

# REFLECTING ON PEACE PRACTICE

## PARTICIPANT TRAINING MANUAL

2009



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## REFLECTING ON PEACE PRACTICE: A COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECT AMONG AGENCIES WORKING ON CONFLICT

The Reflecting on Peace Practice Project (RPP) is an experience-based learning process that involves agencies whose programs attempt to prevent or mitigate violent conflict. Its purpose is to analyze experience at the individual program level across a broad range of agencies and contexts. Its goal is to improve the effectiveness of international peacebuilding efforts.

**What is RPP?** RPP is about *reflection* and *practice*. What are we learning from our experience? How does our experience compare with that of other practitioners? What generalizable lessons can we learn and disseminate? During its first phase, from 1999 through early 2003, RPP engaged over two hundred agencies and many individuals who work on conflict around the world in a collaborative effort to learn how to improve the effectiveness of peace practice. The agencies included international peace and conflict resolution NGOs as well as local organizations and groups working for peace in their countries. By analyzing these experiences through 26 case studies and consultations with over 1000 practitioners, RPP was able to clarify why some things work, and others do not. The findings from this three-year effort, published in *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*, are available at <http://www.cdainc.com>

The lessons comprise a set of tools and concepts that are most useful for conceptualization and planning of peace interventions at all levels. They help to answer the questions:

- *What* should we work on? Which of the issues or conflict factors is a priority?
- *Whom* should we work with? Which actors/stakeholders are most important?
- *Why* should we work on that issue with those people? Is the rationale for our chosen approach solid?

RPP addresses these questions, which are all at the level of broad program design and concept. RPP does not attempt to provide individual skills for implementing such programs. There are many training programs and institutes that do provide that training, but RPP's contribution is more at the level of *what should we do and why*, rather than how to implement such programs.

**RPP Utilization Phase.** Since 2003, CDA has been working with active peace programs in several regions of the world to test how the lessons of *Confronting War* might be applied in practice. In the process of working with collaborating agencies, the RPP Project has also been working to learn additional lessons in four specific areas that practitioners have identified as important, in order to refine and deepen the previous RPP findings and make them more usable by practitioners:

1. ***Conflict Analysis & Program Strategies:*** RPP has been identifying how to conduct good conflict analysis and how to link such analysis to program decisions, in order to ensure that peace programming is addressing those factors that are important to the conflict. The first phase of RPP found that no one context/conflict analysis methodology led to better programming. Nonetheless, the question of how to do conflict analysis in a way that facilitates effective choices in programming remains. RPP continues to explore different

analysis methodologies and processes with the intention of learning more about what the elements of an effective conflict analysis are, beyond the three questions identified in *Confronting War*.

2. ***Adding Up/Cumulative Impacts:*** RPP is in the process of conducting a new set of case studies aimed at discovering what enabled peace efforts to “add up” to peace. Earlier case studies examined the experience of individual programs/projects. These cases look at the effects of multiple initiatives in the same conflict zone, in order to identify those elements that enhance the cumulative impacts of programs.
3. ***Micro-Macro Connections:*** One finding in the first phase of RPP was that peace programs need to be held accountable for their contribution to the broader societal level peace, what we called “Peace Writ Large.” It was also evident that program linkages among levels (local level to national to international...) and across sectors/constituencies aided effectiveness. In this phase, we are exploring what constitutes an effective linkage. This includes consideration of how can we link micro (“peace writ little”) and macro (“Peace Writ Large”) levels in programming in order to enhance the impacts of small, geographically limited programs on the broader peace.
4. ***Monitoring and Evaluation:*** While RPP challenged peace practitioners to be accountable to Peace Writ Large, many still questioned how to measure impacts at that level. RPP’s inquiry includes consideration of how to monitor and evaluate the impact of individual programs on “Peace Writ Large.”

RPP’s activities in the Utilization Phase have included:

***Field Work.*** We have conducted utilization processes in the Balkans (Serbia and Kosovo), Central Africa (Rwanda, Burundi, D.R. Congo) and West Africa (Liberia). The goals of the Utilization Phase have been a) to improve the effectiveness of existing peace programs through application of the RPP learnings; and b) to continue to gather the experiences gained through using the RPP lessons in a way that will be useful for and improve the impacts of subsequent peace practice.

***Consultations.*** Periodically, CDA continues to arrange consultations among the individuals and agencies involved in using the RPP approaches. The consultations are an opportunity to exchange experiences, compare notes, solve problems, share good ideas and, in general, continue to advance learning to improve the effectiveness of peace work. Current consultations (2008-2009) are focused on the cumulative cases (see below).

***Cumulative Case Studies.*** In order to gain greater insight into the elements and processes of the cumulative impact of programs, we are developing case studies of processes in which peace efforts did “add up,” and bringing these experiences to the field and to the global consultations for collaborative reflection.

***Learning Community.*** RPP has developed a manual for training people who consult with and/or advise peacebuilding programs. Participants who have attended the RPP training programs have formed an on-line Learning Community. Many of these people will form a cadre of trainer/facilitators ready to meet ongoing demand for support to field programs and organizational planning processes.

***Outcomes/Products.*** As people gain experience utilizing the RPP findings, CDA will systematically collect and share this additional learning with collaborating agencies. This will be presented in ongoing, informal publications, and/or on the CDA web site, as mechanisms for exchanging experience.

## CONFLICT ANALYSIS

### The Importance of Understanding the Situation

“Analysis is not optional; it is essential and obligatory for peace work.” -- RPP participant

In the first phase of RPP, peace practitioners asserted strongly that analysis is needed in order to avoid costly mistakes, find the correct program focus (address the right issues and people), identify priorities and strategic points of intervention, and match agency skills and resources to the situation. The evidence is strong that the more practitioners know about the conflicts they are trying to address, the more likely they are to identify effective avenues for work, and the less likely they are to make mistakes.

### Findings on Conflict Analysis

At the same time, the RPP process revealed that there was no consistent practice or accepted methodology for conducting such analyses. However, RPP participants did note certain trends:

- *Practitioners often do only partial analysis.* They focus on how their particular approach or methodology might fit or be useful in the context. While there is evidence that conducting analyses that are too “full” and formal can undermine effective programming, the evidence is also strong that partial analysis can lead practitioners to miss important aspects of the conflict or to develop misguided or irrelevant programs.
- *Many people carry out context analysis, believing it to be conflict analysis.* A context analysis seeks a broad understanding of the entire political, economic and social (historical, environmental, etc.) scene. A conflict analysis is more narrowly focused on the specific elements of that broader picture that may cause, trigger or propel conflict. Conflict analysis *may* include a range of political, economic, social, historical and other factors, but it focuses on the ones that directly influence the shape and dynamics of the conflict.
- *Analysis is not updated.* Analyses are often performed only at the front end of a program, but there are seldom efforts at ongoing analysis, other than the natural process of noting events and changes.
- *Programming is not linked to analysis.* In a seeming contradiction, RPP found no clear link between whether and how a program did conflict analysis and its effectiveness. Among the RPP cases, there were effective programs that did very little analysis, and less effective programs that did extensive analysis. Why? The evidence suggested one explanation: that even when practitioners do analysis, they often fail to link their program strategy to it.
- *Many people work on the basis of an implicit analysis, often based on their deep experience of a situation.* As another explanation for the seeming contradiction, RPP found that some programs—often effective ones—are grounded in an *informal* analysis that draws on the long experience of local people or long-time observers of a conflict. These analyses can be quite sophisticated—and may be constantly updated, as individuals move about and talk with many different people. However, when analysis is done this way, members even of the same project team or organization may be operating on the basis of quite different understandings of the conflict. This undermines the development

of coherent strategies and often leaves significant assumptions undiscussed and untested. Therefore, efforts to make the implicit more explicit and to share observations are usually valuable.

## Elements of Good Conflict Analysis

RPP did not find agreement regarding any particular framework(s) for analysis, nor did RPP find any clearly superior methodology. However, RPP did identify several shortcomings of existing methods of analysis and was able to identify elements of analysis that, if not addressed, lessen the effectiveness of programming.

