

Thus, the idea of dialogue would be to ‘compare the notes’, to confront created realities through direct interaction. At the beginning participants are not likely to accept that there is another, sometimes completely opposite, interpretation possible of the same incidents and stories. In a long run, it is inevitable that they will start reflecting on why and how such interpretations are even possible, simply because they need to develop arguments to confront it.

2. *Owning the future*

“A qualified facilitator can assist in shifting the focus from position to interests, and make the participants realize that they have common interests in economic development, good quality education, a reliable system of security, improved job opportunities, decreased corruption, more independent media, clearer separation of politics and business - and a peaceful cup of coffee in the morning”.²

And that is exactly the point where the ‘real thing’ starts. Once former opponents, participants emerge from the first stage of the dialogue process as partners on two levels - one level is internal, among participants themselves, and one external, with those who invest in the programme. This doesn’t mean that the dialogue process ends here, but rather that it now serves in discussions on subjects related to future development.

Rather than presenting and conducting different projects created in distant areas, among the responsible people, institutions and organisations that want to help, with or

without proper assessment of local needs, we gather people around the common interests that they understood and agreed upon, and we create together concrete plans for reconstruction and development. Participants, mainly influential individuals and institutions, but also the important social structures from the grass roots level, thus have the important stake of ownership in the projects.

We can try to summarise this through one example. There was an excellent large project on building an inter-ethnic school in one of the conflict areas in the Balkans, created and supported by a very respectable international organisation. Due to a limited level of needs assessment, the project was not supported by all ethnic groups and it failed as an original idea. Facing the opposition from one of the ethnic groups, representatives of this organisation were forced to build a school for those who supported the project - another ethnic group. Although that new school represented a massive improvement in conditions for education for a large number of children, it further widened the gap between the two ethnic groups.

In Jegunovce, a municipality in Northern Macedonia, NDC Skopje started a dialogue process with local municipal representatives from conflicting Macedonian and Albanian ethnic groups. Throughout the process their main concern about the future was the almost complete division between the children of different ethnic origins, and we discussed together how we could overcome that division. This mixed group came up with the idea of organising joint classes of English language and IT courses for children from both ethnic groups. Another idea for overcoming divisions between children with different ethnic origins in this community was to organise classes for learning each other’s language (Macedonian children have been learning the Albanian language and Albanian children have been learning the Macedonian language). Since turnout was almost unanimous, teachers, parents and children expressed their wish to expand contact between children in a more complex and organised environment that will also

² Ibid

7 NANSEN DIALOGUE - DIALOGUE IN PRACTICE: CHALLENGES FOR EVALUATION

provide better conditions for education. They agreed that the best possible environment for this expansion would be to establish a new joint school which at present they do not have.

This example shows the advantages of ‘turning tables’ - shifting focus from a ‘development for people’ to a ‘people for development’ strategy. Dialogue doesn’t only function as a noble-minded effort to bring people together, but also as a means of monitoring and helping in what people can do together in order to reconstruct and improve their environment.

Furthermore, instead of initiating and then handing over, dialogue facilitators are obliged to cooperate, assist, lead and follow (depending on the situation) throughout the whole process by being continuously present. In order to do that successfully they have to have in mind several aspects of their work:

1. Impartiality
2. Security
3. Inclusiveness and openness to a different points of view
4. Commitment and continuous presence
5. Flexibility
6. Change and creativity
7. Preparation
8. The recognition that dialogue is a locally rooted effort
9. Empowering of participants
10. Constant evaluation at all levels

What kind of monitoring and evaluation?

A user-friendly system that enables practitioners for monitoring

The Monitoring and Evaluation system of the Nansen Dialogue Network has come about through a collaborative effort involving the project management in Norway, the monitoring and evaluation team, and a pilot workshop with practitioners from NDC Skopje.

Modifying existing evaluation systems to fit our needs has not proved so effective in the past. The indicators based on experiences of other efforts of a similar kind

that we tried to modify in order to be locally specific were described by practitioners as too general, not allowing the grasping of subtle changes on individual, interpersonal, intergroup and structural level. Very often, the result was that very important and meaningful changes were somehow neglected within the monitoring system, since practitioners were following and considering as important only the changes that fitted with previously set indicators. Deficiencies in designing indicators resulted in neglecting changes that were very visible to practitioners themselves, but weren’t recognised as such.

The main challenge for the Monitoring and Evaluation team was to establish a link between practitioners’ ‘natural’ way of thinking while planning programmes, following changes and modifying plans accordingly, on the one hand, and using more ‘technical’, methodological terminology and frameworks on the other hand. Instead of trying to fit the content from their work within existing methodological frameworks, we have tried to do the opposite - to design a framework that will be in accordance with the practitioners’ ‘flow of thoughts’ and still comprise all the necessary elements for serious analysis of our work. We have designed it through asking the colleagues from one of the Nansen Dialogue Centers (NDC Skopje) to present their way of thinking while planning the next phase of their work on the Jegunovce programme. Through that discussion we extracted the questions that they usually asked themselves while planning. Having all those questions on paper, we discussed together the order in which they should be put (designing a logical structure), what is still missing from the structure etc. The first version of the *Nansen Dialogue Network Workbook* for monitoring and evaluation consisted only of clear and understandable questions (written in simple language, avoiding more technical terminology) regarding different parts of project planning and the planning of the monitoring and evaluation process. After the testing of this system in other NDCs through the series of workshops, we were gradually introducing more ‘professional’ terminology, explaining how each of these questions could be asked in a different way (and what answers actually represent situation analysis, baseline, indicators, impact etc).

