INCORE

THE EVALUATION OF

CONFLICT RESOLUTION INTERVENTIONS:

FRAMING THE STATE OF PLAY

Cheyanne Church
Julie Shouldice

*'Not everything that can be counted counts,
and not everything that counts can be counted.'*

- Einstein

INCORE

Conflicts of an ethnic, religious, political and cultural nature continue to dominate the world's attention. Since 1990, over 150 wars have taken place, most of which are recurrent, protracted and intra-state, and there is little evidence that such conflicts will decrease significantly over the coming decades. Ninety percent of our states are now multi-identity states and most governments are having difficulty dealing positively with such diversity.

Addressing the causes, effects, solutions and post-settlement impacts of such wars has been the role of the UNU International Conflict Research at the University of Ulster (INCORE) since it was established in 1993. INCORE is a joint research institute of the United Nations University and the University of Ulster. It seeks to address the management and resolution of contemporary conflicts through research, training, practice, policy and theory. INCORE's vision is of a world where the knowledge and skills exist to make non-military management of ethno-political conflict the norm.

The *Research Unit* undertakes, commissions and supervises research of a multidisciplinary nature, particularly on post-settlement issues, governance and diversity, and research methodology in violent societies. The *Policy and Evaluation Unit* is committed to bridging the gaps between theory, practice and policy. It seeks to ensure that conflict-related research and practice is incorporated into grassroots programming and governmental policy.

INCORE
University of Ulster
Aberfoyle House
Northland Road
Derry/Londonderry
BT48 7JA
Northern Ireland

Tel: + 44 (0)28 7137 5500
Fax: + 44 (0)28 7137 5510
Email: incore@incore.ulst.ac.uk
Website: *www.incore.ulst.ac.uk*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

<div style="display: flex; gap: 40px;">
<div style="flex: 1;">

CONTENTS

</div>
<div style="flex: 1;">

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Currently evaluation is an *ad hoc* process conforming to the needs of the moment and limited by lack of skills, understanding and resources. As a result, INCORE has undertaken a pilot project seeking to examine the current state and utilisation of evaluation in conflict resolution interventions. The first part of the project consisted of a literature review, calls for information and a series of field interviews. That research resulted in the publication of this document. The second phase involved convening an international working group to begin addressing the questions and challenges of conflict resolution evaluation.

Overarching Framework

A conflict-specific framework has been developed to integrate the different aspects of an intervention that can be evaluated. It serves both to provide a platform for the field's thinking about current evaluations and to highlight gaps in the evaluation process requiring further research and refinement. The framework is structured around three themes, each of which has an essential question to guide thinking.

- Goals and Assumptions explores the use of conflict analysis when planning an intervention and the theoretical and ideological basis of an organisation's strategy. This theme asks: Why and how is the agency conducting this particular intervention?

- Process Accountability assesses the implementation of an intervention from the perspectives of management, cost-accountability and process. This theme asks: How was the intervention operationalised?

- Range of Results considers the results achieved through the intervention, both in the immediate term and with respect to the longer and broader impact on society. This theme asks: What were the short and long-term results of the intervention?

Beyond these themes, two additional concepts have been expanded to provide typologies by which one can discuss ideas essential to the evaluation of conflict intervention. The first, Focus of Change (p.34), addresses what an interaction is seeking to influence, while the second, Tiers of Influence (p.38), considers who an intervention is targeting.

</div>
</div>

Realities in the Field

In order to ground discussions about the evaluation process in current field experience, research was conducted with practitioners, evaluators and funders to get their views on conflict resolution evaluation. Some of the findings of this study were:

- Evaluations are conducted for a variety of reasons. Practitioners tend to engage in evaluation for the purposes of learning and in order to fulfil funding requirements. Conversely, funders are motivated by a need to review funding allocations and to ensure that agency goals are being met. These different motivations can cause frustrations when the end results of the evaluation only serve the requirements of one of the parties.

- Practitioners tend to conduct evaluations at the level of individual interventions whereas funders usually perform evaluations of a cluster of projects based on a particular theme or geographic commonality. Because of the use of different levels of analysis for evaluations, there are frequently misunderstandings and differing expectations in terms of what the final evaluation results will offer.

- All stakeholders considered the measurement of the intangible changes in attitude and perception that are an important part of peace work a particular challenge for which they had limited tools and resources. Without being able to explain or measure this type of change, it is very difficult to prove the impact of conflict resolution work.

- There is a preference for external evaluators as they are seen to be unbiased, legitimate and transparent. However, a number of practitioners expressed the desire to learn about alternative methods, such as self and participatory evaluation.

- Unlike for other fields, there is no training available in conflict-resolution specific evaluation methods. Many evaluators have some knowledge of social science methodology but they rely on their own experience to learn about the challenges of working in conflict. Practitioners found their lack of training put them at a disadvantage for planning and contributing to their own evaluation processes.

Innovative Approaches to Conflict Resolution Evaluation

There are several pioneers within the field who are developing innovative ways to address some of the shortfalls encountered when applying current evaluation models and frameworks to the conflict resolution context. Some new ideas involve the adaptation of existing models to meet the specific need of conflict resolution interventions, others focus on the establishment of field-wide criteria, while others are moving away from pre-established models altogether and using context-adaptable guidelines.

Questions and Challenges

If the field seeks to improve its ability to deliver meaningful evaluation results, a number of questions and challenges need to be addressed. Some of these include:

- The Challenge of Conflict Context: How can the ongoing changes in the context in which an intervention is operating be reflected in the evaluation process?

- Freedom to Acknowledge Failure: Is there an affirmative culture in conflict resolution whereby it is unacceptable to admit that interventions did not go as well as intended? How can the field address this challenge, particular in light of concerns over continued funding and legitimacy?

- Positive and Negative Unintended Effects: If unintended effects of an intervention are found during the evaluation process, how should they be balanced or weighed against the intended effects?

- Macroevaluation: Do individual interventions on the ground synergise to contribute to the development of a peaceful society? If so, how does this process occur?

- Concept of Success: There is no clear definition of what constitutes 'success' in conflict resolution, so how do we know when an intervention has been successful?

Conclusion

As the discipline of conflict resolution matures, the need for the field to be able to understand, articulate, measure and compare will become increasingly important. New tools need to be designed, disseminated within the field, tested and refined. If those directly engaged in the work do not take up the challenge of finding methods and approaches that are suited to the unique challenges of conflict resolution, other, less useful methods will be imposed by those requiring evidence of the effectiveness of this work. Whether evaluation is tailored to meet the needs of conflict resolution or conflict resolution is tailored to meet the needs of evaluation remains to be seen - and is ultimately the choice of those engaged in the field.

SECTION 1:
INTRODUCTION

With over 50 years experience, the field of conflict resolution has reached a new stage in its evolution. No longer is this work in its infancy, with every project a relative experiment in social change. Paralleling the exponential growth of field agencies and academic programs, public and governmental awareness of this segment of civil society has significantly increased. Despite this increase in activity, thinking and awareness, there are still 21 'internal major armed conflicts' (SIPRI Yearbook, 2002) raging at this time affecting over '31 million people' (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2001) around the world. Although most would agree our work in the field has advanced considerably, few would question the need for further improvement. The filling in of gaps in our current theory and practice could be dramatically assisted by a more thorough incorporation of evaluation as a learning tool in conflict resolution interventions.[1]

The need to improve our performance has been driven by a number of factors originating from different actors in this field, predominantly practitioners, funders/governments and participants/beneficiaries. Over the past five years, both practitioners and funders have actively pursued the development of lessons learned and best practice. Although some progress has been made, attempts to build consensus as to what constitutes best practice have encountered significant difficulties. Funders and donor governments are also demanding more systematic assessment of impact and quantification of results, not only to satisfy the financial arms of their institutions (i.e. the Treasury) but also to improve their own practice and analysis.

Moreover, heightened scrutiny through the popular press has driven the need to measure and articulate the impact of this work in order to gain and maintain legitimacy. This need, combined with perceived funder demand for visible impact, has resulted in pressure to produce positive and significant results. More fundamentally, our responsibility to the individuals in a conflict situation is further driving the need to improve our performance. Conflict resolution agencies should be held accountable to those who engage in their projects, with every effort made to continuously learn and improve our practice.

---

[1] The term 'conflict resolution intervention' is being used to encompass all forms of events, services, activities, or related functions that could fall within the broad and diverse set of conflict resolution projects and programmes, such as a training, mediation, Track II dialogue, youth exchange, report, or joint declaration.

The State of Conflict Resolution Evaluation

Unfortunately, evaluation theory specific to conflict resolution has not kept up with the demand, leaving the field comparatively lagging in this endeavour. As a result those engaged in peace work are seeking to meet the aforementioned needs with inadequate, and sometimes flawed, approaches and models. Aid, development and humanitarian assistance, conflict resolution's closest cousins, have actively pursued these issues, as evidenced by a wealth of literature and tested approaches.[2] Despite the existence of this work, it is commonly felt that many of these borrowed models do not correspond to the unique circumstances found in conflict situations.

In addition to the lack of approaches and models available, there are a series of difficulties that have plagued conflict resolution evaluation to date. Only a few are mentioned here for illustrative purposes. On the most practical level, the field lacks skills and expertise in pure or generic evaluation approaches. Without such experience it is difficult even to recognize the various methods and techniques that could be adapted for conflict resolution. Moreover, a lack of resources in terms of staff time and finances limits the average practitioner's ability to engage successfully in learning and to incorporate evaluation aspects into a project from its conception. Where evaluations exist, comparative attempts to draw lessons from them have been foiled by the inconsistent nature of methods, models and approaches. Disparities in the phase of the conflict when interventions are evaluated and differing conflict contexts have further inhibited learning and incorporation of findings.

The Project

This study is part of a pilot project[3] that seeks to examine the current state and utilisation of evaluation in conflict resolution projects. The goal of the study is to consolidate existing practice and resources to act as a basis for discussion, debate and the identification of next steps. The study aims to provide a structured representation of the realities, innovative approaches, and outstanding questions and challenges in conflict resolution evaluation. It also draws together the variant approaches and develops an Overarching Framework as a lens or tool for the field to utilise.

---

[2] For further information on this work see Appendix II.

[3] The pilot project was initiated based on the identified need for better conflict resolution projects and programme evaluation. The pilot had two phases, lasting a total of six months. The first phase systematically consolidated the realities of those in the field and of those who were attempting to solve those problems this issue has raised. The first phase resulted in this paper. The second phase began to address the questions and challenges identified in phase one through a select, international working group convened at INCORE. Appreciation is extended to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland for their support of this pilot project.

The pilot project focuses on interventions initiated in an attempt to build peace or resolve conflict and does not include conflict prevention in its remit. It is recognised that conflict resolution encompasses a wide range of project types, spanning from youth exchanges to Track II diplomacy. In fact this diversity creates its own challenge, which will be addressed later in the report. This report is not intended to add to the realms of academia. Rather, it is intended to help fill the gap between practice and theory and provide a launching pad for further thinking and discussion.

The project involved a number of data and information collecting measures. The first stage involved two full-time and one part-time researcher conducting an extensive web-based search and a comprehensive library review of conflict related evaluation sources for over two months. In the second stage, requests for information were sent to over 700 people by post[4] and through ten electronic list-serves,[5] as well as in the INCORE e-newsletter, which reaches over 450 people around the world. These calls asked for any of a range of materials, from completed evaluations to agency guidelines or handbooks on evaluation. As a result of the call, INCORE received a range of submissions, including thought pieces drafted in response, academic papers, articles, handbooks, website references and completed evaluations. Although INCORE received approximately 50 responses,[6] the authors did not feel this accurately reflected what was happening in the field as 68% of the responses did not offer information so much as reiterate how important this area was and the real need for further study. This feedback was indeed useful in that it reinforced extant assumptions but it did not assist in determining the state of play. The difficulty in accessing existing work on conflict resolution evaluation prompted the third stage: telephone and in-person interviews[7] with practitioners, evaluators and funders. Every effort was made to access a cross-section of local and international groups, and to discuss this issue with individuals holding primary responsibility for this activity. It should be noted that the interviews were not taped, and thus direct quotes have not been included in the text.

---

[4] A call for information was inserted in an international INCORE mailing and sent to approximately 700 researchers, academics, policy makers and practitioners in this field.

[5] A similar call for information was circulated internationally via both conflict specific and related listserves as well as through generic evaluation listserves such as the UK Evaluation Society. There were 6 conflict and related issue listserves used and a further 4 generic evaluation ones.

[6] The authors were unable to distinguish which responses came from the listserve circulation versus the posted call for information because the same email address was used in both and they were conducted simultaneously. It was not possible to assess the percentage response rate because the circulation numbers for many of the listserves are not public information. As multiple information-gathering methods were utilised in this project, the inability to generate statistics in this regard does not hamper the achievement of the project's aims.

[7] The project team conducted 30 interviews with funders, evaluators and practitioners. For full details of interviewees please see Appendix IV.

As with any pilot project, this one faced a set of constraints and limitations due to the short-term nature (6 months) of the project, limited staff and resources. One of the primary shortcomings was that the project team was not able to look beyond the field of conflict resolution to identify applicable models and approaches in related fields. It is theorised that significant amounts of relevant and adaptable material that could hasten the development of our own approaches and models are available but this avenue has not thus far been explored. Additionally, as the project aimed to be international in scope, it was not able to investigate rigorously the differences between local and international actors or between countries. Rather it sought to identify overarching trends, perspectives and realities for the field as a whole. As mentioned previously, the study omitted conflict prevention activities in an attempt to create an achievable focus for assessment. Furthermore, the study was limited to the resources, expertise and materials that were made available by those within the field. Although much useful information was gleaned from the stakeholder interviews, the project team agreed not to attribute comments to any interviewee directly but to make all references to the interviews generic. Appreciation is extended to all those who participated but the authors do recognise that they were unable to follow-up on all possible resources. As a result this study does not claim to be 'the comprehensive' inventory of evaluation with conflict resolution. Rather it is a first step in systematising this area.

Assumptions & Terms

Before moving forward to the results of the study, two important issues need to be addressed – the assumptions of the authors, and the use of terms and language. As the project progressed, it was recognised that the study was based on three primary assumptions. First: evaluation is the means to our desired end. In other words, if our desired end is the improvement of practice regardless of the impetus, then evaluation is the best means to achieve this. Second: the circumstances of conflict resolution interventions require a different and uniquely crafted evaluation model(s) and approach(es). Third: interventions are developed on the basis of information from a sincere needs assessment and an honest sense of responsibility to the participants. This omits the notion that some projects are driven by political need, stakeholder constraints or factors other than the direct needs of the beneficiaries.