“Traditional” models of conflict analysis focus on understanding the conflict context (history, economics, political movements, etc.), identifying the causes or root causes of the conflict, and categorizing the various stakeholders/conflict actors and their interests. Most models lay out a series of questions to focus the analysis, some of them quite comprehensive and touching on almost all aspects of society. Most of these conflict analysis methods are good as far as they go (we haven’t tried them all!), but experience points to several shortcomings:

- *Too comprehensive.* Many of the frameworks for analysis aim to be comprehensive, but do not help identify which factors are the most important ones. As a result, they do not help practitioners identify priorities and focus on factors that are important to the conflict dynamic. The lists of factors can be overwhelming!
- *Lists without dynamics.* Conflict analysis tools tend to present a static snapshot, often in the form of a list of factors, without much sense of how the factors work together. The *dynamics* of conflict are missing.
- *No linkage to strategy.* Analysis processes and results remain disconnected from program strategies. Even good analysis processes do not enable people to identify what to do about the situation.
- *Biased and narrow?* Analyses tend to be performed by single agencies, in order to justify the agencies’ favorite approach or methodology (dialogues, trauma healing...) or sector (women, youth...), without much sense of whether these approaches are the most effective or the best use of scarce funding resources for peacebuilding.

Where these limitations are transcended, we are finding that good analyses—that is, ones that help practitioners develop programs that do not “miss the mark”—ask certain questions:

1. Of all the causes of the conflict, what are the **key driving factors** (both issues and people), and which are causes or effects of these factors? **Key driving factors are factors without which the conflict would not exist or would be significantly different.**
2. What are the **relationships and dynamics among factors**? How do the factors interact and affect each other? How are actors and factors related?
3. **What needs to be stopped** and who will resist it? RPP found that many programs are biased towards doing creating “positive peace” by building or reinforcing positive factors. The most effective programs also ask what factors (actors, issues, motives, resources, dynamics, attitudes, behaviors) maintain or reinforce the conflict system, who would resist movement toward peace, and why. Conflict analysis must clarify how the war system or injustice system should be interrupted. Must the trade in arms be stopped? Recruitment of young people? Exploitation of natural resources to support warring?

Misuse of the media to target certain groups or distort facts? Funding from diaspora groups?

4. **Who are “key” actors?** Key actors are people or groups who have significant influence on the conflict dynamics, are able to decide or strongly influence decisions for or against peace, and/or are able to “spoil” or undermine peace.
5. What are the *international or regional dimensions* of the conflict? Analysis and programming often focus on the immediate conflict area and fail to incorporate what needs to be stopped or supported in a broader area. Good analysis asks how the policies and actions of forces outside the immediate local context (village, province, nation) affect the conflict, how such factors might be addressed, and what kinds of local-international cooperation are needed to handle these external issues.
6. How can local/community (“*peace writ little*”) and *Peace Writ Large* factors of conflict be related or linked?
7. **What has already been tried, with what result?** Has the proposed programming approach been tried in this conflict before, and with what outcomes? Peace practitioners often repeat program approaches (such as dialogues, or training, or women’s consultations, etc.) that others have tried before with little effect (or that even failed) without analyzing why this has happened.

## CONFLICT ANALYSIS EXERCISES

Based on the findings presented above, RPP has developed an approach to conflict analysis that builds on other models or systems for looking at conflict. We have also been trying to keep the processes simple without losing the real complexity of the situation.

The purpose of doing an analysis is to understand what the conflict is about, so we can figure out how to intervene to change the conflict dynamics, to promote change towards peace. In this sense, conflict analysis is only a tool—it is not an end in itself.

### Step One: Three-box Analysis

Conduct a brief conflict analysis regarding the situation you are working with. The analysis can be performed at various levels (local district, province, nation, region...). The focus could also be on a particular issue (a sub-component of the larger conflict).

Forces for Peace→		← Forces against Peace/for Conflict	Key Actors
What are the forces in the situation that exist now that can be built upon to promote movement towards peace? What currently connects people across conflict lines? How do people cooperate? Who exercises leadership for peace and how? (These are not things you <i>want</i> to exist or that you would like to see—they must be true <i>now</i> .)	<b>P E A C E</b>	What are factors are working against peace or for conflict? What factors, issues or elements are causing conflict and/or dividing people, and how?	Which individuals or groups in the situation are in a position to strongly influence the conflict—either positively or negatively? Who can decide for/against peace? (Note: these are <b>not</b> necessarily people who may be program targets/participants, such as women, youth, or religious leaders. We may be interested in engaging with those groups, but they are not always “key” in the situation.)

### Step Two: Key Driving Factors of Conflict

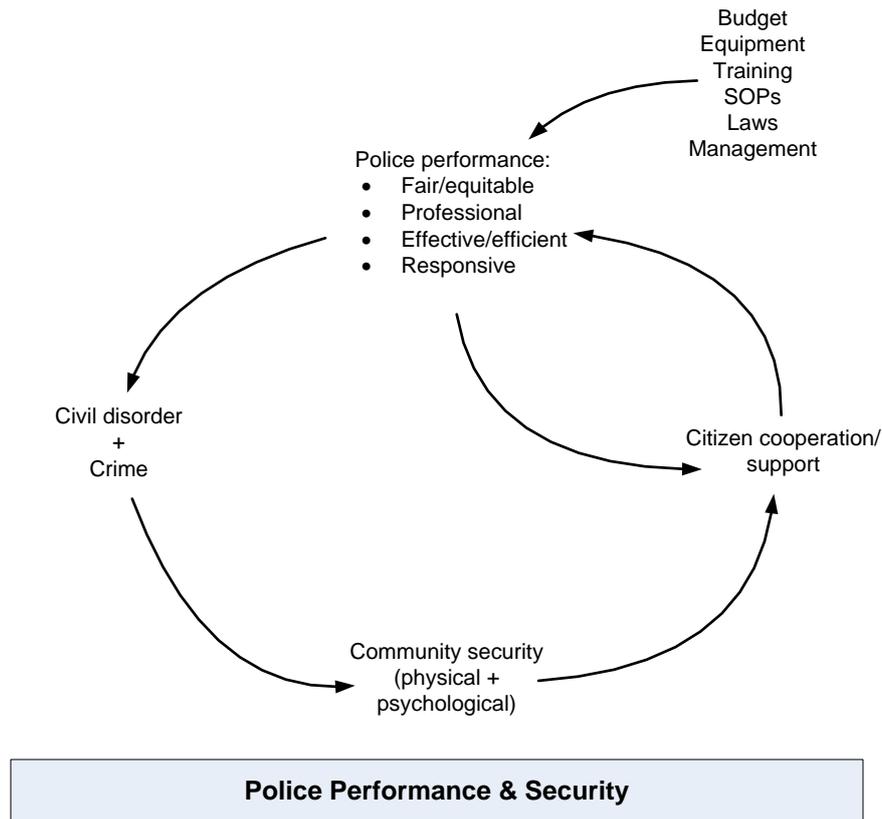
Among the factors identified against peace or for conflict, which ones are “key driving factors of conflict”? These are factors, without which the conflict either would not exist or would be totally different. Why are these factors more important than others? Star them or underline them on the chart—or create a separate list. *There should be no more than 5-6 such elements!!*

### Step Three: Explore the Dynamics among Factors

#### *Introduction to Step Three*

If we see conflicts as dynamic systems, we need to understand how the conflict factors interact with each other. Explore how the factors might interact with each other in causal loops. Which factors reinforce other factors (i.e. make them increase)? Which factors balance or mitigate others? , The following simple example maps the relationship between police performance and community relations. The “causal loop” diagram shows how the elements

of police performance, crime, people’s actual physical security and sense of security, and citizen cooperation with police forces interact.



This cycle can work either positively (a “virtuous” cycle) or negatively (a “vicious” cycle). Good police performance reduces crime, increases people’s sense of security and increases their willingness to cooperate with police. Poor performance, on the other hand, results in increased crime levels, lowered sense of security, and decreased willingness to cooperate with the police.

**Quick Preliminary Exercise**

Before we work with the factors in the conflict you are analyzing, try the following quick exercise. Look at the factors listed in random order below—concerning the relationship between a mining company and a local community—and develop a simple causal loop diagram among the factors. Where is the starting point? What comes next? Does it eventually loop back around?

- Ignorance of community needs/concerns
- Community resentment against company
- Company isolation
- Attacks (physical/verbal) against the company
- Harmful company policies and practices (such as unfair land acquisition and compensation practices)
- Company personnel feel threatened/fear

### ***Working with the Key Driving Factors***

Now look back at the key driving factors of conflict you identified in Step Two. How do those factors interact? What would the causal loop diagram look like for *your* conflict?

If you have time, you can divide into small groups (or even pairs). Each group should work with the key driving factors to see how they interact. Develop a causal loop like the one above, which has a logical sequence of factors.

Note: If the impact or influence of one factor on another is not *direct*, identify the intervening factor that explains the relationship. For example, in one systems analysis, the group identified “mobilization of ethnicity by politicians” and “political violence” as major factors. They noted that mobilization of ethnicity led to increased violence, and as violence for political ends increased, ethnic mobilization became stronger. However, the relationship was not direct, as they noted that violence increased geographical segregation by ethnicity, which made ethnic mobilization much easier. They added the intervening factor of ethnic segregation to the causal loop. Finally, some factors may not fit easily—which can be a matter for discussion later.

