

### *Criteria to Assess and Evaluate Peacebuilding*

*There are currently two authoritative sources, the Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) programme of the Collaborative for Development Action (CDA Inc.), and the 2007 OECD DAC report “Encouraging Effective Evaluation of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities.” CDA Inc. was a major contributor to the DAC report.*

#### **I. Reflecting on Peace Practice: Five Criteria of Effectiveness**

From analysis of the cases and practitioner reflection on their own experiences, the RPP process produced five criteria of effectiveness by which to assess, across a broad range of contexts and programming approaches, whether a program is having meaningful impact at the level of Peace Writ Large. These Criteria can be used in program planning to ensure that specific program goals are linked to the larger and long-term goal of “Peace Writ Large.” They can be used during program implementation to reflect on effectiveness and guide mid course changes, and as a basis for evaluation after the program has been completed.

*1. The effort results in the creation or reform of political institutions to handle grievances in situations where such grievances do, genuinely, drive the conflict.*

Peace practice is effective if it develops or supports institutions or mechanisms to address the specific inequalities, injustices and other grievances that cause and fuel a conflict. This criterion underlines the importance of moving beyond impacts at the individual or personal (attitudinal, material or emotional) level to the socio-political level. This criterion must be applied in conjunction with a context analysis identifying what the conflict is NOT about and what needs to be stopped. To reform or build institutions that are unrelated to the actual drivers of a specific conflict would be ineffective.

*2. The effort contributes to a momentum for peace by causing participants and communities to develop their own peace initiatives in relation to critical elements of context analysis.*

Such analysis, and resulting programs, should address what needs to be stopped, how to reinforce areas where people interact in positive ways, and the regional and international dimensions of the conflict. This criterion underlines the importance of “ownership” and sustainability of action and efforts to bring about peace, as well as creating momentum for peace, involving more people.

3. *The effort prompts people increasingly to resist violence and provocations to violence.*

One way of addressing and including 'Key People' who promote and continue tensions (e.g., warlords, spoilers) is to help 'More People' develop the ability to resist the manipulation and provocations of these negative key people.

4. *The effort results in an increase in people's security and in their sense of security.*

This criterion reflects positive changes both at the socio-political level (in people's public lives) and at the individual/personal level as people gain a sense of security.

5. *The effort results in meaningful improvement in inter-group relations,*

This can manifest itself in, for example, changes in group attitudes, public opinion, social norms, or public behaviors. This criterion reflects the importance of the relationships between conflicting groups, in terms of transforming polarized (and polarizing) attitudes, behaviors and interactions to more tolerant and cooperative ones, as part of addressing underlying grievances and building the willingness and ability to resolve conflicts and sustain peace.

These criteria are *cumulative*: Peace efforts that meet more of the criteria are more effective than those that meet only one of them. (RPP 2009:29-30). They are also *qualitative* which makes it more difficult to assess changes over time in a fairly robust manner.

## **II. DAC Evaluation Criteria Adapted.**

The DAC has been using a certain number of evaluation criteria to assess development and humanitarian assistance notably: relevance / appropriateness; coverage; coherence; connectedness; efficiency; effectiveness; impact; sustainability. Recent work by CDA has informed discussions about the appropriateness and/or adaptation of these criteria to peacebuilding work. The current thinking is as follows:

1. (Continued) relevance / appropriateness: A central criterion that begs the question 'relevant to / appropriate for what?' Evidently the intervention should be relevant to the dynamics of division and conflict. Key questions: Is the intervention based on an *accurate analysis of the conflict*, and does it therefore address *key driving factors or key driving actors/constituencies* of the conflict? Is it working on the right issues in this context *at this time*? Is the theory of change on which the activity / policy is based a logical or sensible one in this context at this time? (Note that solid and up-to-date analysis of the dynamics of division/ conflict is the cornerstone of all effective peacebuilding.)