The use of terms and language[8] is the second important issue to be addressed. As is widely acknowledged, there are no agreed universal definitions for the majority of terms in this field. It would appear that also holds true for discussion on the evaluation of conflict resolution. This causes problems for evaluation as it makes achieving both clarity and comparison difficult. There continues to be confusion about the use of terms, with several expressions having multiple meanings and being used interchangeably in the literature. The confusion appeared to be greatest with the term 'impact assessment',

---

[8] Additional terms and definitions may be found in Appendix IV: Working Glossary.

the definition/meaning of which seems to be dominated by the work on Peace and Conflict Impact Assessments (PCIA).[9] For the purpose of this report however, the authors have chosen to use the phrase 'impact evaluation', which refers to the measurement of the impact of an intervention post-facto.

Additionally, it is important to understand the distinction between the terms 'outputs', 'outcomes' and 'impacts'. An 'output' is an immediate, tangible result of an intervention that is necessary to achieve the objectives. For instance, an output of a Track II diplomacy initiative could be the number of leaders it had in attendance. An 'outcome' on the other hand is the short-term result of a programme or project that is partially generated by the outputs. Using the same example, an outcome of this initiative could be a formal set of recommendations endorsed by all participants from both sides. Finally, 'impact' is the overall or long-term programme effects or changes in a situation.[10] The term 'methods' in this study refers to the means used to conduct the evaluation, such as case studies or surveys.

---

[9] See Appendix II for further PCIA resources.

[10] The concepts of outputs, outcomes and impacts will be explored in more detail in Section 4: Overarching Framework.

SECTION 2:
REALITIES IN THE FIELD

Although evaluation has become a 'hot topic' of conversation in the field of conflict resolution, these discussions need to be grounded in the realities of how evaluation is currently being undertaken in the field. Through a series of interviews with practitioners, evaluators and funders, four main areas of discussion emerged: the reasons why evaluations are undertaken; how evaluations are conducted; stakeholders involved in the evaluation process; and the inhibitors to evaluation. This information is taken from a small sample of individuals who are currently engaged in conflict resolution work.

Why are evaluations conducted?

Motivations and Purpose

Understanding why practitioners and evaluators undertake evaluation provides a key to understanding what information they expect to receive through participation in the process. On the one hand, knowing what knowledge is sought can help with tailoring the evaluation in the most effective and useful way possible. On the other hand, when motivations - and thus expectations - of the process differ, friction can occur between contributing stakeholders.

Practitioners highlighted two main motivations for undertaking evaluations. All interviewees mentioned evaluation as a critical tool for the development of their own work. They expressed a desire to know if their initial strategy was working well and if they were meeting the needs of the community. As one respondent explained, she wanted to know if they were 'scratching where it itches'. There was also interest in learning what could be done better and highlighting future areas for programme development. When asked specifically why evaluations were undertaken, three-quarters of the practitioners also indicated that it was part of their current funding requirements and provided the basis for seeking continued or future funding. However, all of the practitioners mentioned the link between the performing evaluation activities and funding requirements at some point during the interview.

A majority of funders and evaluators expressed the view that the primary purpose of most evaluations is a spending review for allocated funds. The emphasis, highlighted particularly by the evaluators, tended to be more on the efficiency of the organisation than on project outcomes and impacts. As the Northern Ireland Voluntary Activity Unit stated, 'The primary focus of evaluation is on issues of accountability. The findings and outcomes of evaluation should, therefore, assist [government] Departments in determining the future nature and extent of the organisation's funding.' (1996:4)

Funders highlighted their strategic plans, which include priorities, themes and targets for their work. The evaluations they commission are used to find out if they meeting the targets and achieving the goals laid out in their strategic plans. The priorities for evaluation were pilot projects or new programmes, then priority thematic areas, then projects whose outcome had the potential to influence policy, and finally projects that had not been evaluated for some time.

Evaluation as a Learning Tool

The trend toward sharing information horizontally (between agencies) and vertically (from the grassroots to the funder and policy level) between people involved in peace work has become increasingly apparent. Recent examples, such as the work of the Reflecting Peace Practice Project[11] and the European Platform's 'Towards Better Peacebuilding Practice' conference[12] have reflected a growing desire to pool resources and learn from one another.

It was significant that practitioners and evaluators concentrated on the importance of learning from the specific findings and recommendations made in each evaluation. The methods used to share this information varied depending on context and agency preference. However, some of the interviewees also commented that the competition for resources within the field is a disincentive to openly sharing results. Most practitioners indicated that reports are compiled and shared within their organisations. Particularly if the evaluation was carried out mid-project, many of the implementation teams also put aside time to discuss recommendations and possible changes to the way in which the intervention was delivered. A few of the practitioners also mentioned that they shared these finding with the clients or recipients of their services. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, only one practitioner mentioned sharing information with other agencies.

Funders concentrated more on compiling findings and creating lessons learned to be shared publicly. Many of the funders make completed evaluations available to the general public, either by distributing printed copies or by making evaluation reports available on-line. Four of the funders also mentioned methods such as seminars, workshops, conferences and publications used to disseminate research and lessons learned.

---

[11] The Reflecting on Peace Practice Project is an initiative of the Collaborative for Development Action. It seeks to understand and improve the effectiveness of efforts by international agencies to support peace efforts in areas of violent conflict. The project includes a systematic comparison and analysis of case-studies and practitioner consultations.

[12] The international conference 'Towards Better Peace Building Practice', held October 24-26, 2001, involved discussions, working groups, plenary sessions and debates with over 250 people.

Learning is not only applicable to the process and outcomes of interventions in the field; evaluation results can also be used to benefit other aspects of peace work. A few practitioners and funders mentioned the use of evaluation findings for influencing public policy. For example, one practitioner used evaluation results as part of a lobby effort to encourage the government to include diversity education as part of the national school curriculum.

How are evaluations conducted?

General methodology

Measuring intangible changes in areas such as attitudes and perceptions was a frustrating and elusive challenge for all stakeholders. Efforts varied widely; some practitioners indicated that they did not even attempt it because they felt they did not have the tools, resources and knowledge to measure these changes transparently. However, many of the evaluators explored creative methods to show that change had (or had not) occurred as a result of the intervention they were evaluating. In concurrence with the findings of Spencer (1998), an analysis of the evaluations themselves, whether of individual projects or clusters of interventions, demonstrates a broad range of approaches, criteria, and foci. Although most evaluations provide a basic description of the project or projects under study, an analysis of what occurred and recommendations for future action, the breadth and rigour of the work varied greatly.

All evaluators used standard social science data-collection methodology. Quantitative measurements, such as surveys and questionnaires, provided numerical data on factors such as participant satisfaction and pre/post intervention change. Quantitative information is predominantly used to calculate intervention outputs[13] and has been the most traditional results from monitoring and evaluation processes. Qualitative methods, such as interviews, focus groups, case studies and storytelling have increasingly been included by evaluators as an important aspect of understanding the nuances of conflict resolution work. All evaluators stressed the importance of using a combination of methods to obtain useful and reliable results. Single-method evaluations were not considered adequate for capturing the intensity and complexity of peace work.

Using these methods as their tools, evaluators mentioned a number of different strategies employed to measure change:

- Utilising case studies that provide a detailed explanation and analysis of one experience of change to illustrate a broader phenomenon,

---

[13] An 'output' is the immediate, tangible and frequently quantifiable results of the activities conducted as part of an intervention.

- Interviewing a broad range of local people not directly involved with the project but who may have an impression of the project and its effects. This can include other members of the community, political and religious leaders, business people and organisations working in the same area,

- Breaking down an intervention into its component parts, so that manageable sections can be analysed and links can be established between outcomes and impacts,

- Hypothesising about the types of indicators that would likely be seen if the project had achieved the desired effect. The evaluator then sees if these indicators arise in open-ended interviews, focus groups and questionnaires,

- Using quantitative information of behavioural changes, such as reduced crime rates, return of refugees or participation in peace events, as an indication of attitudinal or perceptual changes.

One of the most fundamental discrepancies between practitioners and funders came out in their unit of analysis for conducting evaluations. Practitioners used individual project evaluations as their unit of analysis, whereas funders generally spoke about cluster evaluations,[14] conducted either at the countrywide level or based on a thematic area of interest. This operationally different approach to evaluation could explain many of the frustrations and misunderstandings between stakeholders. When practitioners engage in an evaluation process there appears to be an expectation that they will receive detailed feedback and recommendations referring specifically to their work. However, when funders are commissioning evaluations, many interventions are examined simultaneously and the findings and recommendations are based on broad trends, which are not usually helpful at the field level. Particularly when expectations are unclear, practitioners who have invested time and energy to contribute to an evaluation process may be very frustrated to receive no useable information in return. Conversely, funders have their own set of goals against which their progress must be measured; detailed assessments of hundreds of individual interventions is rarely the most efficient way to indicate achievement to their bosses, boards of directors, and the financially contributing public. Trends and cumulative assessments are the most accessible way to show how a government funder or a foundation has met their mandate. Reducing frustration for both funders and practitioners will require a mutual recognition of the information needed from the investment in evaluation and creative approaches so that both sets of needs can be met through the same process.

---

[14] A 'cluster evaluation' is the evaluation of a set of interventions usually associated by geographic area or thematic focus.

Most of the practitioners and funders expressed frustration with the standard formula on which most conflict resolution interventions are initiated. In concurrence with findings by Lederach (1997) and Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa (1999), most current evaluation methodologies use a project-approach, which assumes the intervention is discrete, measurable and will lead to concrete outcomes in a set period of time. However, peacework tends to involve building relationships, trust and structures that do not easily respond to pre-established and time-limited categories. Most interviewees felt that the evaluation approaches used failed to capture many of the significant factors of working on conflict.

Monitoring and Report Writing

Monitoring captures the unfolding process of delivering an intervention. This includes checking that the implementation is proceeding according to the original plan, that the premises on which it was planned correspond to reality, that the strategies adopted are leading to the desired results and that the original objectives are still relevant in a changing environment (Wake, 2002).

More than three-quarters of practitioners have their own 'internal evaluation process', which essentially fulfils the criteria of monitoring activities. On an ongoing basis they examine how their programmes are operating, whether they are meeting the needs of their clients and how they can improve their practice. Much of this monitoring is related to process questions, such as how courses are delivered and the communication between the organisation and the participant. Practitioners indicated that most formal monitoring reports were sent directly to funders, with information based on timetables for goal achievement and budgetary checks and balances.

Only one of the evaluators indicated active involvement in the monitoring process. His agency had developed a monitoring programme whereby each project provided a monthly summary highlighting what they had planned to achieve, what had been achieved, and what was planned for the next month.

Timing of the Evaluation

Discrepancy exists between belief and reality, as virtually all interviewees believed that evaluation should be included as a fundamental part of the project cycle. However, many admitted that evaluation is currently introduced only when concrete results are required for funding or transparency purposes. The evaluators highlighted that the quality of their work would increase if evaluation were incorporated when planning the intervention. The evaluation process would be less onerous and overwhelming for stakeholders, and data could be collected at the outset of the work, thereby providing a baseline for comparing mid-project and final results. Reflecting a slowly evolving reality, one funder stated that evaluation is now being required as part of all project proposals and one practitioner mentioned that her organisation is now including additional resources for the evaluation phase of all projects as part of their funding proposals.

A few of the evaluators commented that they are usually commissioned to perform a detailed evaluation of an intervention either after a phase of work has been completed or at the conclusion of a cycle of funding. Information from funders and evaluators indicated that this varied from approximately two to five year intervals.

Although all stakeholders expressed interest in the long-term effects of the interventions, none of the interviewees indicated that they were involved in long-term impact evaluations of their projects. Some practitioners stated that they did follow-up surveys with participants at six, twelve or eighteen month intervals after project completion. However, none of these were as comprehensive or in-depth as the initial evaluation conducted at the end of the project.

Evaluation Training

Opportunities exist for practitioners and evaluators to receive evaluation training in the humanitarian and development fields. Experienced agencies like ALNAP and INTRAC provide specific courses for improving skills in monitoring and evaluation techniques. However, no comparable training opportunities focusing specifically on the evaluation of conflict resolution and peacebuilding programmes are offered.

Many practitioners indicated that they have very little or no formalised training in social science methodology or basic evaluation techniques. It would appear that this restricts practitioners' ability to plan and contribute to their own evaluation processes. This could be one of the reasons that the evaluation process generates so much frustration and is so intimidating to practitioners.

None of the evaluators indicated any formal training in evaluation. Although some mentioned a background in social science methodology, most developed their skills 'as they went along'. However, this group of interviewees demonstrated extensive experience in the non-profit sector and in conflict resolution work; many of them referred to this experience as being more important than formal evaluation training.

Stakeholders

Who conducts the evaluation?

All of the major evaluations mentioned by practitioners involved the use of external evaluators. More than half of the funders and half of the practitioners indicated an explicit preference for contracting evaluation work to external consultants, stating that they are less partial, unbiased, and generally accepted by stakeholders as legitimate and transparent. However, more than a third of practitioners also expressed the desire to explore alternative methods, such as participatory evaluation, self-evaluation or peer review, yet felt frustrated that they had neither the skills nor the resources to pursue them.

Concerns with the process of selecting the external evaluator or evaluation team were raised by a third of all interviewees. Evaluators and funders working specifically in the field of conflict resolution were particularly concerned that evaluators should be selected not just on the basis of their evaluation skills, but also on their understanding of the non-profit sector and their field of expertise (either geographic or thematic, depending on the case). One evaluator and a few practitioners indicated the benefits of hiring local people to become involved in data collection and evaluation.

Stakeholder Relationships

Although the stakeholders interviewed for this study were practitioners, evaluators and funders, any conflict resolution process includes a broader array of actors, such as the participants involved in the intervention and the community in which the intervention takes place. The relationships between all of these actors are part of the conflict resolution process and are thus also part of the evaluation.

Many interviewees characterised the relationship between the funder and the practitioner as unbalanced, with the former dictating the allocation of resources necessary for the functioning of the latter. A number of evaluators commented that the funders tended to drive the evaluations in which they were involved by setting the terms of reference, the criteria for review and the time-line. The authors feel that this power relationship may be the cause of many of the frustrations expressed by practitioners about the evaluation process. One evaluator commented that the funder-practitioner relationship would need to become more collaborative if future evaluations hope to capture the complex nature of conflict resolution work and meet the needs of multiple stakeholders.

Two-thirds of the funders emphasised that because they work in small departments with very few staff to manage a large complement of funded projects, establishing relationships with all project practitioners is unrealistic. In some cases, the ratio of evaluation staff to projects was 1:100. Further, one of the evaluators noted that most desk officers, the representative of funding agencies charged with selecting grant recipients and monitoring their progress, remain in their posts for only two to five years. As a result, few officers see the full lifecycle of the projects they fund. Practitioners invest time and energy to educate a new desk officer about their work and are frequently frustrated when they need to restart the process to justify continued funding with a new representative. This evaluator remarked that although many of the funding agencies retain a collective understanding of the context of the work, individual desk officers do not.

Overall, evaluators and practitioners also commented that the relationship with funders varied. Private foundations tended to be preferred to government agencies, as foundations usually fund a narrower cluster of projects, often grouped by a thematic

focus. It was felt that their employees have more expertise and a better understanding of the challenges experienced by their grant-recipients. Additionally, the burden for accountability and transparency can be less onerous for private foundations than for public institutions, which is reflected in a more flexible approach to evaluation.

