

What is Successful Peacebuilding?

**A report prepared for
Catholic Relief Services**

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Revised April 17, 2007

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The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of what is known in both theory and practice about peacebuilding success. The analysis on the following pages was developed through a thorough review of literature on peacebuilding success, discussions with several peacebuilding practitioners and advisors and a review of agency-specific documents.² It represents the emerging consensus on how peacebuilding success *should* be understood. Because peacebuilding is a complex and relatively new industry, most peacebuilding programs are not rigorous in their definition, monitoring or evaluation of success. Donors are the most consistent enforcers of rigor, but few request rigorous monitoring or evaluation of peacebuilding programs partially because of the investment of time and money required. Rigor in terms of peacebuilding success is therefore left up to field staff and their conflict advisors, all of whom are overstretched and under-resourced. In spite of these challenges, many individuals are making amazing progress in developing, implementing and understanding successful peacebuilding programs. This study builds on the work of those pioneering individuals and proposes determinants of peacebuilding success.

Peace Writ Large: macro and meso definitions of success

One measure of success is the achievement of “Peace Writ Large.” The phrase “Peace Writ Large” is increasingly used to refer to the “large” goal of the *absence of violent conflict* and the *existence of just and sustainable peace*. In other words, “Peace Write Large” is the ideal world. There are two general approaches to Peace Writ Large. One emphasizes the components of a well-functioning democratic state with a focus on “good governance.” The second emphasizes the civil society-based process of empowerment and change that enables the transformation of violent conflict into a force for non-violent constructive change. These definitions are not mutually exclusive, but represent two general approaches to peacebuilding that have emerged. The former empowers the state, the latter empowers the people. While the end state of both approaches is essential for peace writ large, their means to their ends may seriously contradict. *One of the determinants of peacebuilding success at the macro level is therefore the balancing of state focused and people focused approaches.*

At the *meso level*, there are four prominent definitions of peacebuilding and peacebuilding success that expand on the state-centered and/or people centered approaches.

1) ***Peace Writ Large*** – the Reflecting on Peace Practice Project (RPP) defines success as efforts to either end violent conflict and/or build just and sustainable peace.³ Based on interviews with over 200 organizations that aimed to accomplish one of these goals, they identified the following four additive *criteria of successful peacebuilding* interventions.⁴ “Additive” refers to the observation that the peacebuilding impact increases with the number of criteria met. These criteria include both people-focused and state-focused approaches.

² The individuals interviewed for this study were from the following organizations: CDA’s Reflecting on Peace Practice Project, World Vision, Consensus Building Institute, Mercy Corps, USAID’s Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation, The Department of State’s Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, Care International and Development Alternatives, Inc. Because of the time constraints of this study it was not possible to do a thorough analysis of each organization’s approach to peacebuilding, or to interview other organizations.

³ Mary B. Anderson and Lara Olson, "Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners," (Cambridge: The Collaborative for Development Action, 2003).

⁴ "Reflecting on Peace Practice Project Handbook," (Cambridge: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2004), p. 14.

- Interventions that lead to the *creation or reform of institutions or mechanisms* that address the specific grievances or injustices that fuel the conflict.
- Interventions that cause participants and communities to develop *independent initiatives that decrease dividers increase connectors or address causes* of conflict.
- Interventions that *prompt people increasingly to resist violence* and provocations to violence.
- Interventions that result in an *increase in people's security* and in their sense of security.

2) ***Transformative Peacebuilding***⁵ - John Paul Lederach describes peacebuilding as “a multiplicity of interdependent elements and actions that contribute to the constructive transformation of the conflict.”⁶ Lisa Schirch says that the goal of peacebuilding is to “prevent, reduce, transform, and help people recover from violence in all forms, even structural violence that has not yet led to massive civil unrest.”⁷ It focuses on building the capacity to meet human needs and protect human rights, the reduction of direct violence, the transformation of relationships, and the waging of conflict non-violently at all levels of society and across all sectors of society (horizontally and vertically).⁸ From a transformative peacebuilding perspective, *success is the generation of dynamic and adaptive processes and structures that transform potential violent conflict into constructive social change at all levels of society.*

3) ***Peacebuilding and Development*** – In the *Overview Report of the Joint Utstein Study of Peacebuilding*, Dan Smith writes that the goal of peacebuilding is to “encourage the development of the conditions, attitudes and behavior that foster and sustain social and economic development that is peaceful, stable and prosperous.”⁹ The Utstein study states that success should be determined not on the project level, but on the policy level in terms of the degree to which the overall peacebuilding strategy for the entire country is moving away from the baseline or beginning levels of violence (original macro-level conflict analysis) and toward *peaceful, stable and prosperous social and economic development*.¹⁰

4) ***Stabilization and Reconstruction*** – In the report *Measuring Progress in Stabilization and Reconstruction* Craig Cohen presents the overarching theory of change for stabilization and reconstruction activities: they seek to support the reduction of violence and the building of local capacity to the degree that “indigenous actors can assume effective control.”¹¹ Success of stabilization and reconstruction efforts is therefore determined when “*sources of violent conflict have been reduced to such an extent that local institutions that are being developed have the capacity to resolve internal*

⁵ I have grouped John Paul Lederach’s and Lisa Schirch’s work under the category of transformative peacebuilding because their focus is on transforming conflict, but Schirch writes that peacebuilding goes beyond the practice of conflict transformation.

