COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECTS

Reflecting on Peace Practice Project

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REFLECTING ON PEACE PRACTICE: A COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECT OF 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.

Building on Earlier Phases of RPP Work

From 1999 though 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. They volunteered time and effort to gather past experiences in attempting to move societies away from war and toward peace. By analyzing these experiences through case studies and consultations with 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 www.cdainc.com/rpp. Lessons have been identified in three specific areas that, if applied, can improve effectiveness:

1. Factors critical to conflict analysis as the basis for effective peace programming;
2. Approaches to setting appropriate goals and planning programs that are closely linked to criteria for improving effectiveness; and
3. Systems for monitoring and assessing outcomes and impacts of peace efforts to determine (and improve) effectiveness.

RPP gained additional useful insights in relation to:

- The relationship between the means used and the ends achieved in peace practice;
- The importance of and ways to improve partnerships between "insiders" who work to resolve conflicts in the areas where they live and "outsiders" who cross borders to work with those who suffer from conflict;
- Possible negative outcomes from peace work;
- Specific programming approaches that are often used (dialogues and training); and
- The impacts of donor policies and approaches on the effectiveness of peace practice.

Agencies and individuals involved in RPP consultations suggested that we should next enable peace practitioners to apply the findings and techniques developed, through some form of direct engagement in the field. In response, RPP has developed a two-pronged strategy that will disseminate and encourage broad adoption and utilization of RPP lessons by a number of peace agencies. The intent is, first, to improve the effectiveness of existing and ongoing peace programs through integration of the RPP learnings, and, second, to continue the process of gathering lessons to improve the impacts of subsequent peace practice.

The Approach

Field Work. RPP-Utilization will provide staff liaisons that will work directly with international and local NGOs engaged in peace practice in specific regions of the world. Initially, RPP will select four specific regions experiencing ongoing conflict. In each area, the liaisons will work in teams of two: one a local practitioner from the region, the other an RPP staff person or consultant. Wherever possible, both individuals will have been active in earlier phases of RPP.

The liaisons will help field staff in the four selected regions employ the lessons learned through RPP. The liaisons will present RPP ideas and lessons to NGO field staff, and then work with them to devise practical strategies appropriate in their areas and to integrate these lessons into their ongoing operations. Liaisons will visit each field site three to four times a year over a two-year period in order to help field staff monitor, assess, and develop strategies for improving program impacts in light of the RPP lessons.

RPP also recognizes that field workers and headquarters personnel from other regions will also be interested in learning about the RPP findings and practical applications. Therefore, staff are ready to provide a variety of workshops or consultations to people from other areas outside the four selected regions.

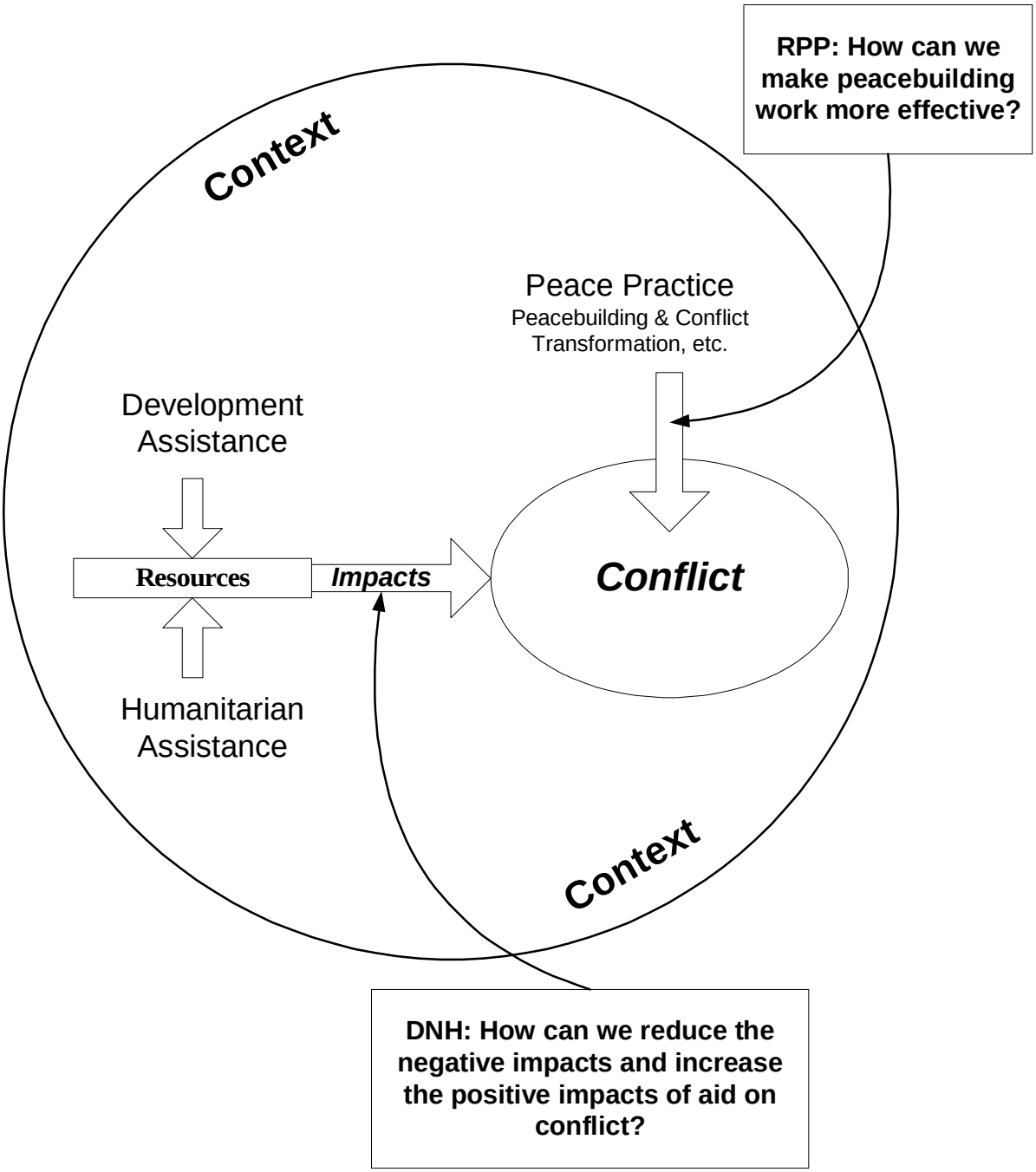
Consultations. Periodically, RPP will also organize consultations among the individuals and agencies involved in using the RPP approaches, as an opportunity to exchange experiences, compare notes, help each other solve problems, share good ideas and, in general, continue to collaborate to improve the effectiveness of their work.