Most of the evaluators expressed frustration, and in some cases disillusionment, with their role in the evaluation process. A number of evaluators mentioned that the funders for whom they had worked were not interested in understanding the projects but concentrated on the delivery of a bottom-line figure from which to make future funding decisions. At the same time, though, more than half of the evaluators also felt that they were unable to establish a trust-based relationship with the practitioners that would enable them to make the evaluation truly helpful to those implementing the interventions.

Conversely, practitioners expressed frustration with evaluators who did not take the time to appreciate the context or engage with their project before writing the evaluation report and making recommendations. However, in cases where evaluators had invested time and shown genuine interest in the intervention, practitioners were pleased with the outcome and praised the evaluator's work.

The ability to control how information gathered during the evaluation process is used and interpreted is another way in which stakeholders can have power over one another. More than half of the evaluators highlighted the importance of determining who owns any research data acquired, as well as the final report and recommendations that are made at the end of the evaluation process. Evaluators felt a professional responsibility to share information with interviewees about who will see their interview notes, who determines whether the final report will be published and, if so, where and who can use the findings in the future. Knowing who controls the evaluation products will determine the information stakeholders are willing to provide to the evaluator.

All of the evaluators stressed the importance of speaking directly with the participants in the intervention, and with other stakeholders who could be directly affected by its outcomes. Two of the evaluators commented that participants are usually much more knowledgeable and in-tune with the project than is commonly recognised. One practitioner stated that involving participants in the evaluation process enhanced the relationship between the participant and the implementing agency by showing the participant that their opinion was valued. However, another practitioner cautioned that participants invest a lot of time, energy and resources into projects addressing conflict resolution themes and this investment has sometimes made them less critical of the results. This agency found that longer-term evaluations allowed participants to put the intervention into the context of their daily lives, which served as a better indicator of its usefulness.

Inhibitors to Evaluation

Virtually all practitioners, evaluators and funders cited a lack of resources as the main challenge to performing evaluations. For practitioners this often meant that evaluation was not considered a priority compared with core programming work. Many funders raised the question of cost-effectiveness related to evaluation. A balance is needed between the financial investment in the evaluation process and the potential information that would be gained. In many cases a large, comprehensive evaluation of each project supported was not financially feasible or strategically useful. For evaluators, the challenge constantly acknowledged was that of finding a balance between uncovering the information that would be most useful to the stakeholders, while still working within the prescribed time, access and funding constraints.

Another commonly stated inhibitor for practitioners was a lack of knowledge about conflict-sensitive tools and methodologies for evaluation. All practitioners expressed a desire to be able to track changes in relationships, attitudes and behaviours over a longer-term period but were frustrated by their inability to do so within current evaluation frameworks and timelines. This comment fitted with the information from funders; none of the government agencies interviewed mentioned any special provisions for the evaluation of their conflict resolution activities. Although some of the foundations indicated that they were working on developing new evaluation tools and many of the evaluators have tried flexible strategies that can be tailored to conflict situations, no resources are widely available that address the unique challenges of evaluating work on conflict.

Evaluators introduced two additional inhibitors to the evaluation process that were not mentioned by either practitioners or funders. First, virtually all evaluators indicated that part of their function usually involves clarifying which goals and objectives the intervention is trying to achieve before they are able to begin the evaluation process. General statements made in funding proposals, such as 'improving inter-community relations' or 'promoting an atmosphere of peaceful interaction' need to be put into a currency that is meaningful to all stakeholders and can be measured through the evaluation process. Many evaluators also found discrepancies between the original funding proposal and what was actually being done in the field. Although they indicated that the difference was typically an adaptation to the conflict situation and reflected good judgment on the part of the practitioners, it was necessary to re-examine the steps of the project to determine what outcome was sought and if it had been achieved. Clarifying the intervention's goals took valuable time and resources and reflected a difficulty for the evaluator in judging whether the intervention was successful by its own standards.

Second, more than half of the evaluators raised a concern about incorporating sensitivity to cultural norms into their work. This included the difficulty of accounting for external factors that may influence the programme outcomes, questions of language and local custom, and acquiring support for the evaluation process from project staff or clients.

SECTION 3:
INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO CRE

A few practitioners, evaluators and funders are developing innovative ways to address some of the shortfalls encountered when applying current models and frameworks to the conflict resolution context. Each new adaptation stretches the state of the field of CRE in new directions and provides insight into possible solutions to the questions and challenges in the field. Some of these models and approaches are currently used by a small segment of stakeholders while others are still in the development and field-testing phase. As an illustration of these developments, short descriptions of a few of these innovative approaches have been included.[15]

The range of approaches in this section is a reflection of the newly emerging views within the field of the best way to create conflict-specific tools and methods. The first three approaches are models that provide a traditional project-based evaluation tool; each are adapted to fit various challenges (defining success, learning from practice and stakeholder power-dynamics respectively) of evaluating conflict resolution. The fourth approach is also suited to evaluate individual interventions but moves away from the pre-established model. Instead it establishes a set of conflict-sensitive guidelines to provide relatively open-ended direction when undertaking an evaluation. The final approach examines the bigger picture by exploring the development of specific criteria that can be used across all conflict resolution interventions to measure the micro-level contribution to macro-level change.

Action Evaluation Model

Action Evaluation, a model developed by Dr Jay Rothman, uses evaluation as a bridge between conflict resolution research and practice. An external evaluator works with stakeholder groups throughout the intervention to create a context-specific process of guided goal setting. Participants in an Action Evaluation collaborate to set internally-defined criteria for success. Action plans are then crafted from participant data and are implemented using the internally determined definitions of success as guidelines for a process of reflection, learning and refinement throughout the life of the project.

---

[15] This is not an exhaustive list or a detailed explanation of different models, but rather a flavour of some of the possibilities emerging in the field. Inclusion in this section does not indicate promotion or support by the authors.

This process has three steps (Rothman, 1997):

Step 1: Individual members of each stakeholder group involved in the intervention are asked by the action evaluator to answer three questions:

What are their goals?
Why do they care about these goals?
How could they best be accomplished?

This information provides a baseline that shows the diverse range of goals and objectives held by the participants at the start of the intervention.

Step 2: The various intervention goals and objectives are presented back to the stakeholders. Participants engage in value discussions regarding the 'why' portions of their data, which fosters a sense of common purpose and commitment, before moving on to talk about the content of their shared and contrasting goals. This process provides an opportunity for points of similarity, difference and contrast to be communicated and understood. The intention is to make participants reflect on, and be aware of, the stated aims of the project so that any changes can be mapped, recorded and discussed.

Step 3: Finally, throughout the intervention, Action Evaluation continues to articulate how the criteria for success evolve. This allows the intervention to change over time as it adapts to the dynamics of the conflict. Continuous improvement is the central concept around which this goal-evolution takes place. As action plan implementation occurs, learning is the ultimate tool, guiding the refinement of actions and projected benefits in accordance with the core values of the project participants.

According to Rothman and Friedman (2001), this process is particularly useful for grassroots conflict resolution and peacebuilding interventions that need to be able to adapt to changes in context and changes in the goals and interests of their stakeholders. It is particularly well suited to these types of conflicts because it allows for grassroots input into the goals of the project and is ultimately guided more by participants' core values than by any external objective or resource. The model has been field-tested in approximately twenty projects and continues to be adapted and refined.

The Learning Model for Peace Evaluation

The National Council of Churches Kenya and the Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa have developed a model for evaluating their peace interventions that emphasises the learning

process. The model is broken into six steps, each providing questions to help the practitioner reflect on different aspects of the intervention. As can be seen in the diagram below, the steps do not have to be followed in a strictly linear progression. The learning gained by the results of one evaluation feed back into the process of selecting activities and indicators for future interventions (Sumbeiywo, 2001).
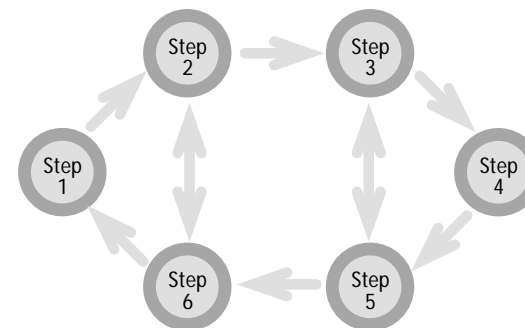
Each step consists of a series of questions for the practitioner to ask at the conclusion of the intervention:

Step 1: What work was done and what were its objectives?

Step 2: What activities were undertaken and how did they carry out the intervention's objectives?

Step 3: Why was this type of work chosen? What theories or assumptions underlie that decision?

Step 4: What types of indicators (of both process and outcome) can be used to see the change that the work has affected?

Step 5: What worked and what did not work with the project? Is the change that is seen in Step 4 understood? What can be learned from this process? How will this affect the type of work chosen in the future?

Step 6: How can the work be adapted or improved to achieve better results? What kinds of new initiatives does this work lead to?

This model stresses that information learned through an evaluation is only useful if the practitioner understands how and why the result was reached. This understanding requires an examination of the rationale behind the practitioner's choice of intervention and whether the assumptions on which this choice was based are accurate. Equally important, though, is the opportunity to be able then to feed this learning back into the process of designing and delivering conflict resolution programmes.

Testing the theories of change on which conflict resolution activities are selected and implemented needs to become a part of evaluation practice. Although it is important to improve the way in which interventions are carried out, the field also needs to examine the assumptions and the beliefs on which the work is based. This provides the opportunity to expand accurate theories and disregard those that have proved flawed. This model offers a foundation for testing theories of change through work being conducted in the field.

Community Evaluation Northern Ireland (CENI) Evaluation Template[16]

This model represents an innovative approach to evaluation in that it attempts to change the relationships between the stakeholders involved in the evaluation process. The template emphasises that the entire process of setting up the intervention, establishing goals and determining criteria of success should be a negotiated transaction from which both partners receive benefit (Morrissey, *et al.*, 2001).

---
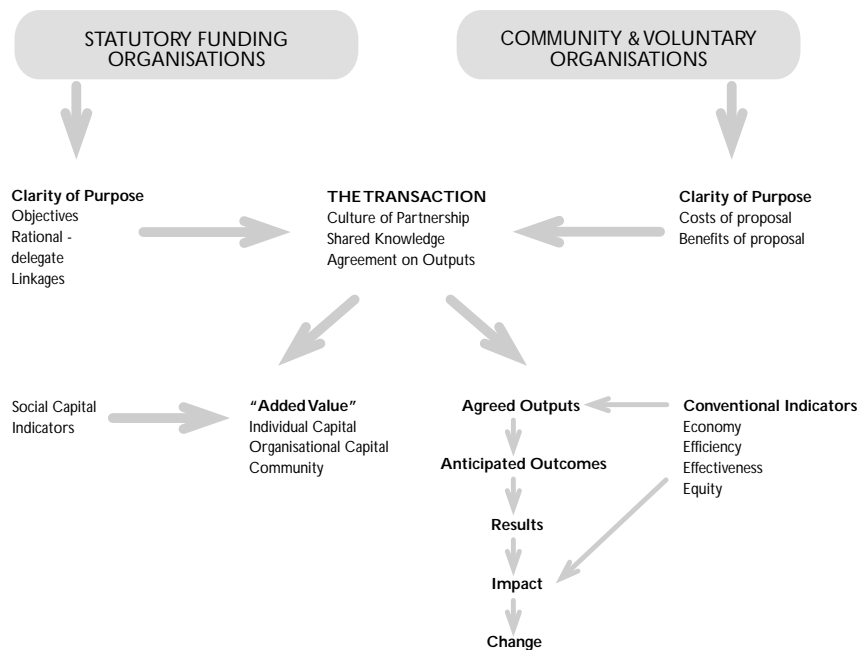
[16] For a more detailed explanation of the model, see Morrissey, Mike, McGinn, Pat and McDonnell, Brendan (2001) *Summary of Interim Report on Research into Evaluating Community-Based and Voluntary Activity in Northern Ireland.* Belfast: Community Evaluation Northern Ireland.

To challenge the power dynamics associated with the traditional funder-dominated model of evaluation, CENI introduced the concept that work done by community and voluntary organisations has 'added-value' beyond the direct intervention outputs. This theory is based on the belief that the transaction between funding agencies and implementing agencies goes beyond the financial. Community and voluntary organisations bring with them the added value of 'social capital', which is defined as 'features of social organization, such as networks, norms and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (Putnam, 1993, p.36 in Morrissey *et al.*, 2001, p.9). Thus, community and voluntary organisations provide more than a service through their work; they are also building relationships, promoting trust and empowering individuals. These are difficult to calculate as project outputs but are important parts of evaluating conflict resolution and peacebuilding interventions.

CENI's model is currently being field-tested with a number of different organisations. However, it has already provided stakeholders with new ways of exploring the power dynamics within the evaluation process.

Flexible External Evaluation Approach

It is worth considering that the way forward for CRE may not be through pre-established models. Many external evaluators have indicated that they avoid evaluation models and are choosing instead to use a set of guidelines that allows for the adaptation of evaluation practice to fit the situation. Since the external evaluator is frequently asked to enter a situation about which they have relatively little prior knowledge, the use of guidelines allows the flexibility to respond to the realities on the ground. Although each evaluator has his/her own approach, some similar strategies have emerged (Abdalla, 2002; Carstarphen, 2002):

- Capture both contextual level and specific (project) level information,

- Use a variety of data collection methods,

- Interact with a broad audience (do not limit the interaction to programme participants - it needs to be extended to other members of the community, government officials, local experts, etc.),

- Whenever possible, observe actual events as they occur,

- Involve stakeholders in the design of the evaluation process,

- Work with local people to refine the methodology or use local people to perform data collection to assist with the cultural dimensions of evaluation design and ensure a greater accuracy of results.

It may be that the variety of intervention types that fall under the heading of conflict resolution, coupled with the need to incorporate broad contextual factors, will lead CRE away from model-based approaches to evaluation. The evaluators who contributed to these guidelines all have extensive experience in both conflict resolution work and in evaluation, and have found the use of guidelines to be the most effective way to achieve results that were useful to funders, practitioners and participants. Guidelines also provided them with the means to address practical concerns such as the need to look for unintended impacts, a way to reflect the changing context in their assessment, and a method to identify intangible change.

Reflecting on Peace Practice Effectiveness Criteria

One of the challenges faced in conflict resolution is determining if interventions have been effective not only within their own sphere but also in contributing to the goal of a larger 'peace'. The Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) Project, an international collaboration of agencies seeking to gather experience from their recent conflict-focused programmes, examined whether criteria could be established that would indicate an intervention's impact on the progress towards peace writ-large.[17] By examining a wide variety of case studies and conducting multiple feedback workshops around the world, a set of tentative criteria have emerged.