⁶ John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997). p. 67.

⁷ Lisa Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding, The Little Books of Justice & Peacebuilding* (Intercourse: Good Books, 2004). p. 9.

⁸ Schirch, p. 26.

⁹ Dan Smith, "Towards a Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding: Getting Their Act Together," in *Overview report of the Joint Utstein Study of Peacebuilding* (Brattvaag: Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004).

¹⁰ Smith, p. 16.

¹¹ Craig Cohen, "Measuring Progress in Stabilization and Reconstruction," in *Stabilization and Reconstruction* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, March 2006).p. 8.

*conflict peacefully and are able to prevail over violent extremists.*¹² In line with Malcolm Gladwell's "Tipping Point" concept, this definition of success is based on the idea that if you can create enough momentum in both the reduction of violence and the peaceful resolution of violence then you can catalyze a society's shift from a culture of war to a culture of contained violence.

At the macro and meso level we have therefore identified the following definitions of peacebuilding success:

- Macro-level – Peace Writ Large
 - absence of violent conflict
 - existence of just and sustainable peace
- Meso level (grouped under four general categories)
 - *Creation of institutions, mechanisms, and capacities to resolve conflict peacefully*
 - creation or reform of institutions or mechanisms that address the specific grievances or injustices that fuel the conflict
 - dynamic and adaptive processes and structures that transform potential violent conflict into constructive social change
 - local institutions that are being developed which have the capacity to resolve internal conflict peacefully
 - *Reduction of all forms of violence*
 - increase in people's security or sense of security
 - *Increase in a culture and relationships that promotes peaceful solutions*
 - impact on relationships by decreasing dividers and increasing connectors between people
 - determination of people increasingly to resist violence and provocations to violence
 - *Increase in economic and social development for all*
 - peaceful, stable and prosperous social and economic development

These four meso-level definitions of peacebuilding success are interdependent and encompass a wide variety of programs and projects that seek to affect change in the direction of peace. To ensure a comprehensive approach, there are important linkages implicit in these macro- and meso-level definitions of peacebuilding:

- *Simultaneous change in the personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions of society.*
- *Linkages between multiple interventions between the sector (socio-economic, political, reconciliation/justice, security), the level (government, civil society, grassroots community), and the dimension of change (personal, relational, structural, and cultural levels).*

¹² Cohen, p. 8.

- *Rebalancing* competing forces in state and society to create an environment that supports *constructive competition and collaboration* (economic, social, political) and the peaceful resolution of conflict, and provides *momentum for iterative constructive change* and progress.
- *Relevance* to the context and *adaptation* to the changing needs of the state and society as they travel along the *gradual path* from war to peace.
- Sustainability of efforts through *building state, civil society, and grassroots capacity to sustain the change* that international efforts helped to catalyze.

Picking one of the facets: the entry point into multifaceted success

Peacebuilding aims to have a comprehensive impact on a country, or even a region. It is multi-sectoral (socio-economic, political, reconciliation/justice, security), it is multi-level (government, civil society, grassroots community), and multi-dimensional (seeking to affect change at the personal, relational, structural, and cultural levels). As a result, peacebuilding is a complex, dynamic process with a multitude of actors and activities, each of which seeks to effect change as it is defined by its own perspective and capacity. The intervening actor's definition of successful peacebuilding at the micro levels is influenced to a much greater degree by the mandate of the organization and the experiences of its staff than by the needs of the country that is emerging from war. For example, a military officer may define peacebuilding as the absence of war or violent conflict; a conflict transformation specialist may define peacebuilding as the creation of a culture of peaceful conflict resolution (much more than the absence of war); a development worker may define peacebuilding as the continuous development of human capacity and infrastructure at all levels of society (grassroots, middle, top) necessary for continued economic growth. Behind each of these definitions is a *theory of change* of what causes war and peace. None of these theories are wrong, and none of them are completely accurate or complete on their own. In addition, these theories impact one another.

An entry point is where the project begins its work, which can be described as the intersection between the sector (socio-economic, political, reconciliation/justice, security), the level (government, civil society, grassroots community), and the dimension of change (personal, relational, structural, and cultural levels).¹³ The entry point defines the micro and meso level definitions of peacebuilding success.