Outcomes/Products:

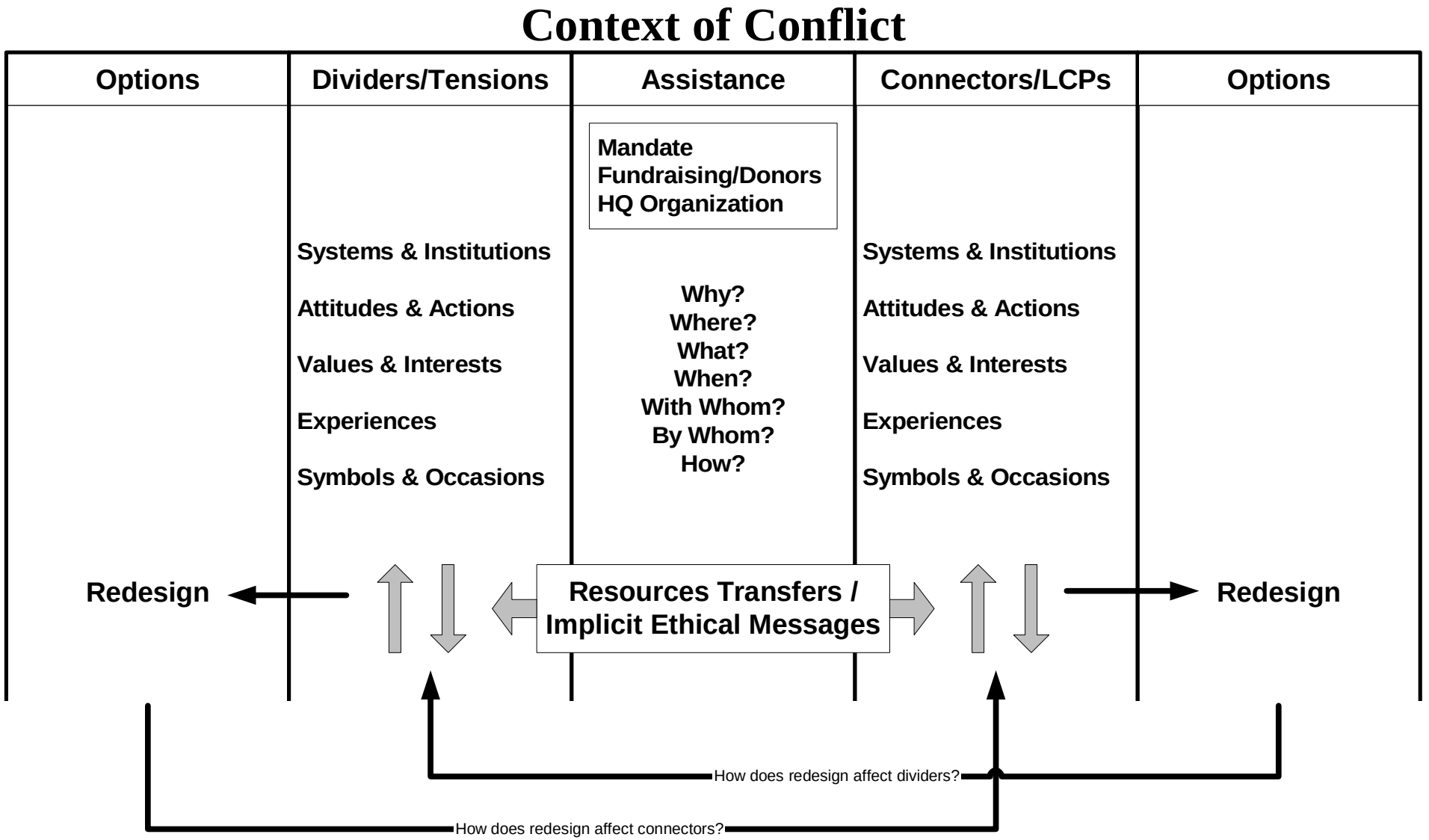
As people gain experience utilizing the RPP findings, CDA will systematically collect and share this additional learning with collaborating agencies. This will be presented in ongoing, informal publications, and/or on the CDA web site, as mechanisms for exchanging experience. At the end of the two years, CDA will publish a variety of materials designed to help field practitioners in peace work to use RPP findings—in the form of case studies exploring the application of RPP concepts, training exercises, compendiums of lessons learned, and so forth.