These criteria seek to measure the likelihood that programmatic efforts will lead to significant progress towards the broader peace. Unlike quantitative indicators, they do not measure how many people have been engaged in peace activities but rather the quality of the engagement as it relates to achieving peace writ-large.

Still a work in progress, peace programmes appear to be more effective, i.e. able to make an impact on peace writ-large, according to RPP, if:

1. **The effort is marked by participants' sustained engagement over time.** The involvement of people is not one-off and is sustained in the face of difficulty or even threats and overt pressure to discontinue.

2. **The effort has a linking dynamic.** It links upwards (to bring in people with existing influence on the political process or support new alternative leaders) or downwards (to bring in larger numbers of people and build public support at the grassroots level). It links key people to more people or more people to key people.

3. **The effort does something substantive about root and proximate causes of the conflict.** It does not represent simply talking about peace but also seeks and finds solutions to the key problems driving the conflict.

4. **The effort is geared towards creating institutional solutions.** It is not sustained only by ephemeral personal relationships or *ad hoc* initiatives but is institutionalized and enduring.

5. **The effort causes people to respond differently (from before) in relation to conflict.** This can involve increasing people's ability to resist manipulation or to undertake proactive efforts. This can occur through increased skills for analyzing, managing and responding to conflict or changed values and attitudes.
(RPP, 2001: no page)

The information gathered by RPP suggests that these criteria are additive - that is, the more of these criteria a project meets, the more effective the contribution will be.

---

[17] The term 'peace writ-large' refers to 'peace in the big picture', or the overall situation in the country.

SECTION 4:
AN OVERARCHING FRAMEWORK FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION EVALUATION

Whilst reviewing the current theory and practice in conflict resolution evaluation, it became apparent that evaluation is beginning to be used to inform the field's activities. However, what was not evident was a broad understanding of what evaluation could offer organisations in terms of learning and enhancing practice. Consequently this section attempts to integrate existing evaluation applications and articulate their relevance through an overarching framework.[18] In essence it is a structured look at the different aspects of an intervention that a conflict resolution evaluation can seek to assess. Its purpose is to offer stakeholders an instrument through which to organise their thinking and constitute the aims, objectives and terms of new evaluations.

Knowledge gaps and lack of precision in language and application still exist in the thinking on these issues. In many areas, there is little in the way of definition or evidence, but hints can be found in a smattering of conducted evaluations or the rare article of first thoughts on an issue. For the sake of clarity and ease of comprehension, where necessary and possible, these gaps have been bridged within the framework. It is recognised that there is significant thinking yet to be done as at times attempting to apply a structured and ordered approach actually raised more questions and challenges than clarity.

It is important to clarify what the framework is not. It is not a new model or method to be used when implementing an evaluation. Nor is it an attempt to create a generic set of criteria to evaluate all conflict resolution interventions. It is hoped that it will be used to establish a basis for discussion and a platform for future research in this area, which will be a catalyst for others to refine and evolve.

Overarching Framework Description

The framework is structured around three thematic areas, each of which have an essential question to guide thinking. Goals and Assumptions: Why and how is the agency conducting this particular intervention? Process Accountability: How was the intervention operationalised? Range of Results: What were the short and long term results of the intervention? Each thematic area has been broken into three specific

---

[18] This framework is intended for use primarily when considering evaluations of individual interventions. Consequently, elements may not be appropriate or relevant when considering cluster, multi-programme or multi-donor evaluations.

aspects of an intervention that the evaluation can seek to assess or understand to a greater extent. Within each aspect, questions have been included to provide greater clarity as to their practical application. These questions are illustrative and the aspect should not be considered restricted to their use only. The potential benefits of each theme or aspect to the field, to the organisation or to the intervention are also raised.

Overarching Framework

Goals and Assumptions:
Why and how is the agency conducting this particular intervention?
- Appropriateness Consideration
- Theoretical Analysis
- Strategic Review

Process Accountability:
How was the intervention operationalised?
- Management and Administration
- Cost-Accountability
- Process Appraisal

Range of Results:
What were the short and long term results of the intervention?
- Outputs
- Outcomes
- Impacts

The distinction between aspects is not as tidy as the framework would suggest. They are not mutually exclusive and combinations of aspects are normally required to obtain meaningful results. The selection of aspect(s) will depend on the purpose of the evaluation, amount of resources (time, finances, personnel) and when in the intervention plan evaluation is considered. That said, for purposes of understanding the different potentials of evaluation the authors felt distinctive categories were a useful exercise.

As the framework took shape it became increasingly apparent that there was a need for appropriate and functional language when discussing evaluations in a practical sense. In this context, two concepts have been expanded to provide typologies by which one can discuss ideas essential to the evaluation of conflict interventions. The first addresses *what* an intervention is seeking to influence, called the Focus of Change, while the

second considers *who* an intervention is targeting, entitled Tiers of Influence. Both concepts overlay the framework in that they apply to most, if not all aspects, in some respect. Moreover the concepts are interrelated in that each intervention seeks to enact a change in someone (who) in some way (what).

THEME #1. Goals and Assumptions:
Why and How is the Agency Conducting this type of Intervention?

This theme considers the utilisation of conflict analysis in intervention planning and the theoretical and ideological basis of an organisation's intervention strategy. The phrase 'intervention strategy' reflects two issues - the type of intervention the organisation has selected (mediation, Track II dialogues, youth exchanges or single identity work) and its subsequent design and development. The theme has three aspects: *Appropriateness Consideration, Theoretical Analysis* and *Strategic Review*.[19] In the first two aspects, the term 'why' is considered from an achievement of objectives point of view, whereas the third aspect, Strategic Review, considers 'why' more from the perspective of organisational motivation.

Aspect 1: *Appropriateness Consideration*

This aspect addresses the connection between conflict analysis and the resulting intervention strategy. It considers whether the intervention strategy was the most appropriate for the situation in terms of need, use, benefits to participants or change created. It also asks if the intervention strategy is based upon the conflict analysis and if it reflects an understanding of the critical leverage points for change in this context. There are two facets to this aspect; is the intervention contributing in the most significant way possible and were the activities selected within the intervention the most appropriate?

1. Is the intervention contributing in the most significant way possible?

Here the following questions could be utilised:

i.) Was a quality (realistic, comprehensive, culturally sensitive, rigorous, etc.) conflict analysis conducted?

ii.) Were there direct linkages between the intervention strategy and this analysis?

iii.) To what degree were critical leverage points identified and incorporated into the intervention strategy?

iv.) Are there other intervention strategies that could have contributed in a more significant manner?

This facet of the Appropriateness aspect becomes very important when an intervention 'successfully' meets its objectives in terms of outputs and even outcomes but seems to show minimal impact on the overall situation. Although these interventions may be outstanding in reaching their immediate goals, they take up resources and occupy territory either physically or conceptually that others may have utilised in a more effective[20] manner. In terms of objective achievement the intervention may be a success but it is filling up limited space and therefore actually detracts from the overarching goal of peace. This scenario does not include those interventions that are appropriate to the context but due to factors outside of the organisation's control are unable to implement the intervention in such as way that impact can be assured.

2. Were the activities selected within the intervention the most appropriate?

Questions here could be:

i.) Were the activities selected based on the conflict analysis?

ii.) Were the affected community/individuals consulted?

iii.) Were multiple options considered using standardised criteria?

iv.) Were the activities monitored and re-aligned if and when necessary?

A simplistic example may serve to illustrate these points; an organisation convenes a conference on a contentious issue and structures that conference around large plenary sessions. The first facet of the appropriateness consideration asks if a conference contributes the most in this context, while the second facet looks at whether the plenary structure was the best activity to utilise within the conference.

Information resulting from an Appropriateness Consideration has the potential to improve an agency's ability to connect conflict analysis with the development of intervention strategy and refine their understanding of how to identify leverage points for change. Moreover, this aspect could provide useful information with regards to the best process to be used in different contexts.

---

[19] Strategic Review is a term utilised by Sue Williams in personal email correspondence.

[20] In this context, the term effective refers to the achievement of peace.

Aspect 2: *Theoretical Analysis*

Whether articulated or not, the majority of people in this field have a theory/ies of change[21] and associated assumptions, which underpin their decisions about intervention strategy at multiple levels. As these theories and assumptions are rarely conscious, it is even rarer for them to be rigorously examined and assessed against the reality and results of interventions in the field. This aspect seeks to identify and test these theories and assumptions.

Questions that could be useful are:

i.)   Has the organisation articulated its belief in how conflicts are transformed or change is enabled in a society? If so, what is it?

ii.)   Has the agency or relevant practitioners/staff investigated the assumptions by which they operate? If so, what are they?

iii.) Have these assumptions or theories ever been reviewed and fed back into the planning process in light of intervention outcomes and impacts?

This aspect has the potential to challenge the assumptions by which practitioners operate and confirm or disprove the theories of change that underpin intervention strategy decisions. For those theories that hold true, the information would be useful to tailor the theory to the local context - which is not to imply that practice should ultimately be confined to theory, as theory can in certain situations prove to be constraining rather than illuminating. Without this type of examination, there is little evidence available to tailor or enhance our collective understanding of what can successfully foster change in a society. Improvement of our theories of change has the potential for significant impact on the effectiveness of this field as a whole. This aspect offers the most to field in terms of transferable learning.

Aspect 3: *Strategic Review*

A Strategic Review addresses whether an organisation is fulfilling its vision and mandate through its choice of interventions. It considers whether an organisation is doing what it says it is doing.

It could address such questions as:

i.)   Can the intervention be logically connected to the achievement of the organisational mandate?

---

21 The process by which a conflict can be transformed.

ii.)   Does the intervention capitalise on the agency's comparative advantage or unique skill set?

iii.) Are there other organisations that have more expertise or experience in this area?

This aspect is particularly insightful in situations where a need is identified in a conflict arena and a subsequent intervention constructed which falls outside of the primary purpose of the organisation. The tension arises between a needed and well-run intervention that is, however, not in line with the organisational mandate or within the primary experience and skill set of the staff. An example may illustrate this tension best. Consider a conflict resolution agency located in Southeast Asia whose mandate is to promote peace and justice. In implementing this mandate the organisation establishes a women's peace centre as a safe place for women from all sides to meet and discuss issues, receive training in dialogue and mediation techniques and promote women's role in reconstruction. After a year in existence the staff at this centre recognise AIDS education to be a significant need amongst women in the region and proceeds to develop an AIDS-awareness training programme. The question arises, is this intervention pursuant of the organisation's mandate? Can this activity be logically connected to the achievement of peace and justice? Is this the best way to utilise the resources of the center and does this capitalise on the skill set and unique contribution the centre and its staff can give to the situation? Are there other agencies who are better equipped to do this work?

There are no prerequisite answers to these questions; rather within a Strategic Review the organisation would be faced with these issues and make choices significant to their situation. Information gleaned through this review will assist organisations in their strategic planning through the targeting of limited resources to interventions whose cumulative value will contribute towards their larger mandate. It will also provide evidence of the enacting of their mandate, which is particularly useful in terms of public relations.

Evaluations within Theme One would provide the field with significant information on how to improve conflict resolution practice at the most fundamental levels by examining the goals and assumptions on which they are based. Amongst others, this improvement would be in the following areas: tailoring and improving theories of change, identifying and verifying basic assumptions, enhancing our ability to connect conflict analysis with intervention selection and illustrating whether organisations are achieving their overarching mandate.

At present this theme receives minimal attention in the conflict resolution world, with only a few examples available. Interestingly, the majority of work that was reviewed showed that when these aspects are addressed they are done so in isolation of each other, although the authors see them as closely related.

THEME #2. Process Accountability:
How was the Intervention Operationalised?

This theme assesses the implementation of the intervention. It includes three aspects for assessment: *Management and Administration,*[22] *Cost-Accountability and Process Appraisal.*

Aspect 1: *Management and Administration*

The Management and Administration aspect considers how an intervention was conducted from a purely operational perspective. This includes, but is not limited to, intervention planning and management, efficiency of administration and where appropriate effective teamwork.

It would address questions such as:

i.) How accurate was the projected intervention plan in terms of staff resources, skills required, timelines, and budgets?

ii.) Was adequate direction, supervision and support provided for the intervention co-ordinator and/or administrator?

iii.) Were avenues of communication open and used effectively and consistently between all stakeholders?

iv.) Were all aspects of the intervention well organised?

Although not generally a popular focus for conflict resolution evaluations, it has a lot to offer organisations in this field. Information from this aspect can improve an organisation's ability to implement interventions as well as accurately pre-plan. Streamlined and improved performance in this area will free-up valuable assets in terms of time and resources.

Aspect 2: *Cost Accountability*

Cost Accountability reviews whether the organisation considered alternatives to the actions taken from a financial perspective. This includes very practical operational issues such as cost-reducing strategies like obtaining quotes, or negotiating long term or bulk agreements with vendors. However, recognising the importance of non-cost related factors in operationalising interventions, this aspect does not refer to achieving the desired ends for the lowest financial outlay. In conflict situations some decisions

---

[22] The term 'management' refers to supervision activities, while administration is conducting logistics, co-ordination and secretarial support to the activity or service.

may be taken that do not represent the lowest cost but which are balanced by their significant contribution to the peace process. There is a range of both generic and conflict specific non-cost factors. Generic non-cost factors include issues such as service and quality. Conflict specific non-cost factors could include such things as capitalising on a window of opportunity like an unexpected cessation of violence, or awarding a contract to a company in a separatist region to demonstrate the benefit of engaging in peace process. Costs must be weighed by considering their value in light of the intervention's objectives.

Questions related to cost-accountability could include:

i.) Were alternative options in relation to costs considered when designing the programme?

ii.) Does the organisation attempt to utilise economies of scale where possible?

iii.) Did lack of planning result in last minute actions that had significantly higher costs?

iv.) Were choices made by the agency that were outside the usual cost effectiveness norms justifiable?

This aspect would always need to be closely associated to an understanding of the context. It would also rarely stand alone and would more likely be conducted in association with several other evaluation aspects.

The benefits to be had from this aspect are similar to that of the Management and Administration aspect. This data would improve implementation and ideally allow organisations to make strategic decisions in a conflict context sensitive manner on financial issues. Moreover, it could improve relationships with donors through the assurance of cost-accountable thinking and effective utilisation of funds.

Aspect 3: *Process Appraisal*

Process Appraisal considers two related issues in the implementation of an intervention. The first concerns the effectiveness of the techniques utilised in conducting an intervention, such as the facilitation skills of the individual running a workshop. The second looks at whether the work is conducted in a manner that is representative of the principles and values to which the organisation aspires, such as equality or respect for diversity.

A process-focused evaluation would address questions such as:

i.) Did the participants feel that their needs were being considered and addressed throughout the intervention?

ii.) Did the actions exhibited during this intervention reflect the values of the organisation and the skills and expertise of the staff?

iii.) Did the conflict-affected community feel the process went well?

A tension can arise for agencies that have explicit organisational values that differ from those of the community in which they are working. For example, this issue could arise for agencies that consider equality for women an intrinsic element of their mandate but wish to conduct community based work in a conflict area that adheres to strict Muslim tradition. In these situations organisations will need to weigh their options and programme accordingly.