Success as transfer and linkage

The review of theory and practice of peacebuilding we conducted for this study showed that **peacebuilding activities were defined as successful when they pushed beyond their initial entry point**. If an activity is able to support personal change in a way that affects relational change, then it can be considered as achieving a degree of success in peacebuilding. If personal or relational change then leads to structural change, then it may have an even greater peacebuilding effect. For example, a dialogue project is deemed successful when its participants are able to translate their new skills and attitudes into new behavior outside of the dialogue session. If this new behavior can lead to new relationships and new structures that will contribute to peace, then it is deemed an even greater peacebuilding success. Herbert Kelman, who helped to develop the concept of problem solving workshops, referred to this as the

¹³ See Lederach, *Building Peace* p. 82-83 and Smith, "Towards a Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding: Getting Their Act Together."

transfer effect: "If interventions are to make a difference, there needs to be transfer of knowledge, attitude change and resources to people beyond those directly participating in the project."¹⁴

Successful peacebuilding can take place in terms of degrees of change within one dimension, but ideally takes place through linkages between dimensions (personal, relational, structural, and cultural). These changes in dimension can be catalyzed by vertical, horizontal, and diagonal moves between sectors (socio-economic, political, reconciliation/ justice, security) and levels (government, civil society, grassroots community).¹⁵ The direction of the linkages is determined by your theory of change, its relevance to the context, and how you define your macro, meso, and micro goals as a result. Often a theory of change may be developed first and then the practitioner has to work backward to help to identify the potential linkages. It is essential to disaggregate the degrees of success that are implicit in your theory and in your program design, and continually test their relevance to the evolving conflict and peace dynamics.

Peacebuilding success is defined as movement from this initial entry point toward another level of change (personal, relational, structural or cultural) or another degree of the same level of change. As we will discuss later, there are also different degrees of peacebuilding success, which help to measure this forward vertical, horizontal, diagonal, and/or spatial movement.

Much of the literature on peacebuilding claims that the way to ensure linkages is through coordination. Yet, coordination alone will not create the linkages necessary for peacebuilding to have a larger, comprehensive impact. Because each agency and organization operates as an independent entity, and coordination is primarily voluntary, it is up to each individual peacebuilding organization to integrate these linking definitions of success into the design and evaluation of their programs. Coordination can facilitate the process of linking to other efforts, but cannot take the responsibility for ensuring that the linkages happen, either within or between projects.¹⁶

Success by entry point: meso and micro level indicators

The following table provides indicators of peacebuilding success at different dimensions of change and sectors of intervention. Most of the indicators fall in the meso and micro levels. This list was compiled from a review of all of the documents available for this study (see bibliography and appendix). It is by no means complete, but it does give a general idea of how peacebuilding practitioners currently understand peacebuilding success. There is variation in level of impact both within and between the chart boxes. It is also interesting that the personal and

¹⁴ Herbert Kelman. "Contributions of an Unofficial Conflict Resolution Effort to the Israeli-Palestinian Breakthrough." *Negotiation Journal*, 1995 :19-27

¹⁵ This discussion of linkages builds on the theories developed by John Paul Lederach in *Building Peace* and by Mary Anderson and Lara Olson in *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*. Anderson and Olson discuss the importance of linkages between efforts that focus on more people and those that focus on key people. They also discuss the importance of connections between the individual level and the socio-political level.

¹⁶ For further elaboration of this argument, see Susanna P. Campbell and Michael Hartnett, *A Framework for Improved Coordination: Lessons Learned from the International Development, Peacekeeping, Peacebuilding, Humanitarian, and Conflict Resolution Communities*, Presented to the Interagency Transformation, Education and After Action Review (ITEA) Program October, National Defense University, 31 October 2005.

<http://www.ndu.edu/ITEA/index.cfm?method=main.itemlist&item=7B&resource=1>

relational dimensions tend to include micro and meso level indicators, the structural dimension includes meso level indicators, and the cultural dimension includes many meso level indicators.

According to the research conducted by Anderson and Olson, movement from structural down to relational and personal change is just as important as movement from personal up to relation and structural. “Cultural change” seems often to relate primarily to macro-level peacebuilding success, except when cultural change is considered to occur in small pockets – such as within one community, or through a coalition of NGOs. In these cases, success would be the use of this group culture to create change outside of the group, at the structural, interpersonal and/or cultural levels.

It is important to think of these indicators of success as linking to one another – within one box, vertically, horizontally, and spatially. The process of implementing a peacebuilding program determines the direction and effectiveness of these linkages. Peacebuilding success is determined not by the simple implementation of a program that has a peacebuilding label, but by *how* a program is implemented and the impact that it has on factors that build the foundation for peace.

For example, the peacebuilding success of a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) program is determined by which armed groups it involves, how it involves them, what it delivers to them, and whether other programs/projects will pick up where the DDR program leaves off. To continue with this example, if the peacebuilding goal of a DDR program is multi-level – a) to sustain a cease-fire by b) integrating former soldiers into society and c) providing them with a way to earn a living without the use of violence; then, a DDR program involves personal (changing the behavior of a former combatant), relational (changing the way that society relates to former combatants), structural (creating new jobs for former combatants) and cultural change (a societal rejection of the use of violence to solve problems and win respect).

The definition of peacebuilding success should include each dimension of change (to mark the intermediate stages). It should include the capacity of the effort to link with other efforts that have complementary capacity (i.e., economic development efforts, continuing political negotiations) and to maintain the momentum necessary to achieve the peacebuilding goal of peacefully reintegrating former soldiers into society. Peacebuilding should not be defined as the simple technical implementation of a project (i.e., removing the guns from former combatants, placing them in transit camps, giving them some money, and taking them back to their home town). These are intermediary stages that may, or may not, lead to peacebuilding. As a result, practitioners need to be open and aware when their original prediction of success, and hoped for linkages, is no longer accurate.

