

Seeking Evidence of Causal Linkages: Alternative Approaches

Presentation for the Network for Peacebuilding Evaluation

Carlisle J. Levine, Ph.D.

BLE Solutions, LLC

May 1, 2014

Overview

- The challenge of establishing causal linkages in peacebuilding
- Alternative approaches that point toward contribution
 - Contribution analysis
 - Most Significant Change approach
- Discussion

The challenge of establishing causal linkages in peacebuilding

- Complexity of how change comes about
- Numbers of actors and factors involved
- The time it takes for change to be seen
- What is done can be undone
- The success of much peacebuilding work is that it is done without others aware of it

Contribution Analysis

- Step 1: Set out the attribution problem to be addressed
- Step 2: Develop a theory of change and risks to it
- Step 3: Gather the existing evidence on the theory of change
- Step 4: Assemble and assess the contribution story, and challenges to it
- Step 5: Seek out additional evidence
- Step 6: Revise and strengthen the contribution story

*Mayne, J. 2008. "Contribution analysis: An approach to exploring cause and effect." ILAC Brief No. 16. Rome, Italy: Institutional Learning and Change (ILAC) Initiative.

Most Significant Change

Some key steps:

1. Defining the domains of change
2. Defining the reporting period
3. Collecting Significant Change stories
4. Selecting the most significant of the stories
5. Feeding back the results of the selection process
6. Verification of stories
7. Secondary analysis and meta-monitoring

Davies, R. and J. Dart. April 2005. *The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique: A Guide to Its Use.*

Discussion