Note that something that once was relevant / appropriate may not remain so as circumstances change. Therefore, the criterion would also be assessing the responsiveness and flexibility of any policies or programmes.

2. Coverage: Are regional and international dimensions of the divisions / conflict taken into account in the intervention? Are internal as well as inter-group divisions/conflicts being addressed? Are there hidden divisions/conflicts that receive no attention or less than they should get?
3. Consistency with conflict prevention and peacebuilding values: Are those who drive the intervention practising and modeling what they want others to adopt (ability to listen, to engage in constructive dialogue, to collaborate across differences, participatory and consensus-oriented etc.). Does the way the intervention is being implemented contribute to positive relations or does it inadvertently worsen relations and exacerbate antagonisms?
4. Effectiveness: This criterion triggers inquiry in two steps: The first question would be whether the programme has achieved its (stated or implicit) objectives or can reasonably be expected to do so on the basis of its outputs. The second question however would be to ask whether the objectives were and have remained relevant to the issues of division or conflict. In short, the effectiveness criterion is closely linked to the relevance one. While 'efficiency' says nothing about 'relevance' (you can be highly efficient in doing something that is largely irrelevant), it makes sense to at least put 'effectiveness' into a minimum 'efficiency' context such as: how much has been spent on what been achieved and how much time has it taken? An cost/time-effectiveness appreciation for a particular intervention however can often also be usefully compared to the cost/time-effectiveness of other interventions.
5. Linkages: This adapts and replaces the 'connectedness' criterion. It is in fact a composite criterion that draws attention to three not entirely similar questions:
  - Are connections actively made between 'more people' and 'key people', between larger groups of people and the 'influential' people? ('compressing the vertical space' in Interpeace-speak)
  - Does the intervention seek to translate changes in interpersonal relations into socio-political changes?
  - Is the intervention actively seeking synergies with other relevant efforts? Are different efforts contradictory or undermining each other?
6. Impact: All interventions have more immediate effects, influences and impacts as well as longer-term ones. These may be direct or indirect, intended or unintended and positive but also negative. This criterion draws attention not only to the wider and longer-term effects but also to the more immediate, perhaps more local ones. Yet not all impacts are of interest, the focus will be on those that relate specifically to intergroup relations and to the driving factors of division / conflict.

7. Sustainability: The sustainability criterion elicits questions both of commitment and implementation but also robustness in the face of challenges. Are positive dynamics sustained even if the interveners no longer directly support them (i.e. have they been integrated into local processes, and is there real local 'ownership')? Will hard-won improvements in intergroup relations persist in the face of challenges? Will the parties to an agreement / consensus proposal continue to honour and support it? Are effective implementation mechanisms in place? Have those who benefit from ongoing division / poor governance / conflict (actual or potential spoilers) been identified and addressed adequately? (DAC 2007: 38-42).

Note that there is no agreement on the criterion of '*coherence*'.

'Coherence' is typically interpreted in relation to the various policies and actions of one given (external) actor (e.g. the actions coming out of the diplomatic, economic and development policies reinforce and do not contradict each other), or in relation to the policies and actions of several (external) actors: e.g. the policies and practices of actor X may actually contradict and undermine those of actor Y although both claim to have the same end goal. The word 'coherence' (or lack thereof) may be used to refer to the various policies and actions of one given actor, whereas the word 'harmonisation' (or lack thereof) may be used to refer to the policies and actions of different actors. The general assumption is that 'more coherence' and 'more harmonisation' are intrinsically good.

In practice, a lot of harmonization among notably the external / international 'assistance' actors, can turn out to be counterproductive: it can undermine 'national' ownership; direct the collective effort in the wrong direction; and seriously delay if not impede flexibility and adaptation when needed.

#### **References:**

DAC 2007: Encouraging Effective Evaluation of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities. Paris, OECD

RPP 2009: Reflecting on Peace Practice, Participant Training Manual, Boston, CDA Inc. Collaborative Learning Projects.