Project Co-Directors: Diana Chigas and Peter Woodrow

CDA Projects: "Do No Harm" & "Reflecting on Peace Practice"



"Do No Harm" Framework for Considering the Impacts of Aid on Conflict



SEVEN MAJOR LESSONS FROM DO NO HARM

1. Assistance becomes a part of the **CONFLICT CONTEXT**. It is not neutral, but becomes a part of the context.

2. There are two realities in any conflict situation: **DIVIDERS AND CONNECTORS**. Dividers are those factors that people are fighting about or cause tension. Connectors bring people together and/or tend to reduce tension.

3. Assistance has an **IMPACT** on both dividers and connectors. It can increase or reduce dividers or increase or reduce connectors.

4. **RESOURCE TRANSFERS** are one mechanism through which assistance produces impacts: what aid agencies bring in and how they distribute it.

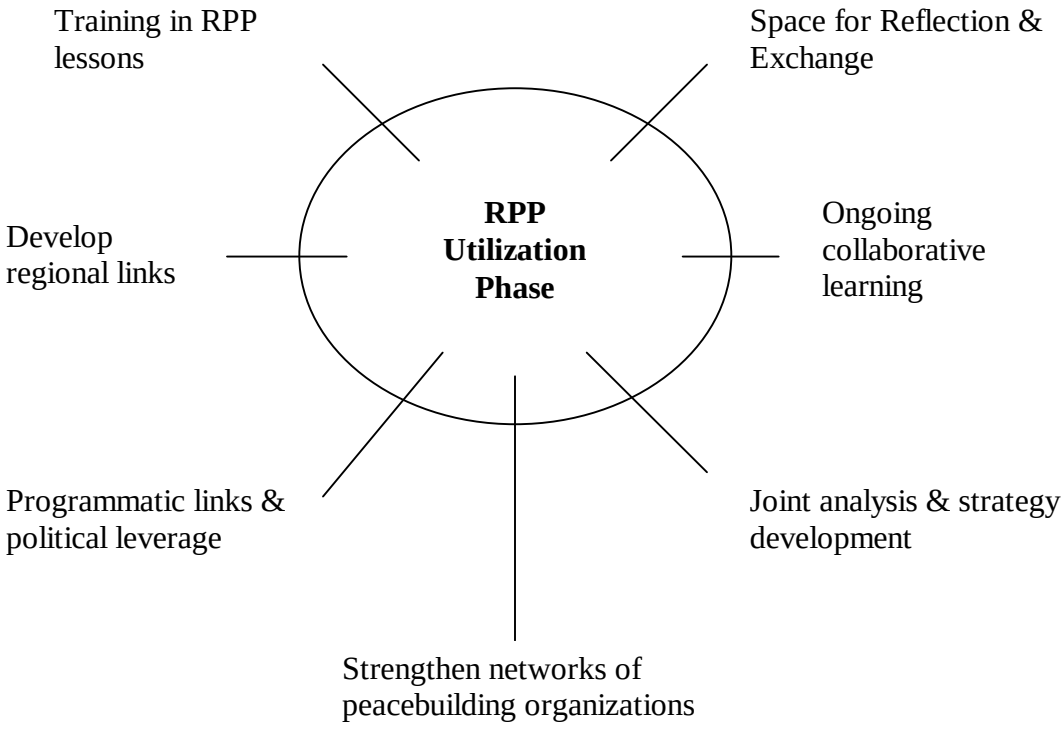
5. **IMPLICIT ETHICAL MESSAGES** are the other mechanism of impact: what is communicated by ***how*** agencies work.

6. The **DETAILS** of assistance programs matter: what, why, who, by whom, when, where, and how.

7. There are always **OPTIONS** for changing assistance programs to eliminate negative impacts (increased conflict) or to improve positive contributions to peace.

RPP UTILIZATION PHASE ACTIVITIES

Primary Objective: to increase the effectiveness of peacebuilding programs



PEACE PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES

The Challenge of Improving Effectiveness: Can Approaches be Compared?

RPP worked with many, varied peace agencies implementing an even wider variety of peacebuilding approaches and activities. Nonetheless, all agencies involved with RPP could agree on two broad ways peacebuilding work contributes to "peace writ large," or the bigger peace beyond the immediate context of their programs: 1) ending violent conflict or war; 2) building just and sustainable peace.

For months, RPP struggled with the question of how to identify effective strategies for impacting "peace writ large." Identifying effective strategies required, in the first instance, a way of comparing them. Were the vast array of approaches to peacebuilding included in RPP, in fact, comparable? Were there ways of determining whether and how small programs could "add up" to peace writ large?