After a while, it was clear that this approach worked - not only that practitioners are now very familiar with the definitions of all these concepts, but they also understand the logic behind them and consider a system for monitoring and evaluation as an integral part of project planning.

The practitioners had previously struggled to understand the M&E system and to use it in its proper context - now they feel enabled to establish a clear relationship between their work and written methodology. After this initial structure of evaluation process was set up (we might call it a 'spine') it has been incorporated in the programme planning from the very beginning. Work is still in progress and we are trying to develop it further in a more structured way, but the benefit of the first part of the process was that we are now all talking the same language - both researchers and practitioners, and we can work together on the further improvement of the system.

Participatory approach

Apart from previously conducting a situation analysis and setting the baseline for our programmes, we believe that further refinement of the definition of 'significant change' together with people from the local communities affected by our programmes is of crucial importance. Creating space for dialogue should be considered as an achievement by itself, but when it comes to its contribution to the monitoring and evaluation process, our experience in the Nansen Network is that it provides the staff with a clear definition of what people living in the communities with whom we are working see as desirable paths of change. Some of the needs and common interests not previously identified (at least not in that way) were defined in practicing dialogue in the abovementioned communities. It became clear to representatives of both sides that win-win solutions exist and the fact that something is perceived as good and acceptable for one side does not necessarily mean that it is bad and unacceptable for the 'other side'. Dialogue sometimes stimulates joint definitions of desired and significant change by members of different groups (ethnic, political, religious etc.) that are living in the same community and we are defining the goals of our

programmes accordingly. This enabled us to monitor more successfully the desirable changes that we jointly defined.

Results-oriented and process-oriented approach integrated

We are using impact-chain (inputs - activities - outputs - outcomes - impact) in defining project plans, but it has been done in a more dynamic way. Since the programmes are designed in accordance with long-term vision, they are necessarily more flexible and open to changes (and frequently implemented in rather turbulent circumstances). Also, the data gathered through monitoring is used primarily for creating knowledge and understanding, since the systems for documentation are designed to grasp incremental, often subtle and cumulative changes.

The sociologist Charles Tilly has emphasised that in explaining social processes we must "resist the focus on deliberated individual action and give attention to incremental effects, indirect effects, environmental effects, feedback, mistakes, repairs, and unanticipated consequences."³

One of the main features of our work (since it is based on the idea of conflict transformation) is to focus on ending something destructive and building something desired at the same time, which inevitably sets challenges for our monitoring and evaluation system, as well as combining a healthy dose of both circular and linear perspectives.

Impact defined on meso level (local communities)

The term 'impact' is usually connected to the macro-level and the concept of 'peace writ-large'. Our argument is that whenever there is a transfer of ideas, skills, knowledge and new ways of relating from the direct participants in our activities to the wider local community (when they are showing initiatives based on values of dialogue, peacebuilding and democratisation and motivating others to actively participate in them) it should also be considered as an impact since it constitutes a very

³ Tilly, 2006

7 NANSEN DIALOGUE - DIALOGUE IN PRACTICE: CHALLENGES FOR EVALUATION

valuable change for the people living in those communities - even if only happens on the meso-level, technically speaking.⁴ It doesn't mean that we don't have the ambition to achieve and measure impact at the level of peace writ-large, it means that by in-depth focusing of our efforts on a few specific local communities (specific by armed conflicts in the past, serious ethnic divisions still present, etc.) in recent years we have also targeted beyond the local level - by setting up the example that fruitful inter-ethnic cooperation is possible. Our thesis is that the significant changes on the meso-level should also be considered as an impact, but it is obvious that working with local communities is not the end point; it should be the basis for changes on the macro-level. When it comes to designing our system for measuring impact on the macro-level, the work is still in progress.

Focus on relations

The monitoring and evaluation system that we are using articulates what needs to be looked for when we are seeking to document the effects of our work. It is focused on answering the question: "If we think what we are doing is making a difference, what is that difference?" The questions are specially designed for the type of projects on which the Nansen Dialogue Network works. We target three levels when looking for effects: relationships, organisational or institutional structures and services. The level of relationships focuses on interactions and transactions between people affected by our programmes (directly or indirectly), including conversations, statements made at meetings, stories about themselves and the 'other side', etc.⁵ If teachers from two different ethnic groups in Bujanovac start cooperating on joint projects that they initiated together, if Albanian and Macedonian children in Jegunovce start playing together, or if families from different ethnic groups in Vukovar, Croatia start visiting each other, all these things are clear indicators for change of types of relationships previously existing in those communities.