Indicators of peacebuilding success

	<i>Personal change</i>	<i>Relational change</i>	<i>Structural change</i>	<i>Cultural change</i>
<i>Socio-Economic foundations</i>	<p>Individuals lose their fear and speak honestly</p> <p>Individuals increase their capacity for critical listening, self-reflection and critical analysis</p>	<p>Improved capacity to work collaboratively for mutual benefit, including both social programs and economic programs</p> <p>Individuals bring new idea or practice to the institutions in which they participate/work</p>	<p>Cessation of gray and black market activity</p> <p>Sufficient influx of state revenues</p> <p>Reduction in levels of poverty</p> <p>Increasing employment</p> <p>Decrease in debt</p> <p>Restoration of trust in the government's ability to provide basic services</p> <p>More equal distribution of wealth, income and assets</p> <p>Progress in addressing economic grievances</p> <p>Low population mortality</p> <p>High nutritional status</p> <p>Normal patterns of cultivation and livestock-tending</p> <p>Voluntary, sustainable, and supported resettlement of displaced people</p> <p>(re-)construction of equitable infrastructure (physical, health, education, etc...)</p>	<p>Communities function according to widely accepted, non-violent societal norms</p> <p>Increasingly inclusive sense of community</p> <p>Critical mass of individuals committed to maintaining peace and development</p> <p>Reduction of socio-economic tensions</p>
<i>Political framework</i>	<p>Acceptance that inclusive dialogue delivers mutually beneficial results</p>	<p>Improved capacity for collective political action</p> <p>Improved consensual planning capacity</p> <p>Development of a common vision</p> <p>Generation of new ideas, principles and options for peacefully addressing the conflict and its causes/manifestations</p> <p>Consolidate constructive political relationships within and between the state and society</p> <p>Develop individual and collective capacity to participate constructively in democratic political processes</p>	<p>Development of political institutions that manage political competition through non-violent, participatory, accountable, representative and transparent processes.</p> <p>Existence of sustainable and active non-governmental peace networks</p> <p>Influx of new ideas, analysis, problem definitions, options, and approaches into policy making and politics</p> <p>Concerted action among domestic, international, and/or regional actors to support the foundations of peace</p> <p>Increased awareness of and legislation to protect human rights</p> <p>Cross-communal political parties</p> <p>Fair, free and non-violent elections</p> <p>Creation of new, sustainable institutions</p> <p>Effective and efficient non-governmental watchdog</p>	<p>Increased awareness of the destructiveness of political manipulation and disinformation</p> <p>Freedom of thought, belief, religion, speech and media</p> <p>Participation in society's affairs</p> <p>Development of a culture of participation, power-sharing, inclusiveness and democracy, as a basis for the peaceful resolution of internal and external conflict</p> <p>Reduction of political tensions and the development of cooperative relations between elites and society (particularly the under-privileged) and between former belligerents</p> <p>The people engaged in and influencing political process</p>

	<i>Personal change</i>	<i>Relational change</i>	<i>Structural change</i>	<i>Cultural change</i>
<i>Security</i>	Individuals feel more physically secure both in their homes and in public	Develop a peaceful and respectful relationship between the security forces (police and military) and the civilians Ensure that security forces are guarantors, not violators, of rights	The State holds a monopoly on the use of force, and is able to maintain this monopoly through open consent of the people (not through coercion) Decrease in the number of violent conflicts Decrease in military budgets Few injuries/death caused by weapons Decrease in human rights abuses Freedom of movement Widespread demining and mine awareness Peaceful reintegration of armed groups into society DDRR of former combatants (including children) that provides them with a viable alternative to violence Decrease in the number of small arms and light weapons available Ensure that the military answers to democratically elected civilians	Rejection of acts of violence Refusal of incitement to violence Free assembly of people Creation of community peace structures Demilitarization of minds Delegitimization of the gun culture
<i>Reconciliation and Justice</i>	Individuals change their attitudes to the other side Individuals develop a deeper respect for differences of identity, attitude and opinion Individuals accept that different perceptions of history are possible Individuals feel that they can address and get beyond trauma and the other psychosocial affects of violence	New patterns of relationships formed Increased trust between former “enemies” New bridges and contacts built between individuals and communities	Halt to elite impunity and general lawlessness Development of a justice system that guarantees impartial rule of law (not rule of the individual) for all citizens and parties to the conflict. Increase in the number of conflicts addressed through non-violent dispute resolution or other means Repeal of discriminatory laws Truth and reconciliation processes with legitimacy at all levels of society (may require several processes)	High-level and varied types of social interaction Intermarriage Acceptance of non-violent dispute resolution as the preferred means of resolving conflict Acceptance of a culture of dialogue and other peace-supporting norms at all levels of society New, more peaceful modes of social interaction

Theories of change: hypothesis that link the entry point to its impact on peace writ large

Implicit in each of the above indicators of peacebuilding success is a *theory of change*, or general hypothesis that identifies factors that will build peace, or a precursor to peace.¹⁷ Theories of change predict the linkage between the entry point and the highest level of peacebuilding impact. Theories of change are derived from both theory and practice. In the table below, we provide examples of some of the theories of change that inform the indicators of peacebuilding success listed in the table above. This is only a sample of the theories of change employed in peacebuilding.