Common Strategies for Affecting "Peace Writ Large"

Through much discussion and analysis, the project discovered that the varied peace activities could be related to each other by comparing the strategies, or theories, RPP participants used for promoting change in "peace writ large." This is represented by a simple, four-cell matrix (see Figure 1) describing the basic approaches and levels of work of the peace activities undertaken by RPP participants – who is being engaged and what type of change is being sought.

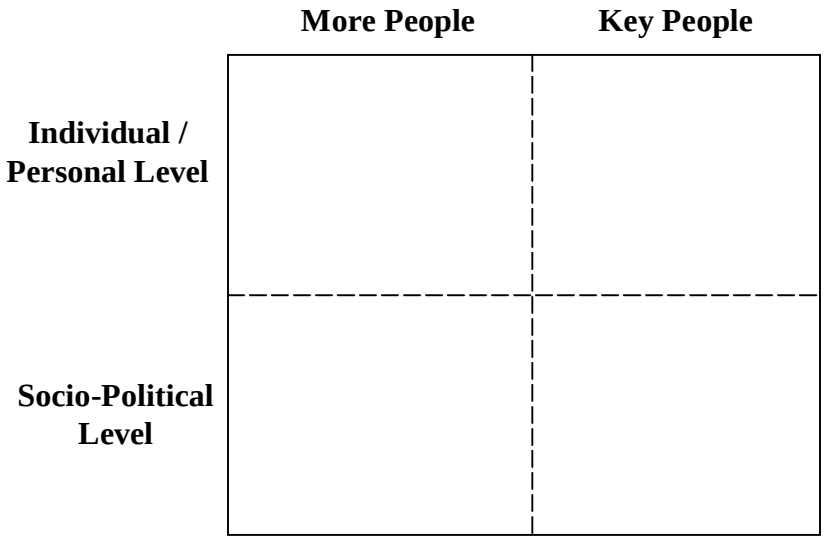
As the Figure shows, RPP found that all activities are based essentially on one of two approaches related to *who* needs to be engaged for peace.

- **More people approaches** aim to engage large numbers of people in actions to promote peace. Practitioners who take this approach believe that peace can only be built if many people become active in the process, i.e. if there is broad involvement of "the people."

- **Key people approaches** focus on involving particular people, or groups of people, deemed critical to the continuation or resolution of conflict because of their leverage or their roles. Who is "key" will depend on the particular context. "Key" people may be political leaders, warlords, or others necessary to a peace agreement. They may be people with leverage on broad constituencies. They may be important entry points for work. Or they may be key because they are otherwise involved in warring (e.g., unemployed young men). "Key people" strategies are based on the belief that, without the involvement of these individuals or groups, no real progress can be made toward resolving the conflict.

As the rows of the matrix show, RPP also found that all programmes work at two basic levels: the individual/personal level and/or the socio-political level.

Figure 1



- Programmes that work at the **individual/personal level** seek to change the attitudes, values, perceptions or circumstances of individuals, on the belief that peace is possible only if the hearts, minds and behavior of individuals – of people – are changed.

- Programmes that concentrate at the **socio-political level** are based on the belief that peace requires changes in socio-political, or institutional, structures. These programs aim to support creation or reform of institutions that address the grievances that fuel conflict and to institutionalize non-violent modes of handling conflict within society.

All the activities included in the range of RPP case studies and consultations can be located on this four-cell matrix. Some programmes cover more than one cell – or work in the boundaries between cells. Some programmes start in one quadrant, but eventually move to, or have impacts in, others. However, many programmes operate within one cell.

Theories of Change

When an agency makes a choice of where to start a programme—i.e., which cell on the matrix, they are operating on a theory about how change (or peace) comes about. For example, an organization concentrating on achieving a peace treaty might be saying: "Engaging political leaders in the negotiation process, will result in a treaty, a crucial ingredient of peace." However, another group might focus on grassroots efforts, saying: "Leaders may sign treaties, but unless we achieve reconciliation at the community level, peace will not last."

The RPP matrix can be used to explore the Theories of Change underlying our programme choices and strategies.

LINKAGES AND LEVERAGE

Does it all "add up?" The importance of linkages

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 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."

The evidence gathered by RPP participants in the case studies and consultations is sobering. Although many people do, indeed, work at many levels, conducting good programs at each level, these programs do not automatically "add up" to peace!

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 critical lessons emerged from the case studies and discussion.

What linkages?

Two kinds of linkages were found to be particularly important for programs to have impact on "peace writ large."

Individual/Personal à 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, 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.

Does work at the socio-political level likewise need to transfer to 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 internalized in the behavior of individuals to be durable. The linkage needed from the Socio-Political to the Individual/Personal to impact "peace writ large" is less strong.