In practice, it appears that Process Appraisals are often being carried out in isolation from the other aspects raised in this framework and are commonly circulated under the heading of Best Practice, the implication being that a 'good' process appraisal is synonymous with intervention success. However, as these evaluations are generally not linked to an assessment of results - either outcomes or impacts - there is little evidence to indicate that there is a correlation between 'good' process and desired outcomes/impacts. Recognising that quality process is fundamental to this work, particularly when external events have the ability to hinder intended progress, the authors feel that it is essential for this aspect to be conducted in combination with others, particularly with results-based considerations. A good process evaluation is but one variable behind a 'successful' intervention.

This aspect could provide organisations with a wealth of information to tailor and enhance the techniques used to conduct interventions. It could also provide further clues to the link between process and effecting change, thereby improving the ability to select and execute interventions.

The first two aspects of Theme Two predominately consider whether there was judicious use of means to accomplish an end, while the third looks at the effectiveness of appropriate conflict resolution techniques and then broadens the frame to consider the implementation of values and principles as well. In practice, the different aspects receive varying degrees of attention. Evaluations with a Process Appraisal focus would occur most frequently, whereas Management and Administration would rarely be a distinct focus. Instead it may generally arise as part of the project narrative but without rigorous consideration with a view to improvement. Evaluations commissioned by funders would generally give more attention to Cost-Accountability, albeit with a much stricter financial assessment focus, than evaluations commissioned by the organisation themselves.

The results of an evaluation with a focus on process accountability can provide valuable information in two ways. First, they could illustrate how intervention teams can enhance their operational activities in terms of both pure implementation and quality of intervention. Second, they can produce data that can be used to improve operational aspects of intervention planning, such as staff requirements, timelining and staff skills requirements.

Focus of Change

The Focus of Change is an ordering of what an organisation's intervention seeks to influence or change. It considers a range of influences, from the macro level, as in the broad social and political environment, to the micro level, such as an individual's behaviour and skills or attitudes and beliefs. This ordering becomes especially useful when evaluating as it provides a common language by which to discuss one of the key elements of an intervention.

What is the Intervention Targeting?[23]

- broad social/political environment
- structures/institutions
- approaches/procedures
- physical/financial
- behaviour/skills
- attitudes/beliefs

Influence does not have to be limited to one level as, depending on the scope, length and resources of the intervention, a number of levels could be relevant. Moreover, the use of the term 'level' and the portrayal of the focus of change schematically is not to imply a cause-effect relationship whereby a change at one level is a prerequisite to a change at the next level.

It also should be recognised that different definitions of success and types of activities are often associated with the different levels.

---

[23] The list has been modified from a diagram in Mayer, Bernard S., Moore, Christopher W., Wildau, Susan T., Ghais, Suzanne, Marada, Radim, Ropers, Norbert, Weiss, Anja, Volker, Ruof. (1999). *Reaching for Peace: Lessons learned from Mott Foundation's conflict resolution grantmaking.* Michigan: Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, p. 9.

THEME #3. Range of Results
What are the Short and Long Term Results of the Intervention?

Assessing the difference an intervention has made in a conflict scenario is one of the most pressing questions facing this field. Those not actively engaged in the work often want tangible results that can be illustrated in graphs and charts. However, rigorous and accurate measures of the 'difference' are only starting to be developed, using qualitative as well as quantitative methods. This theme considers the results of interventions in the short and long term. It has three aspects - outputs, outcomes and impacts of conflict resolution interventions.

Aspect 1: *Outputs*

Outputs are the most common and easiest results to compile. They are the immediate, tangible and frequently quantifiable results of the activities conducted as part of an intervention. For example, this could be the number of participants at a training workshop or the number of meetings held between two conflicting parties.

Questions relating to outputs could be:

i.)   What activities were conducted?

ii.)   Who did the intervention reach (e.g. number of participants, number of meetings)?

iii.)   Were the targets for the intervention achieved?

Outputs are the information most often provided to funders in monitoring or final reports as it is perceived to be a tangible measurement of intervention achievement. They provide a limited but useful set of information, particularly in showing trends such as participants' demographic information in terms of ethnic, racial, religious or gender distribution. That said, the authors believe a true understanding of the intervention cannot be reached by assessing this aspect in isolation as much of the meaning of these quantitative figures comes from the information provided by the other aspects.

Aspect 2: *Outcomes*

Outcomes are the changes that directly result from the intervention activities. They are ideally determined by the intervention objectives as the results that the intervention seeks to achieve. Unlike outputs, which concentrate on what the intervention does, outcomes concentrate on what the intervention makes happen. For example, this would be the information or skills that the participants learned during a training workshop or the agreement made through the meetings of conflicting parties.

This aspect would address questions such as:

i.)   What changes were produced as a result of the intervention?

ii.)   Were the intervention outcomes linked to the objectives?

iii.)   Did any unexpected outcomes occur as a result of the intervention?

Outcomes are commonly two-dimensional, with 'what' the project seeks to influence combined with a specific target or 'who' they seek to influence. Useful tools in conceptualising and discussing these aspects can be found in the Focus of Change and the Tiers of Influence. Utilising the training example above, the 'what' (Focus of Change) would be behaviour or skills, while the 'who' (Tiers of Influence) would be the individual participants.

Outcome evaluations are becoming more common although still significantly lagging behind the usage of outputs. Questions also arise as to the degree to which unanticipated outcomes, both positive and negative, should be identified, balanced and incorporated within outcome evaluations.

This aspect shows the changes that the intervention has been able to make. It allows for a pre-intervention and post-intervention comparison, which can provide legitimacy to the work. It also assists in the intervention planning process by comparing the intervention objectives to the results to see if it was able to accomplish what was anticipated.

Aspect 3: *Impact Evaluation*

There is considerable confusion surrounding the meaning of 'impact' in a conflict intervention context, let alone the challenges of measuring this unrefined idea. The authors propose that impacts are the consequences (either negative or positive) of the interventions' outcomes.[24] Accordingly, Impact Evaluation seeks to determine the consequences of an intervention on a conflict situation or any facet within that situation.[25] This is illustrated, once again, through the simple example of a training workshop where the number of participants is an output and the skills they acquire is an outcome. An impact of this workshop could be the utilisation of those skills in a participant's job. So, if the training focused upon developing mediation skills, an

---

[24] These outcomes include both the intended and unintended.

[25] Like outcomes, impacts are often two-dimensional so the Focus of Change and Tiers of Influence tools may be useful aids in thinking about this idea. It should be noted that there is little consensus on whether consequences assessed should include intended and unintended negative and positive effects. More on this can be found in the next section, Questions and Challenges.

impact of this training workshop could be that the individual established a community mediation service within their agency.

Questions that could be asked within this aspect are:

i.) Is there evidence of the outcomes of the intervention being utilised?

ii.) Were there any unintended positive or negative results from this intervention and can they be linked to a discernible element of the intervention?

iii.) Over time, has the original change/impact proved sustainable?

iv.) Was there any evidence that a multiplier effect occurred due to this project?

Within each of these questions, the thorny issue of establishing causality must be considered and addressed by evaluators. It is unrealistic to assume that a straightforward mapping of direct causation will be possible in the majority of situations. However, as much as possible, evaluators need to ensure that their assertions of impact are rigorously based on evidence or realistic connections and assumptions.

When considering the range of results of an intervention, the time variable needs to be factored into the equation. The timing of the evaluation *vis-a-vis* the intervention life span will affect the degree or amount of change/impact that is detected. When the evaluation is conducted too early in the intervention, little or no effect may be identified. However, it is not clear how time after the completion of the intervention affects the impact. It is our hypothesis that the impact of 'successful' interventions will decrease over time but not to such an extent as to return to the original state. To date, little research exists on the exact relationship between the sustainability of impact of an intervention and the time passed since intervention completion. That said, one should be aware of the time factor when selecting the timing of an evaluation and interpreting its results.

The debate about the meaning of the term 'impact' is an important one that deserves considerable attention from the field. The definition used in this paper purposefully excludes the notion of determining the impact of an intervention on 'peace writ-large'. There are two primary reasons for this. First, many interventions in conflict situations are relatively small in their scope and attempting to evaluate their worth using 'peace writ-large' as a standard is too high a bar to set (Ross, 2000). Second, the number of variables, ranging from economics to droughts, that affect peace within a society makes determining the link between an intervention and peace writ large very difficult and therefore the worth of expending scarce resources for this task on an intervention-by-intervention basis is questionable. This is not to detract from the importance of determining how this work contributes to peace in a society but rather seeks to be reasonable in expectation.

The benefits of conducting Impact Evaluations lie in two areas: practical application and improved field credibility. The practical benefits are obvious; the field will gain immensely in its understanding of the effects and consequences that interventions can have, both positively and negatively. This understanding, combined with information gained from other aspects especially Theoretical Analysis, could propel the field forward. Additionally, the results of impact evaluation can improve the legitimacy and credibility of conflict resolution work with sceptics, such as governments or the public. With tangible evidence of change as a result of interventions, sceptics who consider this work irrelevant would be challenged using their own language and measures. In the long term, this could be an essential step in securing conflict resolution ideas and approaches as mainstream options for governments and international organisations.

Tiers of Influence

The Tiers of Influence model provides a structured way to consider who is being targeted by an intervention. It attempts to move from the singular to the conceptual plurality of a society.

Who does the intervention seek to influence?

• individual

• family unit

• social network/peer group

• community

• society at large

Although it may appear that this structuring implies an order or a natural starting point, that is not the intention. The Tiers of Influence model does not imply a cumulative process whereby individuals change families, who in turn change social networks, which in turn change communities ultimately leading to a societal change. Although this may be one of the ways that societal change occurs, the tiers do not imply a micro to macro or macro to micro direction of change.

This idea may also prove useful in the discussion about transfer.

The benefits to be had from evaluation in this theme are the most immediately tangible to the field. Output, outcome and impact evaluations will provide organisations with the most direct indicators of effective practice in specific contexts. It will improve our understanding of what variables, in what mix, are capable of producing which result. Over time consistent collection of this data will provide the conflict resolution field with tangible evidence of the positive effects of conflict resolution work. This will be a significant step towards addressing the legitimacy and credibility challenges that the field commonly faces with governments, donors and the wider public.

Considering this theme from another angle, the field has an obligation to those it is working with on the ground to understand the ramifications of our actions to the greatest extent possible. Therefore, thoughtful and honest consideration and scrutiny of the consequences of interventions are necessary to increase and improve the effects of our actions.

Within the range of results, output evaluation dominates the current activity in the field, with outcome evaluation becoming more and more accepted practice. Impact evaluation is the newest of the three and therefore has the most questions and fewest established methods. It appears as though, for some, impact evaluation is seen as a separate activity from evaluation and is tellingly referred to as impact assessment. This study, however, sees it firmly planted within the evaluation umbrella. Additionally, there is no agreed standard for consideration of negative and positive unintended results. In some cases, they are not considered at all, while others attempt to identify but not balance or weigh them against the intended results.

SECTION 5:
QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES

If we seek to improve our ability to deliver meaningful evaluation results, then there remain many outstanding questions and challenges to be addressed within the field of conflict resolution evaluation. The authors perceive a certain distinction between a 'question' and a 'challenge'. Broadly, this paper defines questions as problematic issues, the solutions to which are only found through further investigation. In contrast, challenges are defined as areas in which the ability to perform is limited by physical or theoretical obstacles. The authors have attempted to group these questions and challenges under common thematic headings. However, although this paper seeks to provide a comprehensive documentation of the myriad issues, the authors are conscious that every issue has not been explored to the fullest extent possible. Here again lies an opportunity for further research and discussion.

Conventional or Customised Evaluation?

One of the core assumptions of this paper is that the evaluation of conflict resolution interventions should be approached differently from evaluation in other fields such as development, gender or education. However, it would be inaccurate to state that this is a commonly accepted view. The question, then, is do we need an evaluation approach that is specific to conflict resolution, or can pre-existing approaches fit our needs? Further to this question, within the conflict resolution/peacebuilding field there are a wide variety of activities - from dialogue programmes, to infrastructure rebuilding, to economic regeneration. Do these different project types each need different approaches?

In examining the issue of specialisation from the perspective of an evaluator, the question, 'Does quality evaluation demand that the evaluator have some substantive training in the content of that being evaluated?' (Worthern and Sanders, 1984: 1) arises. In other words, does the evaluator of a conflict resolution intervention need conflict-specific expertise and knowledge? If one reviews 'Calls for Evaluators' within this field, content specialisation is not always required. Yet, can someone who does not have any prior knowledge of conflict resolution, but holds credentials in evaluation, produce a meaningful assessment?

The Challenge of Conflict Context

A. Changes in conflict context

When conducting monitoring and evaluation activities, how can the ongoing changes

in the surrounding environment be incorporated into the assessment of the results? For example, how does the evaluator properly take into account changes in context, such as the breakdown of a ceasefire, the assassination of a leader or a local act of violence, in the conclusions of an evaluation?

Even in cases where context changes do not directly impact upon the intervention, questions arise as to the significance of the effect of the environment on project operations. How can external factors that may increase or decrease the potential long-term impact of the project, particularly when the intervention attempts to transfer results to other tiers of influence, such as the family or community, be incorporated? Although an evaluation may indicate that participating individuals and the surrounding community have more positive views on the prospect for peace, it remains a challenge to determine the degree to which the change came from the external environment or from the programming work itself.

There is also an aspect of serendipity central to peace work. How can conflict resolution evaluation find a way to determine and recognise that an intervention has capitalised on unexpected opportunities with the potential to lead to a more profound impact than the originally planned activities? Conversely, how does the evaluation weigh the methods used by the project to dealt with unexpected occurrences, which have impacted negatively on the process and limited their ability to meet the original goals (Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa, 1999)?

B. Access to information issues[26]

How should evaluators deal with the practical challenges presented by working in areas of conflict? Restricted access, such as paramilitary groups limiting passage to certain areas or poor communications and transport infrastructure, reduces the evaluator's capacity to interact with participants and observe the intervention. There may also be a limited ability to gain information, either because of unreliable or unavailable local information or because of the limits to the amount of information individuals feel comfortable disclosing to the evaluator. Both of these challenges can reduce the evaluator's ability to observe and incorporate worthwhile information into the evaluation findings.

When working in unstable regions, personal safety also has to be a consideration for all stakeholders. A challenge for the field is to address concerns about basic safety, whether for participants engaging in a process that is likely to put them into danger with their own communities, local staff who can become targets of violence, or external evaluators

---

[26] For further discussions on research challenges in conflict situations see Smyth, Marie and Robinson, Gillian (Eds.) (2001), *Researching Violently Divided Societies – Ethical and Methodological Issues*, London: Pluto Press.

who arrive in a situation that is unstable and unreliable. How should these concerns be weighed and how can safety-sensitive methodology be included in evaluation work?

Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA)

PCIA is a means of anticipating and evaluating the impacts of development projects on both the structures and processes that promote peace and those that increase the prospects for violence.[27] It has been described as a tool to provide 'non-specialist donors, aid agencies and local organizations with accurate, yet user-friendly methodologies to plan, assess and monitor development and humanitarian assistance in the context of armed conflict.' (Wake, 2002: 59) Throughout the research stage of this project, the authors discovered significant confusion with regard to the purpose and application of this tool within conflict resolution evaluation. Importantly, within the field, there seemed to be a lack of differentiation between PCIA and what the authors are calling impact evaluation.

Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment tools offer many conflict-specific strategies that can and should be explored to further our understanding of how to address the challenges currently presented by CRE. The question for conflict resolution evaluation is how the methods and experience of PCIA can best be utilised. Additionally, what information can PCIA provide to assist in answering and addressing the questions and challenges raised in this section, and in which areas do gaps continue to exist that need to be addressed by CRE?

Utilisation of monitoring and evaluation results

Even in situations where excellent and thoughtful evaluations have been conducted, the field of conflict resolution underutilises the information generated. There are three main challenges that constrain the feedback of this information into bettering practice. First, as a result of the scarcity of resources prevalent in most non-profit organisations, overworked staff do not have the time to review evaluations and determine how the information could be used to benefit their work. Although this shortage of resources makes it more important that information from evaluations be incorporated as many provide recommendations for improving efficiency and effectiveness, this incorporation requires an initial investment of time that few practitioners are able to make. Furthermore, competition for the scarce resources that do exist discourage organisations from sharing lessons they have learned that could improve practice.

Second, when funders commission cluster evaluations of funded programmes, few translate the results into useful information that can be used by individual implementing agencies that contributed to the evaluation. Although valuable information may exist,

---

[27] For further reading on this concept please refer to Appendix II.

it is not in a form that is accessible to practitioners. A twofold question thereby arises - how can funders glean the vital information from their evaluations that is relevant to specific agencies? And, how can this information be most usefully fed back to the agencies on the ground?

Third, information generated from monitoring and evaluation activities tends to be particularly underutilised in the policy arena. The results that are generated through evaluations could be used to build the policy of the implementing agency as well as to influence government or inter-governmental policy. Here again, the challenge is to establish feedback loops or channels of communication that permit this information to be transferred in a contextually meaningful way.

Lessons Learned/Best Practices

A. Questions in relation to current trends

Are lessons learned documents sometimes written in the place of evaluation? Is it perceived as easier (and indeed possibly more useful) to write a lessons learned document than an evaluation? Is this a more participatory approach to evaluation that has been perceived as more accessible by practitioners in the field? Has the fear generated by the term 'evaluation' led people to conduct lessons learned projects, which are less rigorous than evaluations and therefore less telling of the realities of this work?

More philosophically, is the urge to move towards lessons learned and best practice evidence of a desire for greater professionalism in the field of conflict resolution? The authors would posit that a dedication to improving our practice and testing our theories of change is essential to furthering the effectiveness of the field. However, the challenge will be to ensure that this move is made on the basis of solid qualitative and quantitative evidence, rather than conjecture.

B. What is a lesson/best practice?

Although the terms *'lessons learned'* and *'best practice'* are currently very much in vogue within the international field of conflict resolution, there is little debate about the definition of these terms. This lack of clarity leads to important conceptual misunderstanding and misnomers that detract from the work of improving our practice. It is therefore important to ask, what fundamentally constitutes a lesson or best practice?

It would appear that there are different levels of lessons learned or best practice. Some are totally project or context specific whilst others are relevant in various situations. Additionally, to date there is no transferability requirement that determines the evolution of a practice to the level of 'lesson'. It would also appear that there are varying evidential requirements for stating that something is a best practice or lesson, which creates further confusion about the terms. Hence, the question of whether new

categories or terms need to be developed in addition to refining the use of current terms must be addressed.

C. Issues surrounding lesson development

Lesson development needs to be considered in light of the realities presented by current evaluations. For instance, how can generalisable lessons be developed where different models and evaluators are used to study disparate projects at distinct stages in the conflict curve? This development is further complicated when it is recognised that evaluations are carried out for a variety of purposes. As stated in an ALNAP review of humanitarian programmes in Kosovo, 'Despite all of these studies being placed in the context of Kosovo and its surrounds, no two go into exactly the same spatial, temporal and organisational aspects of it, or have equal depth, breadth, or credibility' (ALNAP, 2000: 5).

The inconsistency in evaluations coupled with the lack of information sharing between agencies (horizontally) or between funders and governments (vertically) suggests that the main challenge to the field is to develop lessons that are based on rigorous platforms of evidence and expertise.

Freedom to Acknowledge Failure

A. What is a failure?

The concepts of *'success'* and *'failure'* are closely related within the field of conflict resolution. Although there will be further discussion as to what constitutes 'success',[28] consideration also needs to be given to the concept of failure. A precise definition of this concept is beyond the scope of this study. However, it would seem that the expression 'failure' is a particularly harsh term that tends to foster ideas of gross misconduct. Are there not in fact levels and degrees to the concept of failure? One challenge for the field will be to distinguish between these subtleties.

B. Power dynamics & stakeholders

As mentioned in Section 2, significant power dynamics are played out between the various stakeholders involved in an evaluation. In the funder-practitioner relationship, for example, there is understandable fear on the part of the practitioner that the non-achievement of stated objectives would result in a reduction or cessation of funding. These dynamics can affect the evaluation process and results in a variety of ways: by diminishing the amount of information made available for evaluation; by influencing the selection of interviewees; or by ensuring that results are overly positively reported.

---

[28] See 'Concept of Success' later in this section.

The critical challenge for this relationship is, therefore, to find a channel for open and honest communication about the difficulties inherent in, and the achievements of, interventions. Such a channel would also ensure that well thought-out initiatives would continue to be funded.

A less obvious power dynamic may also be played out between the evaluator and the funder. The funder selects the interventions that will be evaluated and may, therefore, have preconceived ideas of what results they expect to see from the evaluation process. The evaluator may be constrained by how critical on the one hand, or favorable on the other, she/he can be of the intervention, due to future employment considerations.

Within funding agencies evaluation can be seen, by junior staff in particular, as a review of their performance. This leads to concerns of the effect that the findings can have on their professional future. As one evaluator notes, 'in writing [the closing summary], you are essentially rating your own performance as a grantmaker. And because your superiors in the organisation will be reviewing the closing summary statement, it becomes a *de facto* performance review document. Hence the conundrum: the closing summary statement is valuable only if it is filled out candidly, yet too much candor might come back to haunt you later' (Orosz, 2000). The challenge will be to create an environment where an honest review of the intervention is valued on its own merits.

At the macro-level, another power dynamic often played out relates to the widespread perception that 'the field', including funders and implementing agencies, lacks legitimacy and credibility with 'the public'. As a result, it is often feared that an acknowledgment of failure or a statement of lesser achievement than the project goals initially articulated will be used to question the utility of conflict resolution organisations. Hence the challenge for the field is to build up credibility. It can do so by promoting projects that work well, by explaining the challenges that are encountered and by refusing to tolerate gross mismanagement when it occurs.

C. Affirmative culture of the field

Referring to practitioner reports for foundations, one funder stated that they had observed that, 'every year is a good year' (Orosz, 2000). However, learning cannot occur without the acknowledgment that some processes and activities did not go as well as they could or should have done during the course of the intervention. In many cases, despite the use of the best available information and resources, and responsible decisions having been made, the outcome of a project does not achieve the expected results. Although this may be somewhat disappointing to project stakeholders, an opportunity for learning is thereby presented. The challenge therefore is to raise the level of tolerance for admitting to, and benefiting from, these experiences.

Nevertheless, the authors feel that a caveat is needed. It is important to remember that agencies working in this field have a responsibility to the people living in conflict areas.

Encouraging the acknowledgment of failure should not be seen as encouraging bad practice or permitting experimentation with peoples' lives. Rather, the freedom to acknowledge failure involves the creation of a professional environment in which it is recognised that in order to learn and improve we must admit to activities that have not been as successful as anticipated, whilst at the same time rejecting poor or irresponsible practice.

External/Outsider Evaluators

Closely related to the topic of power dynamics within evaluation relationships is the issue of *'outsider'*[29] evaluators coming into a conflict situation to conduct evaluations. During the interviews, evaluators themselves raised the challenge of recognising and incorporating subtle nuances related to local norms, traditions and cultural appropriateness that are not immediately evident to the outsider. The conventional view is that third party evaluation is the most objective and therefore the most useful method for obtaining transparent results (Orosz, 2000). Although funders often encourage other approaches, such as self-evaluation and participatory evaluation, the results rarely seem to be accepted without external confirmation. Many stakeholders have found this reliance on external evaluators limiting, as it would appear that 'outsider' status may make it more difficult for the evaluator to establish open lines of communication and to achieve trust from the local participants, thereby limiting the information that can be gathered.

However, external evaluators do not provide uniform results. It would appear that there is a substantial difference in the skill of individual evaluators, which can have a considerable impact on the quality of the evaluation produced and the value of the recommendations made. There is currently no established code of conduct for evaluators nor is there a review process by which evaluators are assessed. The challenge for the field will be to find methods for recognising excellence among evaluators and establishing a baseline of expectation for conduct in the field.

Misunderstood Motivations

As illustrated in Section 2, practitioners and funders often have different priorities when engaging in evaluation. Practitioners are usually looking at whether their strategy is working in one individual project, while funders may be examining their strategy at a countrywide or thematic level, often with a view to determining future funding allocations. As the funder commissions most large-scale evaluations, a dilemma emerges. If practitioners use their limited resources to contribute to the evaluation, there

---

[29] Using the Reflecting on Peace Practice definition of an outsider: 'An individual or agency from outside the conflict area that chooses to become involved in a given conflict.' RPP Issue Paper, 'Insider-Outsider Roles and Relations' http://www.cdainc.com/rpp/rpp-insiders.htm

is an expectation that useful feedback will be provided to them. This is often not the case though, as the multi-project donor evaluations rarely provide reflections on individual interventions and the focus is predominantly on financial aspects. However, if they accept that the evaluation will only serve the needs of the funder, and thus fail to engage in the process, the outcomes are likely to negatively affect their future funding allocations. This vicious circle creates both frustration and resentment with the evaluation process.

The challenge, therefore, is to find a balance between the needs of both the practitioner and the funder so that the evaluation can be of maximum utility. The purpose and expectations of the evaluation must be clearly articulated to all parties involved, yet there needs to be an awareness that even when an evaluation is conducted for a specific purpose, for example, to see if a funding criterion has been met, learning can be 'mined' from the evaluation. Whilst recognising that the evaluation is perhaps not as comprehensive as one conducted for the distinct purpose of agency learning, the implementing organisation can still learn and benefit from the information if this is included as part of the evaluator's mandate.

Criteria & Indicators

The relationship between criteria and indicators on the one hand, and the field of conflict resolution on the other, raises a particularly important question. Simply stated, can one set of indicators be developed that is useful in relation to the huge variety of contexts and projects that exist within the field of conflict resolution? Even when one tries to break down the size of this task, for instance by developing common criteria for specific types of projects, the same challenge arises. Can, for example, common criteria be useful for all mediation projects, or for all conflict resolution work in Burundi?

If it is argued that meaningful indicators applicable throughout the field can in fact be developed, a further set of questions must be addressed. First, who develops the indicators and accepts them as 'the' standard? Second, how does one insert a qualitative element into an indicator set? For example, if an indicator was the number of cross-community meetings that take place, how can the level of tolerance, the willingness to listen, the ability to compromise or the level of emotion be incorporated into the assessment of achievement for this indicator? A similar challenge arises when attempting to compare across projects. Using the same example, if there were two cross-community groups with significantly variant starting points, how would this be incorporated into the utilisation of indicators?

However, if one argues against the establishment of indicators and criteria, the reason for the desire by funders and donor governments to generate indicators needs to be explored and addressed. The question would thus arise – what mechanism(s) would meet funder/donor government needs whilst satisfying the practice community?

On a more academic note, the terms – criteria and indicators – are used interchangeably within the field and are commonly perceived in a negative light. Therefore, if criteria and indicators are in fact the way forward in terms of effective evaluation, work remains to be done in order to clarify these terms and reduce the negative perceptions associated with them.

Unintended Effects[30] - Positive & Negative

The unintended effects of conflict resolution projects, whether positive or negative, deserve serious consideration by all stakeholders. The incorporation of unintended effects within the evaluation process poses a series of challenges to evaluators. As very few evaluators indicated that they currently look for unintended impacts as part of their strategy, the first challenge is to ascertain effective means of scanning for unintended effects of interventions, both during the course of the project and during the evaluation phase. Second, the evaluator needs to consider whether the unintended effects are relevant, and therefore whether they should be included within the assessment of the intervention.

Once unintended effects have been identified, an important question of how to balance or weigh these effects against intended effects arises. This becomes particularly difficult when there are significant positive intended effects as well as significant negative unintended effects. Conversely, if an intervention has not achieved its stated goals or objectives, but has had unintended positive effects, can this intervention be deemed a 'success'?

If an unintended impact is discovered, what actions should subsequently be taken? If the discovery is made mid-way through an intervention, the opportunity exists for it to be considered by the stakeholders and for the benefits or drawbacks to be addressed in the next phase of implementation. However, if an unintended negative impact is found after the end of the intervention, is the agency subsequently obliged to rectify any damage resulting from the impact?

Measuring Impact

A. Measuring the impact

As discussed in previous sections, an important challenge to the field is to develop accessible models for the identification, tracking and measurement of the outcomes and impacts of conflict resolution interventions. This challenge is exacerbated by questions of how time should be factored into the equation. Is sustainability an important factor that needs to be incorporated into the concept of impact? If so, the challenge for the

---

[30] We are using the term effect here to mean both outcome and impact.

field is to make resources available so that sustainability can be included as part of a long-term impact evaluation. While recognising that the level of change will decrease over time, a further question is raised - how much change must be maintained at future intervals for an intervention's impact to be considered 'sustainable'?

An interesting future debate also remains to be had on the similarities and differences between the measurement of impact in the field of conflict resolution and the measurement of change in related fields, such as psychology or community work. The challenge for the field will be to find ways to mine appropriate learning from other fields that can be adapted to suit the needs of conflict resolution.

B. Transfer[31]

When unpacking the concept of *'transfer'*, far more questions are posed than there are answers available. This is an attempt to summarise the most pressing of these questions.

If an intervention has made an impact in one of the tiers of influence (see Overarching Framework), does this change then transfer up or down to other tiers? In other words, is there a potential multiplier effect that conflict resolution projects can achieve, thereby increasing their overall impact? For example, if one considers a cross-community dialogue project that successfully changed the attitudes of participants, does this change then transfer to their families or peer groups?