The resulting chart/diagram—or even the simple list of factors against peace/for conflict—can be used in discussing the relevance of the program goals: is the program addressing the key driving factors of conflict? How?

### **Step Four: Identifying Points of Intervention**

Now identify the best place(s) to intervene in the system, in terms of producing the largest possible impacts on Peace Writ Large, given your resources and expertise. Once we understand the dynamics of the system, we can figure out how to use our limited resources to have as big an effect as possible. Because changes in one part of a system lead to changes in others, particular approaches or interventions will cause small change in one part of the system to make changes in other elements. This is the concept of *leverage*. The higher the leverage, the less likely the system will resist change, the more likely the solution will work and be sustained, and the lower the cost.

There are no quick and easy formulas for finding leverage points. Because of the complex ways in which the parts of a system are connected, leverage points are often not intuitive; indeed, they are often counterintuitive. However, general guidelines can be explored in particular situations. Successful interventions often involve breaking a link between factors—either by changing the key assumptions and attitudes that underlie the links, by working on the parties’ behavior directly, or by changing the factors themselves, including the structural elements and rules that shape how the parties behave.

The answers three questions will help focus programming on those elements that will make the biggest difference:

- What factors are driving the evolution of the system? Which factors, if they were changed, would lead to a significant change in the system?
- Where are there “weak” links? Where are there opportunities to break links between factors, so that x does not need to lead to y?
- Given who we are (our resources, structures, access, etc.), which of these are we most likely to be able to influence?

## ASSESSING PROGRAM STRATEGIES: THE RPP MATRIX

Assessing contribution to “Peace Writ Large” is difficult, as most peacebuilding programs are discrete efforts aimed at affecting one (often small) piece of the puzzle, and no one project can do everything. Outcomes are also difficult to assess. As one practitioner noted, “Peace requires that many people work at many levels in different ways, and, with all this work, you cannot tell who is responsible for what.” Moreover, when the goal of “just and sustainable peace” is so grand, and progress toward it is immeasurable in its multitude of small steps, then anything can qualify as peace practice. In the face of this complexity, practitioners often say, “I have to assume that, over time, all of our different activities will add up.”

During the first phase of RPP, the evidence from the case studies and consultations was sobering. Although many people do, indeed, work at many levels and conduct good programs at each level, these programs do not automatically “add up” to peace!

During its early phase and during its current phase, RPP has worked with many, varied peace agencies that are implementing a wide variety of peacebuilding approaches and activities. In the earlier phase, RPP struggled with the question of how to compare and assess all of the many contrasting strategies for impacting “Peace Writ Large.” Through much discussion and analysis, the project discovered that the varied peace activities could be compared through the use of a relatively simple tool, the RPP Matrix.

### **The RPP Matrix: A Tool for Comparing Strategies for Affecting “Peace Writ Large”**

The RPP Matrix is a four-cell matrix (see Figure 1) that permits analysis of program strategies in several dimensions, by looking at the different approaches of peace work, who is being engaged and what type of change is being sought.

#### ***Whom to Engage***

As shown in the table below, RPP found that all activities are based essentially on one of two approaches related to *who* needs to be engaged for peace.

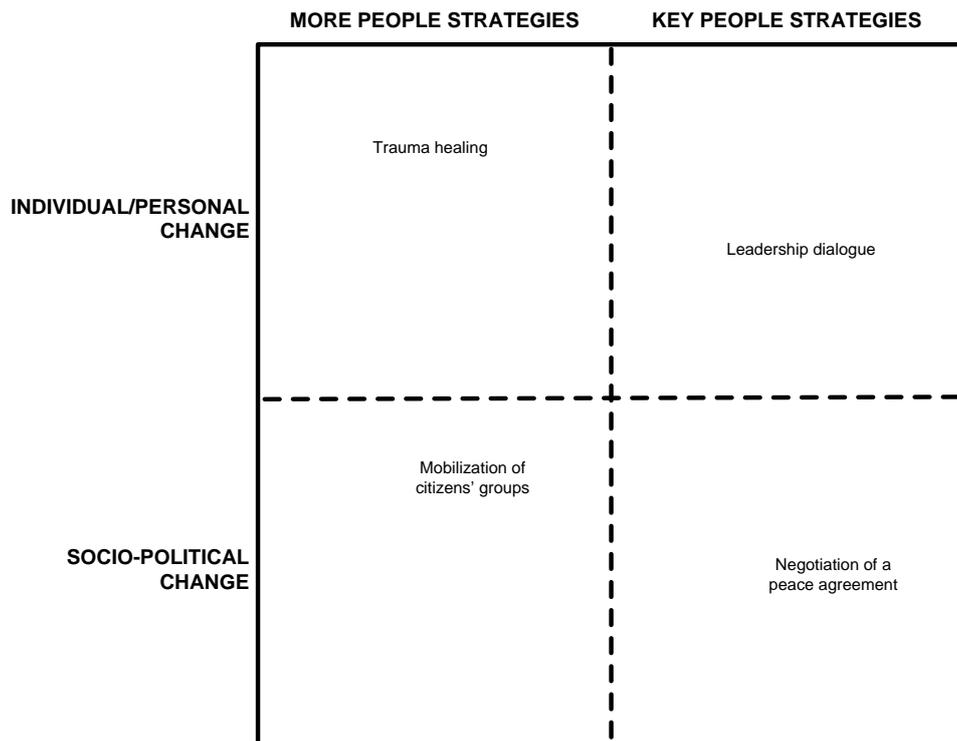
<b>MORE PEOPLE APPROACHES</b>	<b>KEY PEOPLE APPROACHES</b>
<p>Aim to engage increasing numbers of people in actions to promote peace. Practitioners who take this approach believe that peace can be built if many people become active in the process, i.e., if “the people” are broadly involved. This may involve mobilization of larger constituencies or expanding the numbers of people committed to peace.</p>	<p>Focus on involving particular people, or groups of people, critical to the continuation or resolution of conflict, due to their power and influence. “Key people” strategies assume that, without the involvement of these individuals/groups, progress cannot be made toward resolving the conflict. Who is “key” depends on the context: they may be political leaders, warlords, or others necessary to a peace agreement. They may be people with broad constituencies. Or they may be key because they are involved in war making (e.g., unemployed young men).</p>

**Types of Change:**

As shown in the table below, RPP also found that all programs work for two basic kinds of change: the Individual/Personal change and/or Socio-Political change.

<p><b>INDIVIDUAL/PERSONAL CHANGE</b></p> <p>Programs that work at the <i>individual/personal level</i> seek to change the attitudes, values, skills, perceptions or circumstances of <i>individuals</i>, based on the underlying assumption that peace is possible only if the hearts, minds and behavior of individuals are changed. Most dialogue and training programs operate at this level, working with groups of individuals to affect their skills, attitudes, perceptions, ideas and relationships with other individuals.</p>
<p><b>SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGE</b></p> <p>Programs that concentrate at the <i>socio-political level</i> are based on the belief that peace requires changes in socio-political structures and processes, often supporting the creation or reform of institutions that address grievances that fuel conflict, or promoting non-violent modes for handling conflict. Change at this level includes alterations in government policies, legislation, policies, economic structures, ceasefire agreements, constitutions, etc. But it also incorporates changes in social norms, group behavior, and inter-group relationships.</p>

We now have two “columns” showing the two basic programming approaches in terms of who to engage and two “rows” showing the two levels of change promoted. When these rows and columns are combined, we produce a four-cell matrix as shown in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1: The RPP Matrix**

We found that all of the activities included in the range of RPP case studies and consultations could be located on this four-cell matrix. Some programs engage in activities in more than one cell, or work in the boundaries between cells. Many programs start in one quadrant, but eventually move to or have impacts in others. However, many effective programs operate within only one cell.

For example, dialogue work with key leaders of two warring political factions would most likely be found in the upper right quadrant—as the desired changes are in the Individual/Personal realm (attitudes, perceptions, interpersonal relationships) and engage people who are key to peace. Trauma healing programs offered to the general population would be found in the upper left quadrant, as they promote individual healing among the broad population. A program that mobilized citizens' groups to exert influence on important issues would be a More People strategy in the Socio-Political realm, the lower left quadrant. On the other hand, efforts to achieve a negotiated agreement among political leaders would be found in the lower right quadrant. Of course, these are just illustrative examples—other peacebuilding program approaches can also be mapped onto the Matrix.