More people ß à Key people. RPP found that 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

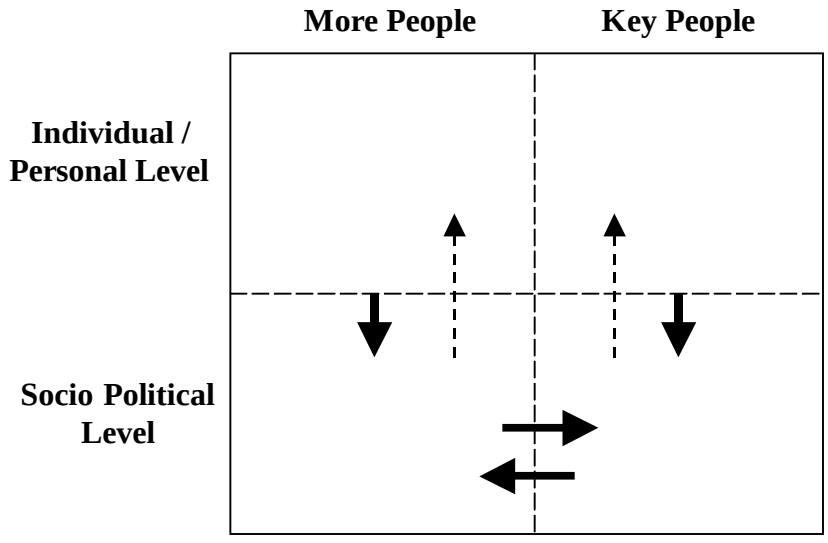
More People must link, strategically, to activities to engage key people, and Key People activities must link strategically to activities to engage More People, if they are to be effective in moving toward peace writ large.

> *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.*

> *Multiple efforts funded by international donors to promote bi-communal rapprochement through conflict resolution training workshops, dialogue, and bi-communal study visits and joint projects led to improved relationships, trust and cooperation among thousands of people on Cyprus. These efforts, however, did not link to and had little impact on decision makers at the political level. The work remained for a long time at the More People level and was unable to affect Key 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. Who else needs to be affected, at what level, in order to produce significant change?

Figure 2



This does not mean that a single agency must necessarily have programs in all areas simultaneously. An agency's program may evolve, over time, to move from one quadrant to another. Or there may be 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? 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 those forces that are perpetuating or benefiting from the conflict – militia fighters, economic elites, governments and diasporas outside the conflict zone. In addition, in many cases, the NGOs emphasize working with civil society, so that few peace agencies make direct connections to official governmental actors and functions or warring factions. 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) often critical to securing peace and to building or maintaining the systems that sustain it.

CONTEXT ANALYSIS

The Importance of Understanding the Situation

Peace practitioners assert strongly that it is crucial that they understand the context in which they implement peacebuilding programs. However, the RPP process revealed that there is no consistent practice or accepted methodology for conducting such analyses. In fact, some good programs did little or no analysis, and some programs that did quite thorough analyses ran into difficulties. Therefore, while everyone acknowledges that is important to develop a deep understanding of the situation, there is no clear guidance about what kind of analysis to perform, or how best to do it.

RPP participants did note certain trends:

- Practitioners sometimes do only partial analysis, often focused on how their particular approach or methodology might fit
- People often depend on their intuitive understanding of the situation, rather than any kind of formal or written analysis
- 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

Why Context Analysis?

As they assert the necessity of understanding the situation, peace practitioners note that some analysis is needed in order to avoid costly mistakes, find the correct program focus (which issues and participants), identify priorities and strategic points of intervention, and match agency skills and resources to the situation.

Some kinds of partial analysis can have negative consequences. For example, when analysis is driven by a particular theory of change or based on a pre-set model for how to achieve peace, it may incorporate only confirming evidence and obscure as much as it reveals. Similarly, when performed at a great distance or with only limited local input, partial analysis can produce misguided programs.

Three Crucial Questions

Although RPP did not find agreement regarding any particular framework(s) for analysis, we did identify several questions which, if not addressed, caused problems.

What is the Conflict NOT About? It is important to identify those areas where competing groups do agree, share common understandings, continue to interact productively, or mutually recognize a common interest. Examples include ongoing trade/commercial relations, common infrastructure, and shared religious or ethnic background. Peacebuilding programs must reinforce, support and build on these kinds of elements.

Peace practitioners must also avoid the easy or popular assumptions about the nature of the conflict—because such suppositions may prove to be wrong. For instance, government leaders

and the media might characterize a conflict as being rooted in religious differences—when, in fact, the conflict is more closely associated with economic factors. In such circumstances, programs that approach the issues as based on religion may miss the mark.

What Needs to be Stopped? Each situation of actual or potential violent conflict includes actions, situations, and dynamics that need to be stopped. Context analysis must clarify how the war system or injustice system should be interrupted—and who might resist such attempts. 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?

What are the International/Regional Dimensions of the Conflict? How do the policies and actions of forces outside the immediate local context (village, province, nation) affect the conflict? How might such factors be addressed? What kinds of local-international cooperation are needed to handle these external issues?

An Experimental Approach at Cross-Agency Analysis

The RPP Utilization Phase will work with peace practitioners to further explore how best to engage in context analysis. In particular, we will be promoting cross-agency sharing of perspectives and information as inputs into joint analysis, as well as working with various tools, frameworks and models for analysis, to see which ones work best in different settings and with different levels of analysis.

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 or when a particular program outcome is significant for peace.

Yet every program that does not fully accomplish the lofty goals of ending violent conflict or building sustainable just structures 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 levels of effectiveness:

1. *Program Level*. At this level, agencies assess the effectiveness of a specific activity (e.g., peace education, dialogue workshop, income generation project) is achieving its intended goals. Program evaluation at this level is often done regularly by agencies, even if not always systematically.