Moreover, if this does happen, how and why does the transfer occur? What degree of transfer takes place – i.e. is it the same level of change that the participating individual experienced or only a percentage of that change – and is this variable over the amount of time and interaction? What are the critical aspects of an intervention which promote or 'set the stage' to achieve transfer? Does the ability to transfer impact vary with the tier of influence on which the intervention is focused?

Macroevaluation[32]

Related to the issue of transfer is the concept of macroevaluation. Macroevaluation asks whether individual projects on the ground synergise to contribute to the development of a 'peaceful society'.[33] Pearson d'Estree *et al*. describe the challenge of linking the small picture to the larger one when working on Arab-Jewish dialogues in the United

States and Israel: 'while the participants themselves build a significant amount of trust, the trust between the communities from which they come may not change and the level of trust at the larger, macro-level of the relationship between Israel and its Arab neighbors may show no movement (2001: 104).

In other words, do the many micro-projects build into the macro-picture? If so, how does this process occur? Can one measure the contribution to 'peace' made by all conflict resolution projects in one conflict situation and if so, how would that be incorporated into the evaluation process? At the level of the individual intervention, is assessing its contribution to peace feasible and should it be a determinant of effectiveness? If further research and evaluation shows that projects on the ground do not synergise to contribute to 'peace', what does this mean for the field of conflict resolution and the way in which it is currently operating?

Concept of Success

There is no clear definition of what constitutes 'success' in conflict resolution interventions. One of the key questions for the field therefore is when has an intervention been successful? Is success achieved when all of the steps in the project plan have been completed or is it contingent on accomplishing the outcomes or impacts that underpinned those activities? Is success a relative concept, related to how an intervention compares with similar initiatives or events that could have occurred had there been no intervention? Or is it a more internal concept based on the ends stakeholders hope to achieve by engaging in the work? During the evaluation process, who determines which of these definitions of success will be used?

Further, has the rhetoric of conflict resolution and peacebuilding encouraged stakeholders to set the bar too high for achieving 'success' at a level that is unrealisable for small-scale interventions with limited resources? Can we be satisfied with a partial success or the 'good-enough' results of conflict resolution activities that create long-term institutions and processes to improve how conflict is handled in the future but do not bring peace writ-large (Ross, 2000)?

---

[31] Concept used in Kelman, Herbert C. (no date) *The Contributions of Non-Governmental Organizations to the Resolution of International Conflicts: An Approach to Evaluation*. Massachusetts: Harvard University.

[32] Term used in Church, C., 'Questions and Challenges', Paper presented at conference, *www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/home/policy/eval/church.html*

[33] Recognising that there is no agreement on the definition of peaceful society, which is another challenge to this idea.

SECTION 6:
CONCLUSION

As the discipline of conflict resolution matures, the need for the field to be able to understand, articulate, measure and compare will become increasingly important. However, all stakeholders in this field have choices about how they wish evaluation to be incorporated into the work. Many practitioners, funders and evaluators have expressed frustration about the direction that conflict resolution evaluation is currently taking. However, if it is accepted that some level of assessment of the work is inevitable, the fundamental challenge to the field is to take the lead in establishing tools, models and approaches that are meaningful to conflict resolution work. If those directly engaged do not take up this initiative, other, less useful methods will be imposed by those requiring evidence of the meaning of this work.

As a field, conflict resolution needs to translate the discussions that have been held about evaluation into action. As a first step, practitioners need to examine why they are so wary of evaluation and take active steps to change the lens through which it is seen. Rather than interpreting evaluation as something 'done to them', practitioners need to be active participants in setting the parameters for evaluation and benefiting from the learning acquired. Conversely, funders need to explore an observed discrepancy between the desire for documented results and the willingness to pay for them. Simple, relatively inexpensive, output evaluations cannot provide the evidence to show that the desired objectives of conflict resolution interventions have been reached. If funders want proof of what their funding has achieved, investment in the evaluation process will be required.

One of the strategies used in conflict resolution work is to move away from pre-imposed power dynamics and structures and to create relationships and arrangements that are meaningful to the participants. Perhaps this same approach should be used in conflict resolution evaluation. By changing the lens through which it is seen, the evaluation process has the potential to be a tool for empowering people to take action, rather than promoting fear, distrust and control.

This study seeks to provide a basis for the next steps in both practice and research. At the beginning of this research work it was recognised that a foundation was needed to structure discussions about evaluation that are specific to conflict resolution efforts. The Overarching Framework explores not only aspects of the intervention that can be evaluated but also how these can be done in a way that is meaningful to peace work. Furthermore, by including an outline of the current reality of evaluation in the field and the outstanding questions and challenges, the report also highlights where the gaps exist in conflict resolution evaluation and the issues that will have to be addressed. Although some innovative approaches to meet the disparity were found over the course of the research for this study, much work remains to be done. More tools need to be designed - by all stakeholders - that expand the limitations of current evaluation practice. Further, these approaches need to be tested and disseminated within the field so that refined and conflict-sensitive methods for evaluating work on conflict can emerge and be put into practice.

In this age of transparency and accountability, evaluation can neither be ignored nor avoided. Rather, it needs to be mainstreamed within the process of planning and implementing interventions. The information gleaned from evaluation will be a key resource for improving theory and practice in the future. However, whether evaluation is tailored to meet the needs of conflict resolution or conflict resolution is tailored to meet the needs of evaluation remains to be seen - and is ultimately the choice of all those engaged in the field.

REFERENCES

Abdalla, Amr. (2002, 20 March). Affiliate Associate Professor, Program on Peacekeeping Policy, George Mason University. Phone Interview.

Apthorpe, Raymond. (2000). *Kosovo Humanitarian Programme Evaluations: Towards Synthesis, Meta-Analysis and Sixteen Propositions for Discussion.* London: Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Assistance (ALNAP).

Carstarphen, Nike. (2002, 15 May). Alliance for Conflict Transformation. Phone Interview.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. (2001). *World Disasters Report.* Geneva: author.

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

Mayer, Bernard S., Moore, Christopher W., Wildau, Susan T., Ghais, Suzanne, Marada, Radim, Ropers, Norbert, Weiss, Anja, Volker, Ruof. (1999). *Reaching for Peace: Lessons learned from Mott Foundation's conflict resolution grantmaking.* Michigan: Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

Morrissey, Mike, McGinn, Pat and McDonnell, Brendan. (2001). *Summary of Interim Report on Research into Evaluating Community-Based and Voluntary Activity in Northern Ireland.* Belfast: Community Evaluation Northern Ireland.

Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa. (1999). *Draft Report of the Workshop on Strategic and Responsive Evaluation of Peacebuilding: A Framework for Learning and Assessment.* Kenya: author.

Orosz, Joel J. (2000). *The Insider's Guide to Grantmaking: How Foundations Find, Fund, and Manage Effective Programs.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Pearson d'Estree, Tamra, Fast, Larissa, Weiss, Joshua, and Jakobsen, Monica. (2001). 'Changing the Debate about "Success" in Conflict Resolution Efforts.' *Negotiation Journal, volume 17, number 2.*

Reflecting on Peace Practice. (2002). *Issue Paper: Effectiveness Criteria.* Massachusetts: Collaborative for Development Action.

Ross, Marc Howard. (2000). '"Good enough" isn't so bad: thinking about success and failure in ethnic conflict management', in *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology, volume 6, number 1,* 27-47.

Rothman, Jay. (1997). 'Action Evaluation and Conflict Resolution Training: Theory, Method and Case Study,' in *International Negotiation, volume 2,* 451-470.

Rothman, Jay and Friedman, Victor. (2001). 'Action Evaluation for Knowledge Creation in Social Education Programs. In Sankaran *et. al., Effective Change Managing Using Action Learning and Action Research.* Lismore: Southern Cross University Press.

Spencer, Tanya. (1998). *A Synthesis of Evaluations of Peacebuilding Activities Undertaken by Humanitarian Agencies and Conflict Resolution Organizations.* London: Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Assistance (ALNAP).

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2002). *SIPRI Yearbook 2002: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sumbeiywo, Jebiwot. (2001). *Framework for the Evaluation of Conflict Prevention and Peace Building Initiatives: approaches to self-evaluation from a theoretical perspective.* Presentation at 'Towards Better Peace Building Practice' Conference, Soesterberg.

Voluntary Activity Unit. (1996). *Guidance on the Commissioning and Conduct of Evaluation of Voluntary Organisations by Northern Ireland Government Departments.* Northern Ireland: author.

Wake, Jim. (2002). 'Picking Appropriate Strategies, Gauging their Impact, and Remembering What Works.' In Galama, Anneke and van Tongeren, Paul (Eds). *Towards Better Peacebuilding Practice: On Lessons Learned, Evaluation Practices and Aid & Conflict.* Utrecht: European Centre for Conflict Prevention.

Worthern, Blaine R. and Sanders, James R. (1984). *Content Specialization and Education Evaluation: A Necessary Marriage?* Michigan: The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University.

APPENDIX I:
Resources - Conflict Resolution and Evaluation

The resources selected for this section specifically address the issues of conflict resolution and evaluation.

Books, Articles and Studies

Beyna, Larry S., Lund, M., Stackes, Stacey S., Tuthill, J. and Vondal, P. (2001) *The Effectiveness of Civil Society Initiatives in Controlling Violent Conflicts and Building Peace: A Study of Three Approaches in the Greater Horn of Africa.* Washington DC: Management Systems International and USAID.
> This study examines generic approaches to conflict prevention, management and peacebuilding used by organisations in the Greater Horn of Africa. It explores which strategies have been effective and draws lessons that can inform future practice.

Chakrabarti, Indranil. (2002) *Towards a Framework for Assessing the Impact of Conflict and Peace Building Activities.* London: Department for International Development.
> A discussion of the key concepts and problems in the field of performance measurement. Four possible approaches are proposed that could be used to measure the progress of efforts to prevent conflict and build peace.

Druckman, Daniel and Stern, Paul C. (2000) 'Evaluating Interventions in History: The Case of International Conflict Resolution.' *International Studies Review, volume 2., number 1.*
> This article explores many of the challenges involved in gauging change when evaluating conflict resolution programmes and suggests options for measuring outcomes and impacts.

Duffield, Mark. (1997) *Evaluating Conflict Resolution: Context, Models and Methodology.* Norway: Chr. Michelsen Institute.
> A conceptual review of conflict resolution and how CR theory links to evaluation.

Galama, Anneke and van Tongeren, Paul (Eds). (2002) *Towards Better Peacebuilding Practice: On Lessons Learned, Evaluation Practices, Aid & Conflict.* Utrecht: European Centre for Conflict Prevention.
> The product of a conference, the first two parts of this edited volume provide an analysis of the impediments to evaluating peacebuilding interventions and a review of suggestions from academics and practitioners for addressing the questions and challenges presented.

Johannsen, Agneta M. (no date) *Measuring Results of Assistance Programmes to War-Torn Societies.* Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.
> This short paper provides a thoughtful analysis of the need for new criteria that are adapted to meet the unique needs of evaluating programmes in war-torn societies.

Kelman, Herbert C. (no date) *The Contributions of Non-Governmental Organizations to the Resolution of International Conflicts: An Approach to Evaluation.* Massachusetts: Harvard University.
> Kelman describes his experience with interactive problem solving workshops and briefly outlines two processes for evaluating such work.

Laprise, Anne-Marie. (no date) *Programming for Results in Peacebuilding – Objectives 'Tree' & Performance Indicators.* Hull: Canadian International Development Agency.
> This short paper looks at six goals that contribute to the establishment of a sustainable peace and lays out a series of indicators for each goal.

Lederach, John Paul (1997) *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies.* Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press.
> In Chapter 10, Lederach discusses the dilemmas of using current evaluation methods for peacebuilding initiatives and briefly proposes his own evaluation tool.

Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa. (1999) *Draft Report of the Workshop on Strategic and Responsive Evaluation of Peacebuilding: A Framework for Learning and Assessment.* Kenya: author.
> Notes from a grassroots meeting of conflict resolution practitioners in Kenya. The frustrations with, and limitations of, current methodologies are explored and possible options for tailoring methods to suit conflict resolution needs are briefly introduced.

Pearson d'Estree, Tamra, Fast, Larissa, Weiss, Joshua, and Jakobsen, Monica. (2001) 'Changing the Debate about "Success" in Conflict Resolution Efforts.' *Negotiation Journal, volume 17, number 2.*
> The authors focus on the idea of using a project's own goals to define success and the challenge of linking micro-level changes to macro-level transformation.

Reflecting on Peace Practice. (2001) *Issue Paper: Effectiveness Criteria.* Massachusetts: Collaborative for Development Action.
www.cdainc.com/rpp/rpp-effectiveness.htm
> A paper based on the preliminary findings of the Reflection on Peace Practice project, which provides a list of possible criteria for judging the effectiveness of peace work.

Ross, M.H. (2000) 'Good enough isn't so bad: thinking about success and failure in ethnic conflict management.' *Peace and Conflict*: *Journal of Peace Psychology, volume 6, number 1.*

> The article explores definitions of success and failure and the concept of 'good enough' conflict management.

Ross, M. H. and Rothman, J. (1999) *Theory and Practice in Ethnic Conflict Management: Theorizing Success and Failure.* Britain: MacMillan.

> An edited volume that includes discussion on determining success and failure in conflict resolution initiatives as well as a series of in-depth case studies.

Sorensen, Ninna Nyberg, Stepputat, Finn, Van Hear, Nicholas (2000) *Assessment of Lessons Learned from SIDA Support to Conflict Management and Peace Building.* Stockholm: Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency.

> This study, commissioned by SIDA, provides a bibliographic survey of the state of the art in peacebuilding project evaluation, and five case studies of SIDA-supported projects with an emphasis on what can be learned from the work.

Spencer, Tanya (1998) *A Synthesis of Evaluations of Peacebuilding Activities Undertaken by Humanitarian Agencies and Conflict Resolution Organizations.* London: Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Assistance.

> An examination of the lack of clarity and consistency in assessing peacebuilding activities and suggestions for future areas of research drawn from a survey of 15 case studies.

Websites

The Action Evaluation Research Institute

http://www.aepro.org/

> General information about the Action Evaluation methodology, including articles and examples of implementation.

Community Relations Council

http://www.community-relations.org.uk/

> This website contains evaluations of programmes designed to promote better cross-community relations in Northern Ireland.

APPENDIX II:
Resources - Evaluation in Related Fields

The resources in this section address the question of evaluation in fields that are directly related to conflict resolution, such as humanitarian aid, development and conflict prevention.

Books and Articles

Borton, John, Gibbons, Laura and Lonford, Sarah, (Eds.) (1998) *Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance Programming in Complex Emergencies.* London: Overseas Development Institute.

> A detailed explanation of how to plan, organise and implement an evaluation of a humanitarian assistance programme. The authors also explore different techniques for obtaining and analysing data, and comment on the challenges of working in unstable environments.

Bush, Kenneth. (1998) *A Measure of Peace: Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) of Development Projects in Conflict Zones.* Ottawa: International Development Research Council.

> Bush offers a framework for the consideration of positive and negative impacts of development projects in conflict-prone regions before, during and after implementation.