## **RPP FINDINGS BASED ON THE MATRIX**

Since 2002, RPP has been working with the Matrix in the field in many places in the world to help program designers and implementers to examine their program strategies. Through that direct work with practitioners, and through analysis of the original RPP case evidence, we have derived several key learnings regarding program effectiveness.

### **Does it all “add up?” The importance of linkages**

RPP found that work that stays within any one quadrant of the matrix is *not enough* to build momentum for significant change. Any individual program aiming to contribute to peace will have more impact if its effects transfer to other quadrants of the matrix. Two associated lessons emerged from the case studies and discussion concerning two kinds of linkages that were found to be particularly important for programs to have impact on “Peace Writ Large.”

#### ***Individual/Personal → Socio-Political***

First, RPP found that programming that focuses on change at the Individual/Personal level, but that never links or translates into action at the Socio-Political level has *no discernible effect on peace*. Peacebuilding efforts that focus on building relationships and trust across conflict lines, increasing tolerance, and increasing hope that peace is possible, often produce dramatic transformations in attitudes, perceptions and trust. But evidence shows that impacts for the broader peace are more significant if these personal transformations are translated into actions at the Socio-Political level.

What does moving from the Individual/Personal to the Socio-Political look like? It involves moving, for example, from changes in attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and inter-personal or small group relationships to social action, activities in the public domain, or efforts to affect something that is collective (whether institutions, public opinion, etc.). When participants in programs adopt new attitudes, form relationships, develop joint activities, undertake trade, do business with each other, form an NGO together, etc., they are operating at the Individual / Personal level. But as individual or small group attitudes, relationships or behavioral change expand and become community or group attitudes, relationships, behaviors or social norms,

they reach the Scio-Political level. This could include changes in public opinion, mobilization of large groups to advocate for change in relation to key drivers of conflict, changes in inter-group relations, etc.

Does work at the Socio-Political level likewise need to link with the Individual/Personal level? Evidence suggests that sometimes, but not always, work is necessary at the Individual/Personal level to ensure that Socio-Political changes are sustained and internalized in the behavior of individuals. The linkage needed from the Socio-Political to the Individual/Personal to impact “Peace Writ Large” is less strong.

**Example: Effective Individual/Personal—Socio-Political Linkage**

*In Cyprus, international agencies conducted intensive conflict resolution training for local activists from both sides of the conflict. These participants formed a permanent working group of trainers and initiated a series of peacebuilding projects aimed at recruiting more participants into bi-communal activities. This spread into a wide-ranging bi-communal movement on the island. In response to a serious incidence of violence that threatened to escalate the conflict, the United Nations planned to cancel a planned bi-communal fair. The group pressed the United Nations not to cancel the event and publicized the event. Four thousand people showed up, and it became a public demonstration of support for the faltering peace process.*

**Example: Insufficient Linkage between Individual/Personal and Socio-Political**

*A program convened dialogue sessions amongst actors representing every sector of society (and across conflicting groups) to analyze the conflict and develop policy recommendations to deal with the causes. The program led to very significant effects on participants’ relationships, attitudes and communication. These effects had not yet, however, been extended to the community at large, through community-owned dispute resolution mechanisms and new initiatives by the community on peace and conflict resolution. A new phase of the program was needed to help make these linkages and advocate for government adoption of the policy recommendations.*

**More people ↔ Key people**

RPP has also found that at the Socio-Political level approaches that concentrate on More People but do nothing to link to or affect Key People, as well as strategies that focus on Key People but do not include or affect More People, do not “add up” to effective peace work. Activities to engage More People must link, strategically, to activities to engage Key People, and Key People activities must link strategically to activities to engage More People, if they are to be effective in moving toward Peace Writ Large.

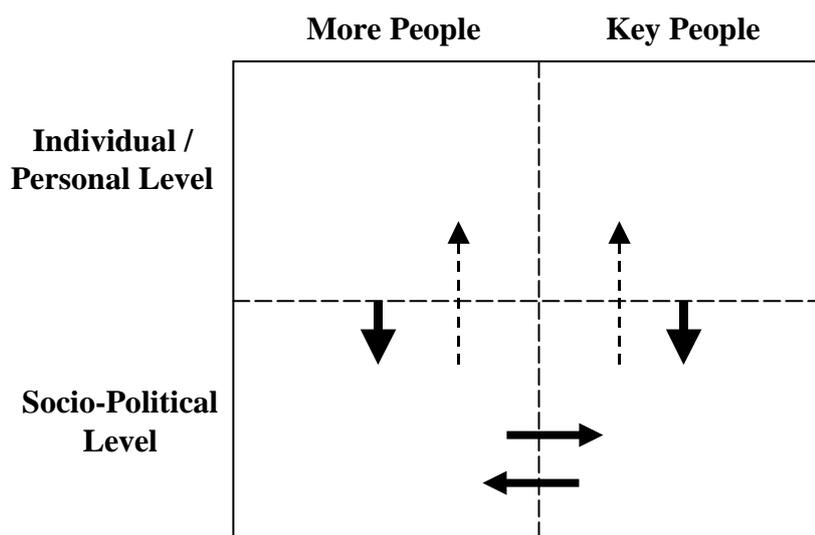
**Example: Effectiveness Undermined by Lack of Linkage between Key/More People**

*An agency organized a high-level dialogue in the Caucasus among people on the negotiating teams and in influential policy positions in government, academia and business. This resulted in improved communication and relationships in the negotiations and the implementation of some ideas to de-escalate the conflict and facilitate refugee return. However, after several years, while some convergence had been achieved in the dialogue on political resolution, participants claimed they were blocked by public opinion (and a regional power). They urged the program to shift the focus of its work with media to affect More People.*

**Example: Effective Linkage between Key and More People Strategies**

*The Citizens’ Constitutional Forum in Fiji developed and advocated broad-based recommendations for constitutional reform to address entrenched inequalities between ethnic groups in the country. Many of their ideas were taken up by the government. Realizing that the reforms needed public acceptance to be durable, they linked with other activists to conduct a public education campaign around the country to publicize the new constitutional provisions through a series of workshops, campaigns, and sales of T-shirts and posters. The work focused on Key People but provided a link back to More People.*

The arrows in Figure 2, below, reflect the findings about the importance of transferring impacts among the quadrants. Wherever an organization’s particular project is located on this Matrix (in terms of work targets and levels), it needs to plan mechanisms for transferring project effects or extending efforts into other quadrants. Who else needs to be affected, at what level, in order to produce significant change?



**Figure 2: Creating Linkages among Quadrants**

These insights do not suggest that a single agency must necessarily conduct programs in all quadrants of the Matrix simultaneously. An agency’s program may evolve, over time, to move from one quadrant to another. Most programs do not and cannot do everything at once. In many cases, programs can remain in one cell and develop opportunities for cooperation and/or coordination of efforts with other agencies working in different areas in order to magnify impacts. How these connections are best made will, of course, vary from context to context.

**Which People? Key people, governments and the “hard to reach”**

RPP found that most peace agencies work with people who are comparatively easy to reach – such as children, women, schools, churches, and health workers – because they are, in some way, deemed non-political or because they are often ready to collaborate. As a beginning point, this makes sense, because initiating peace activities in a tense conflict arena is difficult.

Yet RPP found that few agencies move beyond these groups to forces that are perpetuating or benefiting from the conflict, or who oppose peace efforts – militia fighters, economic elites, governments and diasporas outside the conflict zone. In addition, in many cases, NGOs emphasize working with civil society, so that few peace agencies make direct connections to official governmental actors and functions. These groups are the “hard to reach.”

RPP’s experience affirmed the importance of working with these “hard to reach” people and groups – especially government and other combatants– because involving them (or dealing with them in a way that ensures that their actions do not undermine peace) is often critical to securing peace and to building or maintaining the systems that sustain it.