2. *Peace Writ Large Level*. The effectiveness question at this level asks whether, in meeting specific program goals, an agency makes a contribution to the bigger picture. This requires assessing changes in the overall environment that may or may not result from the project or program. RPP found that this question – whether the program results represented a significant contribution to peace – was rarely asked. Rather, the connection was assumed. Nonetheless, practitioners involved in the RPP process affirmed that they *do* want to understand the connection between their peace programs and ultimate impacts, and that they are dissatisfied with the way projects are currently assessed.

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 (or is not) 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 large 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 contributes to stopping a key driving factor of the war or conflict. The program addresses people, issues, and dynamics that are key contributors to ongoing conflict.

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: what needs to be stopped, reinforcement of areas where people continue to interact in non-war ways, and 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 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

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 effectiveness criteria are additive. Peace efforts that meet more of them are more effective than those that accomplish only one of the changes.

Four Additional Questions

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

1. Is the change from this effort fast enough? Sooner is 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.

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 programme.

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 scale will be valuable, but not as significant as those efforts that affect the national scale. 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 more proportional to the actual conflict?

4. Are the linkages big or strong enough? The stronger and more strategic the linkages efforts 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?

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

	Criterion	Rating	Big Enough?	Fast enough?	Impact sustained?	Level of impact: Linkages?	Locally Specific Indicators
1.	The effort contributes to stopping a key driving factor of the conflict or tensions	0 1 2 3 4 5					
2.	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					
3.	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					
4.	The effort prompts people increasingly to resist violence and provocations to violence	0 1 2 3 4 5					
5.	The effort results in an increase in people's security and in their sense of security	0 1 2 3 4 5					

NEGATIVE IMPACTS

The Imperative to "Do No Harm"

There is no perfect peace program. Movement towards peace – both at the macro level and at the project level – often occurs as "two steps forward, one step back" rather than linear progress. Things beyond peace practitioners' control may go wrong. Peace practitioners also make mistakes. While many peace practitioners assert that it is better to try something and risk failure than to avoid risks by doing nothing, RPP's review of experience suggests that negative impacts are not merely "inevitable bumps along the road to peace." Peace practice can do actual harm by making a situation and the lives of people living in conflict worse rather than better.

And, RPP found, these negative impacts are not inevitable. Experience shows that there are predictable ways negative impacts occur. Consequently, with greater awareness of how negative impacts occur and how peace agencies contribute to them, practitioners can anticipate and minimize them in their work.

Six Categories of Negative Impacts

What negative impacts occur from peace efforts? And how do peace agencies contribute to them? RPP found four broad categories of negative impacts of peace efforts. These impacts are usually inadvertent, occurring despite the passion, commitment, competence and high ethical standards of practitioners. Yet, while not all negative impacts are avoidable, RPP found common ways in which program approaches, decisions and actions contribute to creating or worsening them.

1. Worsening Divisions between Conflicting Groups

Some programs exacerbate divisions and tensions among groups by confirming or reinforcing prejudice, discrimination or intolerance. This is the most common negative impact that emerged in the experienced reviewed in RPP. Agencies inadvertently contribute to this in a number of predictable ways:

a. *Inadequate analysis and inadequate skills.* Agencies underestimate the depth of divisions, do too little consultation with participants beforehand, do inadequate analysis, or take on volatile situations that are more that they have the skills or experience to handle. As a result, they are not prepared to deal with problems.

b. *Agencies inadvertently become advocates for one side.* Agencies may openly become advocates for one side. Or, more indirectly, they may choose to work in ways that favor one side over another. When agencies focus exclusively on a particular, often marginalized, group, they may increase tensions by appearing to favor them.

c. *Agencies neglect to monitor the after-effects of bringing people together across lines of conflict.* As a result, they may be unaware when participants are unhappy with the

program, or neglect to manage the problem, leaving "spoilers" to spread views that reinforce prejudice or divisions with the other side.

2. Increasing Danger for Participants in Peace Activities

Peace work is dangerous. People who participate in peace activities are often trailblazers in a hostile environment. They are vulnerable to attack – physical, social, economic or psychological – by people opposed to their activities, and in this sense, consciously choose to take risks. But agencies – especially outside agencies – may further increase danger to participants either by creating false expectations of security or by creating additional real danger to participants. This can occur in the following ways:

a. *Agencies create a false sense of security.* Agencies' aura of expertise and protection may lead people to take risks they would not otherwise take.

b. *Agencies put people in dangerous situations.* For example, when foreigners ask to be taken to places local counterparts feel are dangerous, the latter agree out of a sense of hospitality. Or participation in an agency program or affiliation with the agency draws attention that makes people become targets.

c. *Agencies give counterparts unrealistically high expectations and/or insufficient follow-up support*. Local counterparts may be more vulnerable to attacks, or may suffer psychological burnout and trauma.

d. *Agencies do not explicitly analyze and discuss with local partners how the risks each faces are different.* Often, foreigners are safer than local people because they can call on their home governments for protection or attract the attention of the international media.