Institutionalisation of changes

Besides relationships, we focus on tracking the changes in the functioning of local institutions as well (their organisational structure and the services they are providing).

Organisational structure has to do with the way the institutions or organisations we work with are structured. For example, if significant changes are made in the way the municipality of Bujanovac in South Serbia is functioning, then we are interested in the sustainability of that change (to what degree and in what way were the principles of dialogue and democratic values incorporated in its work, are they addressing the needs of different groups living in the same community, do institutional changes provide basis for sustainable positive changes in the functioning of other aspects of those communities, etc.).

Conclusion

The Nansen Dialogue Network consists of ten Nansen Centres active in the Balkan region (in Belgrade, Bujanovac, Skopje, Podgorica, Pristina, Mitrovica, Osijek, Sarajevo, Mostar and Banjaluka). Each of these NDCs focuses their efforts on one or more local communities, and in each of these local communities several target groups are included, levels are overlapping, programmes are interconnected and it is not easy to determine the separate effects of each of these programmes. The challenge for us as researchers remains to set up the system that would enable our colleague practitioners to measure the effects of these joint efforts, first on the national (state) level, and then on a regional level.

One of the key measures of success here is undoubtedly the degree to which we (as Nansen Dialogue Centers) have succeed in increasing the ownership of the dialogue process by the participants and wider communities they are living in, as well as the degree of institutionalisation and systematic usage of dialogue in producing social change.

4 For example, if the representatives of the ombudsman's offices in Vojvodina who participated in the mediation training mediate conflicts and thereby changes the usual (often more violent) way of resolving or transforming conflicts of members of the community - then this should be considered as an impact.

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Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the multiple challenges faced with planning, monitoring and evaluating conflict prevention activities and has examined some options in dealing with these challenges.

Some important observations and lessons that can be drawn from these chapters are:

- Many organisations are still looking for adequate tools and methods to plan, monitor and evaluate conflict prevention activities.
- There is a need to develop systematic planning, monitoring and evaluation procedures for conflict prevention and peacebuilding interventions. The Aid for Peace approach and the Reflecting on Peace Practice Project both contribute towards this aim.
- Civil society organisations should be included in assessing for impact.
- Attribution remains a difficult issue. Options for dealing with this difficulty include focusing on the outcome level and measuring change within a programmes sphere of influence or instead of focusing on Peace writ Large, linking the operational level of the intervention with the respective scale of the conflict-level.
- It is extremely useful to make explicit the operating Theories of Change - in the context of programme design, as well as during an evaluation.
- Getting the design right is key to ensuring programme effectiveness.
- The use of linear methods for planning, monitoring and evaluation conflict prevention work as well as for networks is perceived as problematic.
- Organisations are creative in developing PM&E methods that are adapted to the needs of their organisations.
- Networks such as GPPAC are complex systems and planning, monitoring and evaluating such networks is a new field with many challenges.
- Donors, for the most part, don't recognise the specific needs for PM&E for conflict prevention and networks.
- Flexibility and openness towards innovative methods is needed from both sides, donors as well as NGOs.

In conclusion, efforts have been made to plan, monitor and evaluate conflict prevention activities. Nevertheless, there is more to be done to improve PM&E practice in this field. In the coming years, GPPAC will further invest in finding adequate PM&E methods and strengthening the capacity of its members in this regard.

THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR THE PREVENTION OF ARMED CONFLICT

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is building new international consensus and pursuing joint action to prevent violent conflict and promote peacebuilding, based on its *Regional Action Agendas* and the *Global Action Agenda*. GPPAC maintains a global multi-stakeholder network of organizations committed to act to prevent the escalation of conflict into destructive violence at national, regional and global levels.

The primary function of GPPAC is to promote and support the implementation of the *Regional Action Agendas* and the *Global Action Agenda*. For this purpose, GPPAC represents important regional concerns on the international level, enhances the functioning of the international systems for conflict prevention and uses its capacities to assist the implementation of key regional activities.

Sub-programs are:

Promote acceptance of the ideas of conflict prevention

GPPAC supports regional efforts to raise awareness regarding the effectiveness of conflict prevention, and undertakes parallel efforts at the global level.

Promote policies and structures for conflict prevention

GPPAC generates ideas for improving policies, structures and practices involving interaction among civil society organizations, governments, regional organizations, and UN agencies for joint action for conflict prevention.

Build national and regional capacity for prevention

GPPAC strives to enhance the capacity of its regional networks and global mechanisms to undertake collective actions to prevent violent conflict.

Generate and share knowledge

GPPAC engages in a process of knowledge generation and sharing, by learning from the experience of regions and developing mechanisms for regular communication/exchange of such information. GPPAC activities aim to improve our mutual understanding regarding important methodologies and mechanisms for action.

Mobilize civil society early response actions to prevent

GPPAC develops the capacity of civil society organizations to contribute to early warning systems and to intervene effectively in impending crises/conflicts. In response to regional requests, the global network will a) mobilize coordinated civil society responses, based on early warning of impending conflict escalation; and b) pressure governments, regional organizations, and the UN system to respond to early warning information.

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