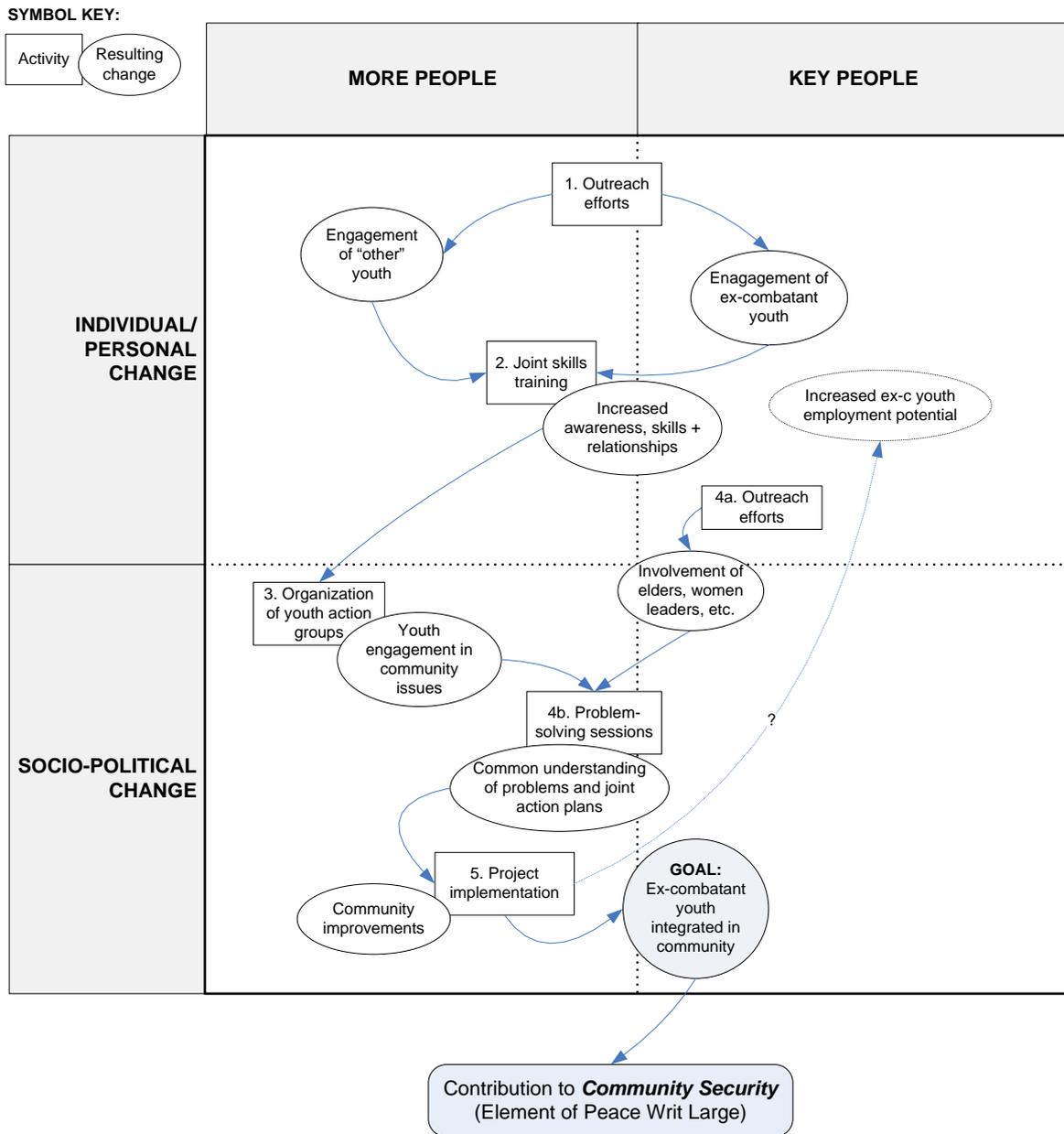
**ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE: EX-COMBATANT YOUTH PROGRAM**

This section illustrates application of the Matrix to a specific case example, as a preliminary step to engaging training participants in application to their own situation or program. The example concerns a program aimed at reintegration of ex-combatant youth into a traditional rural community. In this situation, the ex-combatant youth are considered “key people” because they represent a threat to security, as most of them are unemployed, are viewed with suspicion and even fear by many members of the community, and are considered to still hold weapons and to maintain connections to their old command structures.

The overall program goal is indicated at the top of the table below. The columns of the table show a series of activities in the left column and associated changes in the right column. Note: the table indicates “proposed/completed” activities and “actual/expected” changes, as the tool can be used either to plan programs or to examine programs underway or completed.

<b>PROGRAM GOAL: Contribute to community security by improving the reintegration of ex-combatant youth.</b>		
	<b>Proposed/Completed Program Activities</b>	<b>Actual/Expected Changes, due to Activities</b>
1	Conduct outreach and “listening” efforts to ex-combatant youths and others, find out what young people are concerned about.	Obtain agreement to participate, achieve initial engagement.
2	Joint skills training: communications skills, community problem analysis, leadership skills.	Heightened awareness of multiple perspectives, greater understanding of problems facing the community, better participant relationships.
3	Organization of youth groups: engage training workshop participants in youth action groups focused on addressing community issues, as well as enjoyable activities (sports, drama...).	Specific and ongoing mechanism for bringing youth attention to issues people hold in common in the community.
4a	Outreach to elders, women leaders, etc.: Invite community leaders to participate with youth in community problem solving.	Concrete evidence that leaders are concerned about young people and willing to devote time/energy to thinking with them about issues.
4b	Problem-solving session: Facilitated meetings to identify problems, engage in joint analysis and development of possible solutions/actions.	Joint ownership of an action plan for addressing specific community problems, with primary responsibility resting on youth for action. Youth deepen their sense of responsibility to/for the community.
5	Project Implementation: Youth action groups undertake projects to implement solutions/actions developed in the problem-solving sessions.	Concrete improvements in community life as a result of projects. Ex-combatant youth fully engaged and better integrated into the community. Possibly, some youth will gain skills that will help employment prospects.

Figure 3 illustrates how this project might be charted on the Matrix. In the diagram below, the items in boxes are activities, and the resulting changes are in circles. The overall goal is also indicated.



**Figure 3: Youth Program Charted on the Matrix**

**Questions:**

1. Do you think that the activities outlined above would actually lead to the goal? Is anything missing? Why and how? What assumptions is the program making about how the activities and changes they are designed to produce will lead to the goal? Are they good?
2. What linkages is the program making? What linkages are just “hopes?” How can those be strengthened?
3. What kinds of obstacles might the project encounter? Who/what might get in the way?

**MATRIX EXERCISE: MAPPING PROGRAMS ONTO THE RPP MATRIX**

The purpose of mapping programs onto the RPP Matrix is to explore their strategies and to see if there are ways to enhance their effectiveness in promoting Peace Writ Large.

A Matrix mapping exercise can be applied to either an *existing program* or one that is in the *planning stages*.

Before attempting to chart the program onto the Matrix, it is helpful to list the various program activities (proposed or completed) and the changes that have happened or might be expected from those activities. If you do this first, it becomes relatively easy to map the activities and changes onto the Matrix.

**Step One: Preliminary Identification of Activities and Changes**

<b>Program Goal:</b>		
	<b>Proposed/Completed Program Activities</b>	<b>Actual/Expected Changes, due to Activities</b>
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

**Step Two: Mapping onto the Matrix**

1. First locate the program goal on the Matrix. Is the goal at the Individual/Personal or Socio-Political level of change? More People or Key People?
2. Take the first activity and the associated change: where do you find the activity on the Matrix? Where is the resulting change?

3. Continue to map activities and changes until you come to the end of the current program steps (in the case of an existing program) or the proposed steps (in the case of a prospective program in planning).
4. Do the activities/changes add up to the desired change (goal)? Are there any gaps?
5. Are there useful linkages that can be made in *your program* from the Individual/Personal to the Socio-Political levels? From More People to Key People? Alternatively, are there other organizations/programs with which you can link at other levels?

### **Reflections**

1. What insights have you gained regarding your own program?
2. What challenges are raised?
3. Are there additional linkages you might consider—either within your own program or with other efforts?
4. Going forward, what do you want to think about more? What changes might be needed to make your program more effective?

## THEORIES OF CHANGE & EFFECTIVENESS

It is impossible to define “peace” in way that all can agree. RPP found, however, that there is broad agreement regarding the two big goals of peace work: stopping violence and destructive conflict (achieving “negative peace”) and building a just and sustainable peace (“positive peace”). These goals constitute a common *vision* of Peace Writ Large. However, these are lofty and ambitious goals—and very broad. If peace practitioners are working toward such grand and bold goals, how can they know whether their programs will be significant for Peace Writ Large?

Inherent in practitioners’ decisions about what to do in a particular situation are assumptions about how to bring about peace and theories about how to bring about change. These underlying assumptions are often implicit, and rarely discussed. RPP is finding that effective programs clarify these Theories of Change and continually test them against the realities of the conflict.

### What are Theories of Change?

Peace practitioners select program goals, methods, approaches and activities based on underlying “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 necessarily conscious or stated. Rather, they are embedded in the skills and approaches that peacebuilding practitioners and policy makers have learned, the capacities and “technologies” of their organizations, attachments to favorite methodologies, and the perspectives various decision makers bring to the peacebuilding process. Ideas about what will contribute to peace may also be dictated by international political dynamics and policies. Some theories focus on *who* needs to change: which individuals and groups in society or which relationships need to change. Other theories concentrate on *what* needs to change: an institution, a policy, a social norm. Still other theories are tied directly to a particular methodology or approach by which the change can or should happen.