3. Reinforcing Structural or Overt Violence

Peace efforts can be conducted in ways that reinforce asymmetries of power behind the conflict or legitimize a status quo that systematically disadvantages some groups relative to others. Agencies contribute to this when they:

a. *Assume that simply bringing people together in equal numbers will "level the playing field" in conflicts marked by deep asymmetries of power.*

b. *Agencies accept conditions placed by the more powerful side in a conflict, or influential outside states, in order to conduct a program.* This often occurs in organizational matters, such as control over movement, visas, decisions over participant selection, use of names or symbols that are politically sensitive, etc. When agencies accommodate such demands, they may be perceived by the less powerful side as reinforcing power asymmetries and skewing the program in favor of the more powerful side.

c. *Agencies fail to challenge behavior that affirms perceptions of superiority and inferiority of people in conflict.*

4. Diverting Human and Material Resources from Productive Peace Activities

Sometimes peace efforts may not do overt harm, but make peace more difficult by diverting the attention, resources and time of local people into activities not directly related (in the eyes of local people) to what drives the conflict.

d. *Agencies come in with preset ideas (and models), and focus on issues that are not the most relevant or productive (in the eyes of local people).* For example, agencies may come in with preset ideas of what the main issues in conflict are or what is needed to build peace, and do not listen to what local people want or need. Or agencies, believing people must deal with the past, focus too much on "talking about past conflict" rather than on actions people can take to change the situation.

e. *Foreign agencies, because of their access to greater resources, hire local activists to run their programs, pulling their energies away from promising local initiatives and approaches.*

5. Increasing Cynicism

The ways in which agencies work with local communities and donors can inadvertently cause people to become cynical about the effectiveness of such efforts. This can both undermine agencies' initiatives and the broader impact of their initiatives, and lead donors to reduce support for peace work.

f. *Agencies create unrealistic expectations about what can be achieved*. When the expected results do not occur, perceptions of failure amongst communities and donors are exacerbated.

g. *Agencies are not fully transparent about their activities with communities so that rumors and suspicions reinforce cynicism.*

h. *Agencies recast established aid and development activities as "peacebuilding."* As they adopt new peace vocabulary without essentially changing the content of the programs, they create cynicism about agencies' real (profit) agendas.

i. *Agencies assume that competence in one area translates into competence in others.* As a result, they design bad programs.

6. Disempowering Local People

Most peace agencies seek to empower local people to take action for peace. However, they can unintentionally and unconsciously disempower local people and communicate an implicit message that local people cannot make peace without outside help.

a. *Agencies counsel patience.* International agencies often counsel patience, saying, "peace takes time," with the aim of supporting local people to maintain confidence and persist in their activities in the face of ongoing conflict. However, this may also undermine people's urgency to push bold new initiatives and reinforce a sense of powerlessness to end the conflict.

b. *Agencies do not address local people's needs.* Agencies teach people things they already know, or introduce topics in which they believe people need training before consulting them. Agencies also often present models for dealing with conflict authoritatively, without giving people the space to examine if, and how, these approaches fit their situation. When agencies do this – often unconsciously and without intending to do so – they convey the message that the outsider knows best.

c. *Agencies foster dependence on outsiders.* Agencies can give the impression that they are "taking care of the situation," causing people to think problems are being handled. Or they implement programs in a way that fosters dependency on outside "experts" who are constantly brought in to run activities.

d. *Agencies undermine effectiveness of NGOs with government.* Foreign agencies that work exclusively with the NGO sector and deliberately avoid support to government structures, no matter how weak, may foster resentment and competition between NGOs and governments, undermining NGOs' positions vis-à-vis their own governments.

e. *No exit strategy*. Agencies do not know when to leave and encourage local groups and people to take over.

PARTNERSHIPS AMONG OUTSIDER AND INSIDER PEACE PRACTITIONERS

Many agencies work for peace through partnerships between insiders and outsiders. Each side brings perspectives, networks, assets, and leverage with particular constituencies that the other does not have. Peace practitioners believe that the key to insider-outsider partnerships is focusing intentionally on the relationship—and negotiating explicit partnership arrangements. Peace work begins with forming right relationships with allies and counterparts and then extending these outward to the people all groups aim to help.

RPP's evidence shows that good insider-outsider partnerships promote effectiveness. While good partnerships do not always produce big impacts on the broader peace, they are necessary, if not sufficient. Bad partnerships put peace work at risk.

Defining Insiders and Outsiders

First, who are insiders and who are outsiders? Are these terms synonymous with locally-based agencies and agencies that come from abroad or foreign agencies? Experience reveals that other dividing lines are far more relevant.

> ***Insiders*** are vulnerable to the conflict, usually live in the area, experience the conflict, and suffer its consequences personally. They include activists and agencies from the area, local NGOs, governments, church groups, and local staff of outside or foreign NGOs and agencies.
>
> ***Outsiders*** are choosing to become involved in a conflict. Though may be intensely engaged, they have little to lose personally. They may live in the setting for extended periods of time, but can leave. Foreigners, members of the diaspora, and co-nationals from areas of a country not directly affected by violence are all seen as outsiders. Those working with foreign agencies or local people working in the manner of an outside organization can also be seen as outsiders.