	<i>Personal Change</i>	<i>Relational Change</i>	<i>Structural Change</i>	<i>Cultural Change</i>
<i>Socio-economic foundations</i>	Individuals will be empowered to create peace if they are given a safe space and the skills in which understand the conflict and envision peace.	Different groups/individuals who work for a common goal are more likely to see their common interests and create relationships that will prevent them from fighting against one another in the future.	The development of the socio-economic foundations for all citizens to feel equally represented and served by their state provides assurance that peace provides benefits to all, and removes the feeling of deprivation and inequality that can fuel future conflict.	If a society operates on the principles that resources are equally shared among all and progress benefits all then conflict is less likely to develop between the haves and have nots.
<i>Political framework</i>	Individuals that engage in dialogue with the other groups in society will be able to develop a much more mutually beneficial solution than if they resort to war to resolve their problems.	Inclusive, collective, consensual, representative, and democratic decision-making builds inter-group relationships and establishes the pattern of managing differences peacefully through institutionalized mechanisms of the state and society.	The development of a political framework, and the supporting institutional and legal structure, that represents the views of all of its people and resolves disputes through dialogue will be unlikely to escalate into internal war. ¹⁸	If disagreements can take place openly and transparently and a culture of debate and discussion can develop then people and parties will not have to resort to violence to have their voices heard or resolve their conflicts.
<i>Security</i>	Individuals who feel more physically secure will be less likely to engage in violent conflict and to support leaders who use violent means to resolve conflict.	Providing and maintaining security in a way that respects people's rights helps to ensure that people will not resist the maintenance of security, which could lead to violent conflict.	If violence is used only as a last resort (if at all) in maintaining security then people will become accustomed to using non-violent means to resolve conflicts and ensure their own security.	The development of a society that does not condone the use of violence will discourage its use.
<i>Reconciliation and Justice</i>	Individuals who can respect and accept different groups/people and understand that they have a legitimate (although different) perspective will be more likely to work and live peacefully with former enemies.	The creation of inter-group empathy among individuals establishes the foundation for the resolution of conflict within the society. ¹⁹	The development of both formal and informal justice systems that hold all people accountable to laws that they have consented to be peacefully governed by creates the framework for the possible peaceful resolution of all disputes.	The creation of a culture of dialogue, understanding and non-violent dispute resolution will discourage the use of violence.

¹⁷ According to Church and Shouldice, theories of change are “generalized beliefs about how and why widespread change can be generated in a violent conflict.” Cheyanne Church and Julie Shouldice, *The Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Interventions: Part II: Emerging Practice & Theory* (Londonderry: INCORE, 2003).

¹⁸ Democratic Peace Theory claims that democracies will also be less likely to go to war with one another.

¹⁹ Ross's description of the theory of change behind conflict transformation work. Marc Howard Ross, "Creating the Conditions for Peacemaking: Theories of Practice in Ethnic Conflict Resolution," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, no. 6 (2000).

All theories of change to which we refer in the field of peacebuilding were developed from studies and experiences of similar phenomena in other fields and/or case studies. In other words, all peacebuilding theories of change by their nature apply to other contexts and experiences to a new situation and/or time period. The theories of change behind most peacebuilding dialogue and training efforts have their origins in social psychology and economic game theory. Many of them were then tested and further developed in the Israeli-Palestinian or North-South Ireland contexts. The theories behind political processes result from the work of diplomats in their own and other countries and from political scientists' studies of the political processes in other countries, or in the same country at a different period of time.

Practitioners often develop their own theories of change based on their experiences in other places, and then apply them to the next context in which they work. As a result, no theory can be guaranteed to deliver what it aims to deliver, and no theory can be considered objectively valid out of context. Because each theory was developed from research and practice in a different environment with different actors, issues and dynamics, no theory can or should be applied blindly. For a theory of change to have a chance of having the intended impact, it has to be applied (through the design of the intervention) to the specific context and the specific timeframe.

For example, one multifaceted theory of change is that creating inter-group empathy will decrease stereotypes and misperception, which in turn can lead to increased communication and result in the development of trust. In line with this theory, dialogue programs have been developed to increase communication and understanding among different groups involved in the conflict. But these dialogue programs have no guarantee of building trust or even the foundations for trust. The Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP) employed dialogue and conflict resolution techniques with a group of Burundian leaders to increase trust and their capacity to work together. The evaluation of the BLTP revealed that the program may have created greater empathy, but that creating trust depended on a much greater number of factors, many of which the BLTP could not directly affect. Many BLTP participants said that trust could only be created once impunity had been addressed. The BLTP evaluators developed the following table to illustrate this point:

Table summarizing BLTP discussion of trust²⁰

Cause of mistrust	Relation to the war	Types of solutions
1. Stereotypes & misperceptions	Predates, but significantly worsened by, war	Attitude change. Education system and reconciliation mechanisms.
2. Lack of interaction	Mainly created by the war	Communication and shared resources
3. Culture	Long predates war	Long-term and hardly programmable, and education, spirituality, sensitization are needed.
4. Past behavior	Predates, but significantly worsened by, war	The past cannot be undone, but transition may contribute to acceptance.
5. Lack of knowledge	Predates, but significantly worsened by, war	Media, improved governance, truth commissions
6. Impunity	Predates, but may be worsened by, war	Justice, rule of law, improved governance

²⁰ Table developed by Peter Uvin based on discussions with the BLTP staff and on the experience of Uvin and Campbell in Burundi, found in Peter Uvin and Susanna Campbell, "The Burundi Leadership Training Program: A Prospective Assessment," (Washington, DC: The World Bank, July 2004).

This table above shows that there are multiple theories of change and projects that aim to build trust. It also shows that the creation of genuine trust among people who have gone to war with one another may take generations.

Kosovo provides another important example of theories of change that were not suited to, or sufficient for, the context. The Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) Project recently evaluated a series of projects that aimed to create understanding and reconciliation between Kosovars and Serbs in Kosovo through inter-ethnic workshops and jointly implemented projects. The theory of change was that if the ethnic groups could communicate well and work well together, then it would create a framework for reconciliation and sustainable peace. RPP's assessment of these efforts showed that they were not having the intended effect of promoting reconciliation and coexistence because the theory of change was not appropriate for the context of Kosovo.²¹ According to RPP's report, the desired changes did not extend beyond the personal level and relationships and inter-group cooperation did not significantly change. Second, the emphasis on multi-ethnicity was resented by the community and seen as a conditionality that was imposed on them. The report attributes the lack of peacebuilding effect to two primary factors: 1) the projects did not address the key driving factors of the conflict and 2) NGO efforts were uncoordinated and did not target key decision makers. In terms of the determinants of peacebuilding success discussed in this paper:

- These projects did not build on similar activities implemented by other groups.
- The theory of change (returning refugees and promoting integration of minorities through multi-ethnic projects would address the conflict) did not take into account the characteristics of inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo and therefore did not transform relationships.
- Key people/issues were not brought into the projects, making real reconciliation/cooperation very difficult
- The projects pushed the participants to the next level of cooperation without ensuring that the first levels of personal and relational change had occurred.

Theories of change are also value laden. The vision of international NGOs, donors, and National NGOs as to how a particular country can be transformed from a state of war into a state that can sustain peace carries many different visions and ideas of what the final state and society will look like. To some degree, this is inevitable with work that seeks to transform a society and build something new. But if theories of change do not fit with the specific reality, capacity, and wishes of the people in the particular country concerned, then they can be completely ineffective, lead to disenchantment with peacebuilding efforts and even lead to renewed violent conflict.

In general, most peacebuilding efforts take their theories of change for granted. They do not systematically question or evaluate their relevance to the particular context. As a result, they do not often manage the attribution/contribution dilemma well. They often simply assume that they have had a successful impact if they have implemented their project according to plans.

²¹ "What Difference Has Peacebuilding Made? A Study of Peacebuilding and the March'04 Riots in Kosovo. Identifying Factors Contributing to Violence of Absence of Violence in Communities: Summary of Findings Draft," in *Reflecting on Peace Practice - Utilization Phase* (Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2006). DRAFT NOT YET RELEASED.

There also seems to be an over reliance on standard conflict analysis and insufficient emphasis on designing programs that could make a real peacebuilding impact on the conflict in question. People often conduct an analysis only to identify which program model (with its implicit theory of change) they will apply to the context, not to design a program specifically suited for the context and adapt the program and the theory of change to the distinctive context.

In summary, this discussion of theories of change reveals four major challenges to peacebuilding success:

- 1) **Many variables and types of program can impact any particular theory of change, making it difficult to understand a particular project's impact on the change.**
- 2) **A theory of change may be applicable to one place and not another.**
- 3) **The implementation of a project or program will have a significant impact on whether or not it has the intended effect outlined in the theory of change.²²**
- 4) **There is an over-reliance on theories of change in peacebuilding, and a lack of evaluation of success, precisely because of the difficulty of proving success in peacebuilding. As a result, peacebuilders resort to hoping and assuming that their theory of change will lead to their desired result.**

The key to success: implementation in stages - entry point to impact

Peacebuilding success requires that you define the stages and degrees of success (or *chain of results*) that you hope to achieve.²³ This should be a process of working backwards from the desired goal, questioning and unpacking the theory of change that is implicit in that goal, and then elaborating the stages of peacebuilding impact that you will look for within one level of change and between changes. This could be seen as a scenario-building exercise that encourages people to brainstorm about the possible impacts that a project could have and to work backward to see what intermediary stages could possibly lead to that level of impact. Organizations' entry points are limited to the areas where they have expertise.