Theories of Change operate at two levels. One type of Theory of Change describes how achieving the program goals will contribute to Peace Writ Large (PWL). In other words, what does the program assume about what is needed to address the driving factors of conflict and achieve Peace Writ Large, and if it were successful, how would it contribute to PWL?

For example, a program may aim to improve governance and integration of minorities. The program might work for changes in laws or policies that exclude minorities and promote the transparency and accountability of government to citizens, etc. This approach may be based on a belief (Theory of Change!) that by addressing exclusion of minorities from government and by demonstrating that government can serve all citizens, the grievances of minorities

would be addressed and, as a result, inter-group tensions would be reduced. Similarly, a trauma healing effort may be based on the theory that it would contribute to national reconciliation (an element of PWL) by reducing the numbers of people carrying deep resentment/hostility in society. These are theories that need to be tested.

RPP has found that people also operate according to “programmatically” Theories of Change or program theories. These are theories about how our main activities or series of activities will add up to the goal/objective we have set. (See the chart of activities and changes in the previous section on the RPP Matrix.) What changes will result from each activity, and what needs to happen in order for the efforts to result in the goals we have set?

For example, in the governance program described above, a series of activities might be planned, including training for government officials, expert advice on laws, grants or assistance for projects to meet the needs of minority groups, and so forth. Each of these activities might be guided by a theory or assumption about why this is the appropriate thing to do and what kinds of changes will result from the activities. What will government officials learn from and do with the training they receive? Why is the target group the most appropriate for the goals? And so forth. At each step/stage, program planners and implementers hold these smaller programmatic theories that influence our choices about what activities to engage in and how to implement them.

### **Theories of Change and Peacebuilding Effectiveness**

RPP is finding that programs are often less effective than they could be, because their Theories of Change and program theories are implicit (unspoken/unexpressed or not open), incomplete or not well-thought out, untested and at times inappropriate for the conflict in which they are working. RPP’s evidence suggests that two elements of a good Theory of Change are often missing, as explained below.

#### ***Robust peacebuilding goals and Theories of Change***

Planners or program implementers commit two kinds of “framing errors” in relation to peacebuilding programs.

The first error we might call “void for vagueness.” Goals are framed in vague, amorphous and largely unattainable ways. For example the program might aim: “to achieve community harmony and security,” “to strengthen democratic processes,” or “to promote coexistence and tolerance.” These are not measurable; how would we ever know that we were making progress or actually achieving the goal?

The second error we might call “activities are not a goal” or “process is not our most important product!” Under this error, goals are framed as activities or processes, rather than as changes the program would like to see in the situation. For example the program might seek: “to encourage the formation of farmers’ associations,” “to bring youth together,” or “to conduct a national debate on peacebuilding challenges.” What desired changes would result from the farmers’ association, youth encounters or a national debate?

RPP has found that effective programs formulate peacebuilding goals as *statements of desired changes in the socio-political realm* (even if the activities are not at that level). Programs that formulate goals in this way are more likely to connect their activities to the

desired changes, make effective linkages between individual/personal and socio-political level change and connect their programs to the conflict analysis.

These programs consider three questions in developing their goals:

1. Are our goals a *statement of change* at the socio-political level? This is effectively a statement of the way in which the program—by necessity affecting only one piece of the conflict puzzle—will contribute to Peace Writ Large.
2. If we achieve our program goals, how will this contribute to Peace Writ Large? What is our Theory of Change?
3. Are these the right goals for this context, that is, is our Theory of Change appropriate? Will achieving our goals address important drivers of conflict and how?

### ***Explicit and well-developed connections between activities, goals and Peace Writ Large***

The experience gathered by RPP reveals that many programs are less effective than they could be, because they make untested, and ultimately unrealistic, assumptions about how their activities will lead to changes in Peace Writ Large. This is a problem regarding their Theory of Change!

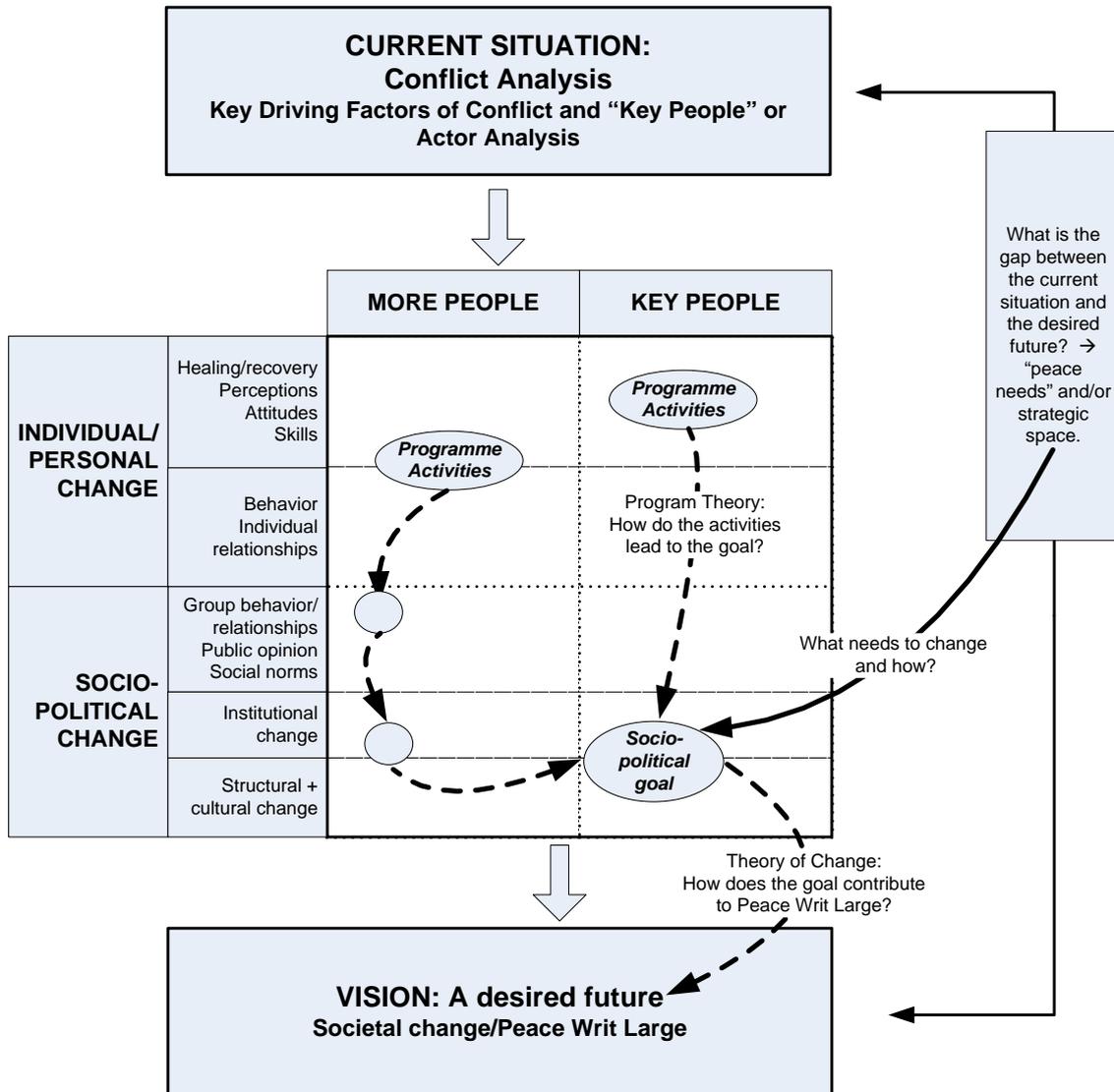
For example, some practitioners working with political leaders assume that if they change the individual perceptions of key leaders (at the Individual/Personal level), those leaders will then initiate changes in policies at the Socio-Political level. RPP has found that this assumption is not borne out in many cases. Programs that explicitly identify and examine their program theories and Theories of Change are more likely to have effects on Peace Writ Large. They need to be clear about what will happen as a result of the activities they undertake, and how that will lead to the goals and their desired impact on peace.

Figure 1 below presents the “RPP Matrix *Plus*,” which shows how conflict analysis, Peace Writ Large and Theories of Change fit together. Note that this version of the Matrix adds subcategories of change within the Individual/Personal and Socio-Political realms. This greater specificity about the subcategories can be helpful in positioning the program goal within the Socio-Political area.