In practice there are no pure insiders or outsiders, but rather degrees of "insiderness" and "outsiderness." Often the relationship can be defined in relative terms—someone is more or less of an insider/outsider than someone else. Particularly those in the relatively outsider role must develop an awareness of how they are perceived.

Roles of Insiders and Outsiders

Local groups undertake most peace efforts with little or no outsider support. However, a partnership of insiders and outsiders working together for peace can produce opportunities for increased effectiveness, if the partnership is well-designed and managed, because conflicts often have both domestic and international dimensions. Partnerships provide another element of linkage—addressing the interlocking elements of conflict and ensuring that solutions on one level are not undermined at other levels.

Insiders and outsiders bring different and distinct qualities to peace partnerships. In broad terms, insiders provide depth of knowledge about the context and connections to the communities affected, their culture, attitudes, and world-view. Outsiders provide breadth of knowledge and connections to external constituencies, ideas, and models.

There are no hard and fast rules about which agency should do what. In fact, the roles that insiders and outsiders play often overlap. Partnership planning should address which group can act as an intermediary or provide training or lobby governments or monitor human rights abuses (etcetera!), depending on the context, the geopolitical environment, the types of agencies, and the particular skills and networks of each group.

Insiders in Peace Work

Insiders, as those most in touch with the conflict and its consequences, clearly bring many of the key elements needed for peace work, including:

1. Clear motivation, passion, and commitment to the cause because they experience the costs of the conflict.

2. In-depth knowledge of the context, the conflict and its dynamics, the particular people and the internal politics of the groups in the setting, and the internal resources that exist for peace.

3. Their reputation, credibility, and trust with people in the setting. This can translate into ability to gain access to decision-makers, to negotiate, to mobilize constituencies, etc.

4. Leverage and the ability to apply political pressure in the setting due to personal influence or the domestic constituencies they represent.

5. Ability to provide continuity, follow-up, and long-term monitoring since they are present in the setting and able to maintain ongoing contact with the people they engage in peace efforts.

Insiders also recognize that they sometimes bring their personal views and biases, precisely because of their intimate connections to the conflict. Personal experiences can make it difficult for an insider to play a neutral role among the parties to the conflict.

Outsiders in Peace Work

Outsiders bring power, resources, certain kinds of influence, and access to a wider stage to a partnership. Outsiders add value in a partnership when they:

1. Lobby, advocate, and raise awareness internationally on the local and international causes of the conflict and on peace initiatives by insiders.

2. Apply influence and pressure on national political authorities.

3. Use channels to and leverage with outside constituencies to increase security of insiders, through on-site presence, monitoring, and reporting.

4. Provide comparative experiences and new ideas and techniques from other settings in ways that insiders can decide whether or not to take up.

5. Host a "safe space" where all sides of a conflict can come together for dialogue, training, conferences, joint work, etc.

6. Use external contacts and credibility to mobilize resources.

Partnerships Gone Wrong

In the RPP workshops, insider and outsider practitioners stressed again and again that the role of outsiders is to support internal forces working for peace. However, RPP discussions revealed that insiders often feel undermined or weakened by outsiders. Outsiders often:

- Bring external models that make it difficult for people in the context to make their own ideas heard, or introduce techniques or approaches that are inappropriate.

- Impose "Western" values, devalue or ignore local solutions, show "arrogance" and "neocolonial attitudes."

- Focus on "perceptual work" at the expense of "structural work," downplay the conflict and its roots, or try to provide quick fix solutions for historical problems.

- Interpret the need to be neutral between the parties as the need to be silent on the abuses the parties commit.

- Enter new situations with "institutional biases and strengths that can blind them to what is already happening."

- Remain unaware of local realities and political nuance, and come armed with easy ethnic or two-party frameworks for conflict.

- Believe, mistakenly, that they are not part of the conflict, lacking awareness of how their own identities relate to the conflict.

- Seek legitimacy in the conflict, becoming stakeholders because they want to be seen to succeed.

At the heart of the challenge facing insider/outsider partnerships is a serious power asymmetry felt by insiders. They feel that the priorities, biases, agendas, and analyses of outsiders tend to

dominate, especially where the outsider brings funding. On the other hand, insiders can undermine the partnership when they become the sole "gatekeeper" for the peace effort.

Principles for Effective Partnerships

1. Both should bring their perspectives to joint planning, evaluation, analysis, and monitoring. In the best partnerships, insiders and outsiders work as a team in which both perspectives are valued.

2. The relationship should be horizontal and based on mutual consultation, with equal influence on decisions, and involving joint processes for setting strategies, defining goals, and evaluating results. Even in a horizontal relationship, the initiative and definition of needs must come from insiders.

3. Each agency's role should be clearly and explicitly defined, and those roles should be re-negotiated and re-assessed frequently.

4. Partners should take time to identify shared criteria by which to evaluate and improve their relationship.

5. Partners should take the time to understand and define where their missions ***diverge***. That is, they should explicitly recognize that they have differences as well as a common vision, and they should clarify and acknowledge these as valid.

6. Together insiders and outsiders build a sustainability strategy for when outsider funding and programming is phased out.

7. Insider and outsider staff are safer if they work together so they should be conscious of their roles in providing security, in different ways, for each other.

8. Each brings different and important networks to the work, and both should focus efforts on mobilizing the constituencies where they have maximum contacts and leverage.