The earlier example from the evaluation of the Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP) again provides an example of the levels and degrees of peacebuilding success.²⁴ It also shows how the achievement of the subsequent stage of success is dependent on the achievement of its preceding stage. It demonstrates that there are many different stages of success within one dimension of change (personal, relational, structural, cultural).

²² According to Church and Shouldice, p. 33, *Theories of change* are "generalized beliefs about how and why widespread change can be generated in a violent conflict." *Theories of practice* "establish a method or strategy for addressing a conflict." *Working Assumptions about Change* "refer to specific assumptions made at the level of project design and implementation about the transformative effect of each discrete action/activity."

²³ While this is a common term in results based management, Thania Paffenholz and Luc Reyhler apply it to peacebuilding in their Aid for Peace Approach. Thania Paffenholz and Luc Reyhler, "Towards Better Policy and Programme Work in Conflict Zones: Introducing the 'Aid for Peace' Approach," *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 2, no. 2 (2005).

²⁴ Uvin and Campbell, "The Burundi Leadership Training Program: A Prospective Assessment."

Prospective Evaluation: The Burundi Leadership Training Program

	Expected outcomes	BLTP actions (outputs)	Indicators (identified by BLTP team)
From direct impact on individuals to	Changes in relations between participants	Initial workshops Follow-up workshops	Participants lose their fear and speak honestly. Participants understand that other participants see the world differently than they do. They should be able to articulate the other's perspective and accept that they have different perspectives, which they can justify. They should also respect the other's perspective. Participants should understand not only how the other feels, but also that if they had been born in different circumstances they could also be in that situation. Participants come out of their boxes and think/act as individuals and see others as individuals. Participants build new relationships among themselves.
	Changes in relations between participants and others	Support to participant activities	Participants should manage their perception of other people/groups more effectively. Participants use their new knowledge, perspective, and tools to build relationships with others outside the group.
Indirect impact on social processes	Changes in participants' immediate environment	Support to elaboration of development projects' Impact on other donors' projects (e.g., OTI)	Participants should have an improved capacity to work collaboratively. Participants should create new patterns of relationship and behavior outside of their formal group structure. Participants should be able to accept that different views of history are possible, which should allow them to live with their community.
	Indirect impact on national institutions	Selection of participants New, targeted BLTP projects or network activities	No specific criteria mentioned.

The BLTP provides an important example of the use of internal and external ripeness to increase the peacebuilding effect of the project. The BLTP had originally envisioned small development projects as a way of extending its impact, but did not have the capacity or the resources to produce projects that would make a significant impact on either the relationships or on the root causes of the conflict. The BLTP team's astute political sense and networking ability, along with its institutional flexibility, allowed them to build on internal ripeness – there were members of the military who had been trained in the BLTP workshops and who wanted those workshops to be applied directly to the newly integrated army. They were also able to take advantage of external ripeness; there was a large need in the military to increase communication between former rebels and traditional Burundian military who were all part of the integrated Burundian army. As a result, they trained a group of former rebels and Burundian military who were trying to negotiate difficult issues. Because the BLTP fostered a new culture of

communication within this group, and because they were given political permission by their bosses to move forward, the group was able to achieve a breakthrough in negotiations. In other words, the BLTP was sufficiently attuned to internal and external ripeness to create a linkage that enabled their dialogue/training project to affect structural change.

Ripeness for success

Definitions of peacebuilding success are likely to change during the implementation of a good peacebuilding program/project. It is essential to envision the direction that the project should take, and the peacebuilding goals that it would like to achieve, but the effect beyond the project will depend on the *ripeness* of the conflict environment for that particular effort. As a result, the success of a peacebuilding effort may be determined by its capacity to detect internal and external opportunities to transfer its peacebuilding effect beyond the program entry point. Peacebuilding success should therefore be conceptualized in stages, with the progression to the next stage dependent on the fulfillment of the first stage. The definition of the subsequent stages of success should be somewhat flexible to take advantage of the opportunities to transfer the impact of the project beyond its immediate realm of influence. Lederach refers to revisiting and revising the theory of change and the chain of results during the implementation process as *transactive* evaluation, which others refer to as monitoring.²⁵

For example, Search for Common Ground produced and disseminated radio soap operas in the Democratic Republic of Congo to stimulate individual thinking.²⁶ An evaluation of the project revealed that a girls' theatre group had independently written down the soap opera scripts and was putting them on as community plays, which were followed by community discussions. Search for Common Ground in Bukavu had only thought of radio programs as directly affecting the personal dimension. It had not occurred to them that media could be a means to directly stimulate public dialogue. This was an unintended peacebuilding impact. It is important to be aware of ripe opportunities to extend and link the impact of peacebuilding programs beyond your original entry point. SFCG could have, for example, fostered dialogue opportunities on the soap operas themselves, using radio talk shows, discussions in schools, or other forums where people could come together to discuss the soap opera themes.