RPP has found that effective peacebuilding strategies consider the links between conflict analysis and Peace Writ Large, program goals, and program activities and have an explicit Theory of Change and program theory/theories. Therefore, we can state that effective peacebuilding programs:

- Identify driving forces of conflict and key actors and a vision for Peace Writ Large that addresses them.
- Articulate program goals that reflect change at the Socio-Political level, either institutional change or collective attitude, behavioral or relational change, and ask whether their theory of how the goals will contribute to Peace Writ Large is appropriate in the particular conflict context.
- Define a series of activities and ask, at each stage, what difference these activities will make, and how the changes from these activities will result in the Socio-Political goal. Often activities begin at the Individual-Personal level, but good programs have an articulated strategy and tested assumptions about how they will move from the

Individual/Personal level to the Socio-Political, and how they will link More and Key People strategies.



**Figure 1: The RPP Matrix Plus**

### Two illustrative examples

Following are two examples of how Theories of Change and program theories have been identified and tested.

#### *Community Dispute Resolution program in Liberia*

A large international NGO received donor funding, in the wake of the 14-year civil war in Liberia, to develop Community Peace Councils (CPCs), a community-based mechanism for resolving a range of disputes, with an explicitly inter-ethnic approach. The CPCs were also designed to promote greater democratic participation through leadership development. An evaluation team first identified the underlying Theories of Change and program assumptions mainly by interviewing local and international staff members. The evaluation revealed the following underlying Theories of Change:

**Theory 1:** Establishment of a new community-level mechanism for handling a range of dispute types will contribute to peace by avoiding incidents that have the potential for escalating into serious violence.

**Theory 2:** Inclusive structures for community problem solving will improve communication, respect and productive interactions among subgroups in the community, as well as access of disenfranchised groups to decision making. This will lead to improved problem-solving in the community and avoidance of disputes that can escalate into violence. It will also reduce grievances of disenfranchised groups and prevent violence, by providing a forum for their voices to be heard and their needs to be addressed.

**Theory 3:** By creating a new leadership group infused with democratic concepts and provided with critical skills, we can foster more effective and responsive leadership which will have the willingness and ability to respond to people's needs.

Were the theories of change and program theories appropriate? The program made a number of assumptions that proved to be wrong.

- They assumed that the CPCs would handle disputes that had the potential for escalating into or inciting widespread violence. (If they did, then the CPCs would directly contribute to stopping a key factor in violent conflict; if not, then the CPCs would make little or no contribution to Peace Writ Large.)
- They assumed that the interactions in the CPCs would be positive, that disenfranchised groups would speak up and be taken seriously, and that these groups were key people in the conflict, in the sense that they might take up arms if their disenfranchisement continued;
- They assumed that the new leadership would be able to gain credibility and authority in the community.

The evaluation team found that the CPCs were, for the most part, not handling the most serious and volatile disputes, which concerned land issues. While the CPCs were set up and trained well, as communities were repopulated and traditional leadership patterns were re-established, the CPCs were mostly excluded from handling land issues. At the same time, the hope (and Theory) regarding alternative leadership models proved unfounded, as traditional leaders gained control over the CPCs or used them to address issues they preferred that someone else deal with, such as domestic violence. The evaluation recommended that the agency work to expand the mandate and capability of the CPCs for handling land disputes, by connecting them to land commissions and other emerging government structures. It should also be said that the CPCs did represent a useful developmental advance, even if they were unable to fulfill, as completely as hoped, a contribution to Peace Writ Large.

### ***Multi-ethnic reconstruction and economic projects in the Balkans***

CDA performed an extensive study regarding the reasons for the recurrence of inter-ethnic violence in Kosovo in the spring of 2004, and the relationship of that violence to policies and programs undertaken by the international community. Among other things, the study identified the Theories of Change underlying the various approaches to improving ethnic relations. As is often the case, these underlying theories were strongly influenced by the policies and (unspoken) assumptions of the international community. The multiple aid and

development programs were directly linked to the implementation of international standards and widely held-beliefs regarding refugee returns, inter-ethnic relations, and a future multi-ethnic state. One significant programming approach was to provide rewards and incentives, mainly economic, for cross-ethnic contact and activities—through joint projects such as joint agricultural cooperatives, cross-ethnic business linkages, internet cafés serving multi-ethnic youth, multi-ethnic NGOs and businesses, reconstruction and development projects, among others.

The study identified the following Theories of Change for these programs:

**Theory 1:** If we develop activities that provide economic benefits to both ethnic communities (economic interdependence), people will have self-interested incentives to resist efforts to incite violence against each other.

**Theory 2:** If we provide opportunities for people to work together on practical issues across ethnic lines, it will help break down mistrust and negative stereotypes, as well as develop habits of cooperation.

**Theory 3:** If people have jobs and economic stability, they will be less hostile to the other ethnic group.

The study found that the failure of peacebuilding programming to achieve desired impacts was due in part to faulty Theories of Change, and in part to problems in program design and implementation. Several assumptions about how these programs would contribute to Peace Writ Large proved to be wrong, for example:

- While both Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs mentioned the economy as the biggest problem facing them, they referred to past and present oppression and injustice as drivers of continuing hostility. For Kosovo Albanians the poor economy fueled hostility mainly because they perceived it as the result of Serbian blocking of recognition of their independence. In other words, the delay in resolution of the status question and Serbian actions to block independence were driving factors of conflict.
- “Spillover” effects from joint decision making and cooperation on reconstruction projects to other domains of relationship and to broader inter-group trust did not occur. This was in part due to an inappropriate Theory of Change for this context. Many people viewed the assistance offered for multi-ethnic projects not as “carrots,” but as a form of coercion that generated resentment and led beneficiaries to circumvent the spirit of multi-ethnicity, by dividing the resources provided, or by being multi-ethnic in form only. Where there was genuine interaction and cooperation, the context limited the “spillover” that programs hoped would happen. Implicit “rules of the game” made business interaction socially “permissible” but sanctioned people who developed relationships in other domains.
- In part, program theories were insufficient, as agencies believed the trust, attitudes and interests developed in the programs would change relationships and behaviour outside the project boundaries. Social pressure to conform, continued resentment about past and present injustices and political manipulation all obstructed this, and programs did not do sufficient follow-up to these interactions, provide enough resources for the “soft” aspects (such as dialogue) of their programming or pay sufficient attention to the effects of intra-group dynamics to deal with these effectively.

- The theory that greater interaction, cooperation and relationships would lead to a reduction in violence proved to be inadequate. While many people who participated in these programs, and others who had relationships with people from the other ethnic group, did not participate in the violence, and at times took risks to protect their friends, these relationships did not lead to changes in collective behavior. In other words, the places considered to have the “best” inter-ethnic relations suffered the greatest violence, as local residents did not take precautionary or protective measures, as they assumed that *their* community would not erupt in violence.

## EXERCISES: EXPLORING THE THEORY OF CHANGE & THE RPP MATRIX PLUS

### A. Formulating a Robust Peacebuilding Goal

1. Using the chart developed in the previous section on *Mapping on the Matrix*, first locate the program goal on the Matrix. Is the goal at the Individual/Personal or Socio-Political level of change? More People or Key People?
2. If the goal is expressed in very *broad and vague terms as an element of our vision for peace* (peace, reconciliation, peaceful coexistence, security, etc.), try to articulate the goal in more specific terms as a desired change at the socio-political level.

Initial goal: “We will achieve peaceful coexistence among the three ethnic groups in the district.”

↓

Reformulated goal: “Leaders of the three ethnic groups in the district regularly consult each other to solve mutual problems and intervene together to prevent violence.”

3. If the goal is expressed as an *activity* (such as training, a dialogue...) or a *process* (such as “people will participate in decision making...”) try to articulate the goal in more specific terms as a desired change at the socio-political level.

Initial goal: “Women are empowered to participate in the political process in their communities.”

↓

Reformulated goal: “Women and women’s groups are raising with local authorities issues of concern to them, resulting in changes in government policies and/or actions.”

4. Now, locate your reformulated goal on the Matrix. It should be in the Socio-Political realm, either More People or Key People.

### B. Identifying the Theory of Change of a Program

1. In this conflict context, what are some desired aspects of Peace Writ Large: what is the vision for peace? Try to be as specific as possible. For instance, not just “reconciliation” or “harmony,” but what do these look like in concrete terms. “People have put the past behind them and are able to live together.” “Conflicts that arise are settled without resort to violence.” Take about ten minutes to develop some understanding of what PWL would like in this setting. Put this vision on the Matrix Plus (Vision: A Desired Future).
2. Given our understanding of the program goal and the kind(s) of change it is trying to achieve:
  - a. How would achievement of that goal contribute to Peace Writ Large as we have outlined it?
  - b. Would achievement of the goal address driving factors of conflict, and, if so, *how*?