Grounding the definitions of success in the community

One way of simultaneously defining the stages of peacebuilding success and maintaining contextual relevance is for the community that has experienced conflict to define what they would consider to be peacebuilding success. It should be expected that the community's definitions are different from those of international actors, or even national NGOs. It should also be expected that while the community will be able to envision a dream of a future, their definitions of success will move in stages. And, their capacity to define the next level of peacebuilding success may be, in itself, a definition of success of the peacebuilding effort. As one person that we interviewed said: "There is a self-preservation that needs to happen with communities that have been through violent conflict. We expect a community involved in conflict to be more righteous and ethical than a normal community. We need to recognize that the answers that people give at a particular point are going to be based on self-preservation. After things have calmed down a bit the answer might be different. We just need to be open to the community's definition of success changing over time."²⁷

²⁵ Lederach, *Building Peace* p. 138.

²⁶ The evaluation was conducted by Mark Rogers and Cheyanne Church. Example courtesy of Mark Rogers.

²⁷ Barb Lauer, Development Alternatives, Inc. May 2006.

One community-based effort to identify indications that peace had “truly returned to their town” reveals the following indicators:²⁸

- Hearing a mixed market—different languages present and selling
- Houses being rebuilt by different ethnicities
- Mixed ethnic representation on the peace committee
- Active market present with marketers from both counties??
- People moving freely without intimidation
- Reduced mob violence
- Improved access to land and decision-making for strangers
- Plentiful, low-priced, local food for sale in the market (indicating people are able to return to farming)
- Farmers no longer complaining about access to land
- Free movement across county borders as evidenced by cultural performances and similar events

Tools such as the “Most Significant Change” approach and “Appreciative Inquiry” can help programs to identify these types of indicators and to develop a project’s potential stages of peacebuilding success. The RPP Kosovo study mentioned earlier revealed the consequences of trying to skip over the stages in peacebuilding success. Individuals felt forced into interethnic dialogue and joint projects, and as a result became disenchanted with and resistant toward the various peacebuilding efforts. Grounding definitions of success in the perceptions and reality of the communities affected by conflict helps to ensure that the project remains contextually relevant, does not skip over important stages in the peacebuilding process, and is able to identify ripe opportunities for peacebuilding.

Conclusion: Determinants of peacebuilding success

In this study, peacebuilding success is defined as 1) having an impact on a precursor to Peace Writ Large, which can be at the micro or meso level; 2) the linkage of a peacebuilding activity to a dimension or degree of change (personal, relational, structural, cultural) beyond its original entry point; and 3) efforts to take account of and balance out potentially negative outcomes of your activity on other peace efforts, or vice versa.

Both theory and practice have revealed the following common variables that have a strong influence:

- 1) Macro level:
 - a. *Simultaneous change within the personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions of society.*

²⁸ Search for Common Ground internal document.

- b. *Linkages between the multiple interventions* at the *sector* (socio-economic, political, reconciliation/justice, security), the *level* (government, civil society, grassroots community), and the *dimension of change* (personal, relational, structural, and cultural levels).
 - c. *Rebalancing* competing forces in state and society to create an environment that supports *constructive competition and collaboration* (economic, social, political), the peaceful resolution of conflict, and provides *momentum for iterative constructive change* and progress.
 - d. *Relevance* to the context and *adaptation* to the changing needs of the state and society as they travel along the *gradual path* from war to peace.
 - e. *Sustainability* of efforts through *building state, civil society, and grassroots capacity* to *sustain the change* that international efforts helped to catalyze.
- 2) Meso and micro levels:
- a. *Relevance of the theory of change* to the particular context and its changing dynamics.
 - b. *Clarity of the chain of results* – Have you clearly defined the stages of desired peacebuilding success and articulated how and why you will proceed causally from micro to meso, and vice versa? Are these results grounded in informed and grounded projections of the context? Are changes predicted within and between the dimensions of change?
 - c. *Effectiveness and adaptation of the chain of results* - Is your activity leading to the expected chain of results? Why, and why not? How can you alter your definitions of success to be more relevant to the current dynamics and priority needs?
 - d. *Linkages* - If the achievement of your peacebuilding goal and theory of change depend on other factors (in space and time), then how can you influence, support, and link to those other factors to increase and/or balance out your impact?
 - e. *Ripeness* – Are you adjusting and adapting your theory of change and chain of results to new opportunities for impact outside of your sphere of influence?²⁹
 - f. *Grounding the definitions of success in the community* – Has the community helped you to determine relevant and priority definitions of success? Are you involving the community in the process of monitoring and understanding the impact, how it is progressing, and in identifying the next stage in the chain of results?
 - g. *Sustainability* – Is your project achieving a sustained impact, not necessarily through its own capacity, but through linking with and building other capacities?

The rapid growth of the field of peacebuilding over the past ten years has advanced the conversations about its definitions of success. Nonetheless, enormous gaps remain between the things we want to accomplish and our capacity to do so. Future efforts at inquiry should examine the theory and practice underlying the various peacebuilding theories of change. They should also further explore the concept of vertical, horizontal, and diagonal linkages, and find examples of the conditions that affect successful transfer in each of these directions. Finally, they

²⁹ For a good description of this process (prospective, transactive and retrospective vision) see Lederach, *Building Peace*, Ch. 10, pp. 129-148.

should develop approaches to balance the importance of local definitions of peacebuilding success with the time constraints and output focus of donors.

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