For instance, in the example of the ex-combatant youth program in the previous section, if the goal is “to improve community security by reintegrating ex-combatant youth,” how would this contribute to our vision for peace, and how would it address driving factors of conflict?

3. Write out the Theory of Change for the program you are focusing on. The “how” in the previous question leads to the Theory of Change. Make this into a statement, with the general format: “If we achieve X (goal), it will contribute to PWL, by doing Y, because....” For example:

***Reintegration of youth into the community will decrease violence by reducing the influence of armed groups and their ability to recruit youth. It will also increase trust and cooperation within the community by forging bridges across group lines among youth and bringing community members together in a common cause—which, in turn, will prompt communities to resist violence.***

4. Discuss the Theory of Change as stated in #3. Is it valid in the circumstances? If the goal is achieved, is it likely to make the contribution desired? Is it realistic? What does it depend on—who else needs to do what in order to reach the PWL aims? Would another goal and theory be more appropriate or practical?

### **C. Exploring Program Theories**

Use the table on the following page to explore the program theories built into the various activities at the phases of the program. The first two columns are the same as the chart developed under the RPP Matrix section—so if you have already done that, you can simply add another column and fill it in.

At this level, we are seeking to understand the rationale and assumptions behind the choices of activities of a program and the way they are implemented. Why did we decide to work with group X rather than group Y—what was the rationale behind the choice? Why was a training program necessary at this stage—as opposed to another activity? Why was it important to bring in community leaders at this stage? Most importantly, why and how will the activities we have chosen bring about the changes we desire? Under what circumstances will these changes not happen?

<b>PROGRAM GOAL:</b>			
	<b>Proposed/Completed Activity</b>	<b>Actual/Expected Changes due to activity</b>	<b>Program Theory: Why this choice? How will the changes happen?</b>
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			

**Questions for Reflection:**

1. In your estimation, are the program theories valid in this situation? Will the expected changes result from the activities?
2. Are there any places where we would have to question our assumptions? Are there things that might happen (or fail to happen) that could have an impact on the program?
3. Do the activities—and associated change—“add up” to the desired goal? What is the likelihood that the goal will be achieved if all of the activities and changes are completed successfully?

## CRITERIA OF EFFECTIVENESS

### Challenges of Assessing Effectiveness

Assessing contribution to “Peace Writ Large” is difficult. Most peacebuilding programs are discrete efforts aimed at affecting one (often small) piece of the puzzle, and no one project can do everything. Outcomes are also difficult to assess. Attribution of social impacts to particular peace activities is even more difficult. As one practitioner noted, “Peace requires that many people work at many levels in different ways, and, with all this work, you cannot tell who is responsible for what.” Moreover, when the goal of “just and sustainable peace” is so grand, and progress toward it immeasurable in its multitude of small steps, it is difficult to know whether a particular program outcome is significant for peace.

Yet even though a program may not fully accomplish the lofty goals of ending violent conflict or building sustainable just structures, it is not by definition ineffective. Are there criteria for determining which programs have a more significant impact? Against what benchmarks can agencies identify whether their programs have contributed to progress? How can agencies judge, as they are planning their programs, which of the wide range of possible approaches will have more significant impacts on the conflict?

### Program Effectiveness vs. Peace Effectiveness

RPP’s review of experience identified two dimensions of effectiveness:

1. *Program Effectiveness*. In this dimension, agencies assess whether a specific activity is achieving its intended goals in an effective manner. This might apply to many different approaches, such as peace education, dialogue workshops, or income generation projects. Agencies do this kind of program evaluation regularly, if not always systematically. This kind of evaluation asks whether the program is fulfilling its goals and is successful *on its own terms*.
2. *Impact on Peace Writ Large*. This effectiveness question asks whether, in meeting specific goals, the program is making a contribution to the bigger picture (Peace Writ Large). This requires assessing changes in the overall environment that may or may not result directly from the project or program. In most instances this will entail identifying the *contribution* of the specific program to PWL, rather than seeking clear attribution of impacts.

Practitioners involved in the earlier RPP process affirmed that they *do* want to understand the connection between their peace programs and ultimate impacts, and expressed dissatisfaction with the way projects are currently assessed. However, they were not sure how to assess impacts. During its current work (since 2003), RPP has been addressing this need. In addition to further work with the RPP Criteria of Effectiveness described here, the RPP team has been working with the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD-DAC, the network of donor organizations

in international assistance) regarding the development of guidelines for the evaluation of peacebuilding and conflict prevention programs.<sup>1</sup>

### **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,*** reflected 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.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/14/24/39341279.pdf> for a copy of CDA’s report for the DAC. The resulting Guidance document can be found at: [http://www.oecd.org/secure/pdfDocument/0,2834,en\\_21571361\\_34047972\\_39774574\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/secure/pdfDocument/0,2834,en_21571361_34047972_39774574_1_1_1_1,00.pdf)

These criteria can best be thought of as intermediate-level benchmarks of success applicable to the broad range of peace work being done.

### **The Criteria Are Additive**

The experience gathered through RPP suggests that the Criteria of Effectiveness are additive. In other words, peace efforts that achieve progress in more of them are more effective than those that accomplish changes in only one area. In addition, regardless of which criteria are relevant, the effort must demonstrate that it contributes to stopping one or more key driving factors of the war or conflict. *This is a condition of effectiveness for all programs: they must address people, issues, and dynamics that are key contributors to ongoing conflict, whether directly or indirectly.* Clearly, in order to accomplish this, a conflict analysis is needed.

### **Four Additional Questions**

To assess the significance of a particular change in a given context, four additional, interconnected elements must be considered:

1. Is the change from this effort *fast enough*? Sooner is almost always better than later in ending violence and injustice. One should always ask whether this effort is more likely to gain results faster than anything else we might do, or whether there are other ways to work that could produce results sooner. At the same time, there is a caution against inadvertently causing harm through haste! Sometimes people (perhaps pushed by donors) try to do too much too quickly, without the necessary analysis and planning.
2. Is the change from this effort likely to be *sustained*? Short-term gains are undermined over time in conflicts. Peace practitioners should hold themselves accountable to standards that look beyond the end of a particular project or program.
3. Is the change from this effort *big enough*? If violence is occurring at a national scale, efforts to address it at a very local level will be valuable, but not as significant as those efforts that affect the national scene. Peace practitioners should always ask: is this effort likely to have the widest possible effect we are capable of promoting, or is there something else we might do that is proportional to the actual conflict? Scale may also refer to program coverage. Are we working with only twenty communities among three thousand—and therefore having a negligible impact on Peace Writ Large? How could we scale up to reach a critical mass of people?
4. Are the *linkages* adequate? The stronger and more strategic the linkages programs make between levels, the more effective they will be vis-à-vis “Peace Writ Large.” Practitioners should ask: Can we make stronger or more strategic linkages between the Individual and Socio-Political levels, or between More and Key People? Is there something more we can do to address or take account of the regional, national and international dimensions of the conflict?

## EXERCISES: APPLYING THE CRITERIA OF EFFECTIVENESS

### Option A: Individual Reflection

Reflect on a program you are familiar with using the Criteria of Effectiveness Rating Chart (see next page):

1. What is/was the goal of the program? What have you done/are doing?
2. Which criteria is your program addressing or trying to address? (Rate your impact 1-5). How are you having this impact?
3. How would you know if you were having an impact? (Indicators)
4. Optional (if there is time): Is the program fast enough (but not too fast)? Big enough to achieve significant change? Sustainable?
5. Share your thoughts with your neighbor.

### Option B: Group Reflection

Complete the steps as outlined above, but do the work as a group regarding a program that all group members are familiar with and then report back.

## Criteria of Effectiveness Worksheet

Rating: 0 = no impact on this factor; 5 = major impact on this factor

Big/Fast/Sustained: Mark Y/N and why

	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Rating:</b> degree of impact	<b>Big Enough?</b>	<b>Fast enough?</b>	<b>Impact sustained?</b>	<b>Level of impact? Linkages?</b>	<b>Locally Specific Indicators</b>
1.	The effort results in the creation or reform of institutions or mechanisms that address the specific grievances or injustices that fuel the conflict	0 1 2 3 4 5					
2.	The effort causes participants and communities to develop independent initiatives that decrease dividers, increase connectors or address causes of conflict	0 1 2 3 4 5					
3.	The effort prompts people increasingly to resist violence and provocations to violence	0 1 2 3 4 5					
4.	The effort results in an increase in people's security and in their sense of security	0 1 2 3 4 5					
5.	The effort results in meaningful improvement in inter-group relations	0 1 2 3 4 5					