Leonhardt, Manuela (2000) 'Improving Capacities and Procedures for Formulating and Implementing Effective Conflict Prevention Strategies: An Overview of Recent Donor Initiatives.' In Lund, Michael and Rasamoelina, Guenola, (Eds) *The Impact of Conflict Prevention Policy: Cases, Measures, Assessments.* Germany: Die Deutche Bibliothek.

> Based on a survey of major donors, the research provides an overview of changes in policy, evaluation and partnerships in responding to conflict. The appendix includes a matrix of donor agencies and their efforts to incorporate conflict prevention and peacebuilding measures into their remit.

McDonnell, Brendan, McIlldoon, Nicola and O'Neill, Jim (1996) *Evaluation in the Northern Ireland Voluntary Sector: A Review of Policy and Practice.* Belfast: Community Evaluation Northern Ireland.

> Through a series of surveys, interviews and seminars, the authors have gathered information on practitioner, funder and evaluator perceptions of evaluation practices in the Northern Ireland voluntary sector.

Oakley, Peter, Pratt, Brian and Clayton, Andrew (1998) *Outcomes and Impact: Evaluating Change in Social Development.* Oxford: INTRAC.

> A thoughtful analysis of how change can be evaluated in social development work, including methods, challenges and lessons from experience.

Walker, Perry, Lewis, Julie and Lingaya, Sanjiv (2000) *Prove it! Measuring the Effect of Neighbourhood Renewal on Local people.* Birmingham: Groundwork UK.

> A handbook for evaluating community-based programmes, with an emphasis on a participatory approach.

Websites

ALNAP

http://www.alnap.org/

> The website provides information on training opportunities as well as background papers and in-depth studies about the evaluation of humanitarian activities.

Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation

http://www.berghof-center.org/handbook/cf.htm

> An on-line tool that provides an overview of current approaches, methods, techniques and theories of conflict transformation. The site includes a section on how interventions are assessed, focusing predominantly on PCIA.

European Union

http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/evaluation/

> The website contains methodological tools for incorporating evaluation into the programme cycle and for financial/economic analysis. Evaluation reports produced since 1988 are also available.

International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

http://www.idrc.ca/evaluation

> This site has a variety of evaluation tools and methodologies as well as an extensive compilation of strategic evaluations that consider diverse thematic and geographic issues.

International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC)

http://www.intrac.org

> This website provides diverse resources for non-profit organisations, including information on evaluation and impact assessment. Some publications can be found on-line, others must be ordered.

MandE News

http://www.mande.co.uk/news.htm

> A vast clearinghouse of information on topics related to monitoring and evaluation, focusing specifically on development work.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

http://www1.oecd.org/dac/Evaluation/

> A comprehensive site with information on the evaluation of humanitarian assistance.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

http://www.unicef.org/reseval/

> The website has a database of completed evaluations and information about tools and methods for evaluating and monitoring UNICEF projects.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

http://www.undp.org/eo/documents/who.htm

A handbook written by UNDP on conducting participatory evaluations.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

http://www.unhcr.ch/epau

> UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) maintains an on-line database of all evaluation reports produced since 1994 as well as assessments of specific projects.

World Bank

http://www.worldbank.org/oed/

> The website of the Operations Evaluation Department (OED) of the World Bank Group contains evaluations of countries, sectors and projects, best practice documents, and information about the evaluation methods used by the OED.

National Government Websites

> A number of country foreign aid programmes have both completed evaluation reports and guidelines for monitoring and evaluation available on-line.

Australian Government's Overseas Aid Program (AusAID)

http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pubs.cfm?Type=PubEvaluationReports
http://www.ausaid.gov.au/ausguide/contents.cfm

Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca

DFID

http://www.dfid.gov.uk/

Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DANIDA)
http://www.um.dk/danida/evalueringer

SIDA
http://www.sida.se/Sida/jsp/Crosslink.jsp?d=520

United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
http://www.dec.org/usaid.eval
http://www.dec.org/partners/eval.cfm

APPENDIX III:
Resources - General Approaches to Evaluation

The resources in this section provide general information on planning and performing evaluations from different perspectives and using varied approaches.

Books and Articles

Beyer, Barry K. (1995) *How to Conduct a Formative Evaluation.* Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
    An introduction to formative evaluation with a focus on education programmes.

Bond, Sally, Boyd, Sally and Rapp, Kathleen (1997) *A Practical Guide to Evaluating Your Own Programs.* North Carolina: Horizon Research.
    A practical manual directed at community-based organisations. It covers both the 'why' and 'how' to evaluate a programme and offers insight into data interpretation.

Caulley, D. (1997) 'What is Goal Free Evaluation?' *Evaluation News and Comment Magazine, volume 6, number 2.*
    Both a description of the theory behind goal-free evaluation and details on how to perform this type of evaluation.

Council on Foundations. (1993) *Evaluation for Foundations.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.
    An outline of multiple aspects to be considered when evaluating donors, including why, when and how donors are evaluated.

McCartney, Clem (1992) *The Promise of Evaluation: What Evaluation Offers Policymakers and Practitioners.* Coleraine: University of Ulster.
    A short paper considering the expectations held about evaluation and comparing them with what different types of evaluation can offer.

Orosz, Joel J. (2000) *The Insider's Guide to Grantmaking: How Foundations Find, Fund, and Manage Effective Programs.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
    A discussion of grant-giving from a funder perspective. All stages of the process are discussed, from pre-funding to the final dissemination of lessons learned.

Quinn Patton, M. (2002) *Utilization-Focused Evaluation (U-FE) Checklist.* Michigan: Evaluation Center, University of Western Michigan.
    A checklist for performing utilisation-focused evaluation. Included are sections on identifying future uses and users, selecting the focus and designing the evaluation.

Reineke, Robert A. (1991) 'Stakeholder Involvement in Evaluation: Suggestions for Practice.' *Evaluation Practice, volume 12, number 1.*
> An exploration of the link between increased stakeholder involvement and better utilisation of evaluation results.

Rossi, P.H. and Freeman, H.E. (1987) *Evaluation: A Systemic Approach.* (6th Ed.) California: Sage Publications.
> An introduction to generic evaluation.

Scriven, Michael (1991) *Evaluation Thesaurus.* (4th Ed.) California: Sage Publications.
> An encyclopaedia of evaluation terminology, theories and methods.

Websites

Bill Trochim's Center for Social Science Research Methods
http://trochim.human.cornell.edu/
> This website provides explanations of different methods for data collection useful for evaluation.

Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)
http://www.ericae.net/
> A clearinghouse of evaluation information with a focus on education. This site also links to the on-line journal *Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation.*

The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University.
http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/
> The website contains evaluation reports, papers on issues relating to evaluation and a glossary of terms.

Management Assistance Project (MAP) for Non-Profits
http://www.mapnp.org/library/
> A library of information for non-profit organisations, with a specific section on evaluation.

United States General Accounting Office
http://www.gao.gov/
> This site has excellent generic information on conducting evaluations in its Special Publications: Evaluation Research and Methodology section.

W.K. Kellogg Foundation
http://www.wkkf.org/Knowledgebase/Pubs/
> The Kellogg Foundation has produced an evaluation handbook that is available on-line.

Evaluation Society Websites

There are a number of national evaluation society websites available, each containing varying amounts of information, literature and detail on evaluation.

American Evaluation Association
http://www.eval.org

Australasian Evaluation Society
http://www.aes.asn.au

Canadian Evaluation Society
http://evaluationcanada.ca

European Evaluation Society
http://europeanevaluation.org

French Evaluation Society
http://www.sfe.asso.fr

German Evaluation Society
http://www.degeval.de

Swiss Evaluation Society
http://www.seval.ch

UK Evaluation Society
http://www.evaluation.org.uk

APPENDIX IV:
Working Glossary

Many of the meanings associated with terms in current evaluation literature vary according to field, context and author. The terms in this glossary have been adopted for the purposes of this study and focus on the evaluation of conflict resolution. This glossary is not intended as a comprehensive definition of all terms related to either evaluation or conflict resolution, nor for general applicability to all types of evaluation.

Administration (of an intervention): The realisation of logistical, co-ordination and secretarial tasks to support an intervention.

Appropriateness Consideration: An exploration of the practical impetus for an intervention rooted in the needs of the situation.

Baseline Data: Information about the condition of a situation or subject gathered before an intervention is started. This allows an evaluator to measure the performance of an intervention against pre-collected data.

Best Practice: Systems of knowledge, guidelines or recommendations, established on the basis of past experience, concerning how best to do things and why.

Cluster Evaluation: The evaluation of a set of programmes usually associated by geographic area or thematic focus.

Conflict Resolution Interventions: A general term referring to all initiatives developed to build peace, address the root causes of conflict, improve human security, increase recognition of human rights, bring equality, promote diversity or build new sustainable political institutions. [Also referred to as 'intervention' in the text]

Cost-Accountability: The consideration of how cost implications and alternatives are weighed when undertaking an intervention.

Criteria: Standards by which something can be judged.

Ex-Ante Evaluation: An assessment conducted prior to the start of an intervention that gathers and analyses information in order to forecast potential impacts.

Ex-Post Evaluation: An evaluation occurring one to five years after the end of an intervention. It is used to determine whether the intervention had any enduring impact on the participants or the target community.

External Evaluation: An evaluation conducted by an individual or group not connected to the intervention in any way.

Focus of Change: What an intervention is seeking to influence or change; for example institutions, procedures, behaviours or attitudes.

Formative Evaluation: Evaluations incorporated throughout the lifecycle of an intervention, allowing the findings to refine and improve the project as it progresses.

Funder: A general term to refer to any source from which conflict resolution agencies obtain funds, including foundations, trusts, donor governments and specialised agencies.

Goal-Free Evaluation: An evaluation approach concentrating on the appropriateness of an intervention and its contribution to a given situation, rather than whether it has met its initial goals and objectives. This approach was originally documented by Dr. Michael Scriven.

Impact: The positive or negative consequences of the interventions' outcomes (either intended or unintended).

Impact Evaluation: The measurement of the impact of an intervention after its conclusion (*post-facto*).

Indicator: A specific factor that supplies information about the performance of an intervention by providing evidence that a certain condition exists or that certain results have (or have not) been achieved.

Internal Evaluation: Evaluation conducted by a staff member or unit from within the organisation responsible for delivering the intervention but who has not participated directly in programme activities.

Macroevaluation: An evaluation of whether and how individual projects synergise to contribute to the development of a peaceful society.

Management (of an intervention): The supervision and planning activities related to an intervention.

Meta-Evaluation: The process by which evaluations are themselves evaluated. It includes an examination of inaccuracies and errors in the administrative process and looks for bias in the way the evaluation was conducted.

Methods: The research techniques used to gather data when conducting an evaluation.

Monitoring: An on-going process of surveillance, often measuring the intervention against its initial goals and time-lines.

Outcome: The short-term changes that result from an intervention's activities.

Output: The immediate, tangible and frequently quantifiable results of the activities conducted as part of an intervention.

Participatory Evaluation: An approach that actively involves all stakeholders in the evaluation process. The prospective evaluator carries no more weight than other stakeholders in the design, implementation and analysis of evaluation results.

Peace Writ-Large: A concept referring to 'peace in the big picture' or the overall situation in the country.

Process Appraisal: A consideration of the way in which a project is conducted.

Qualitative Data: Descriptive data generated through techniques such as case studies, focus groups and interviews.

Quantitative Data: Numeric data generated through scientific techniques such as surveys, population studies and statistical reviews.

Results-Based Evaluation: An evaluation approach that emphasises describable or measurable change resulting from a cause-and-effect relationship.

Self-Evaluation: An evaluation performed by operating staff and beneficiaries. The main objectives of this type of evaluation are usually organisational learning and improved implementation of interventions.

Stakeholders: All parties that are involved in the evaluation process or who have a direct interest in its results.

Strategic Review: An examination of whether an organisation is undertaking the appropriate activities to achieve its mandate.

Summative Evaluation: An evaluation undertaken immediately after an intervention is concluded.

Sustainability: The durability of an intervention's results after it has concluded.

Theoretical Analysis: The identification of the theory and assumptions that underpin a project-strategy and a review of their effectiveness.

Theory-Based Evaluation: An evaluation approach that examines the theories of change and assumptions on which an intervention is based to better understand why the intervention has achieved its results.

Tiers of Influence: The 'who' (individual, family unit, community, society at large) that is targeted through an intervention.

Transfer: A concept introduced by Dr. H. Kelman that refers to the 'multiplier' or 'ripple' effect whereby the outcome/impact of an intervention extends beyond its immediate recipients.

Unintended Effects: Positive or negative outcomes and impacts that resulted from an intervention but were not anticipated in the project design.

Utilisation-Focused Evaluation: A user-oriented approach to evaluation, most often linked to Dr. Michael Quinn Patton. Throughout the evaluation process, the focus is on how the evaluation will be used in the future and by whom. Evaluations are only considered beneficial if the information is used by stakeholders to better practice.

APPENDIX V
List of Interviewees

Dr. Amr Abdalla, George Mason University, United States

Mark Adair, Community Relations Council, Northern Ireland

Claes Bennedich, Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA), Sweden

Emery Brusset, Channel Research, France

Ivan Campbell, International Alert, UK

Nike Carstarphen, Alliance for Conflict Transformation, United States

Douglas Carpenter, European Union (Evaluation Unit), Belgium

Dr. Stephen Fabick, US & THEM: The Challenge of Diversity, United States

Dr. David Fairman, MIT-Harvard Public Disputes Program and Consensus Building Institute, United States

Eran Fraenkel, Search for Common Ground Macedonia, Macedonia

Kinga Goncz, Partners Hungary, Hungary

Dr. Krishna Kumar, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United States

James Magowan, Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust, Northern Ireland

Bulelwa Makalima, Centre for Conflict Resolution, South Africa

Fayaz Manji, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), Canada

Dr. Clem McCartney, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland

Brendan McDonnell, Community Evaluation Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland

Kemi Ogunsanya, African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), South Africa

Chris O'Halloran, Belfast Interface Project, Northern Ireland

Violeta Petroska-Beshka, Ethnic Conflict Resolution Project, Macedonia

Anne Porter, Co-operation Ireland, Republic of Ireland

Matthew Smith, Strategy and Tactics, South Africa

David Todd, Department for International Development (DFID), UK

Sue Williams, Independent Consultant, Northern Ireland

Ian White, Glencree Reconciliation Centre, Republic of Ireland

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Cheyanne Church

Ms. Church is the Director of the Policy and Evaluation Unit - INCORE, which aims to bridge the gap between research, policy and practice. Her work has focused on improving the impact of research on policy and evaluation. Her activities in this role have included briefing government officials in Macedonia on conflict resolution strategies and techniques; co-ordinating work with the European Commission; being a member of the Reflecting on Peace Practice Advisory Group and conducting training on women and peacebuilding in India. She is also the Director of INCORE's International Summer School - an annual training opportunity for senior level policy makers, practitioners and academics. In addition to her role at INCORE, Cheyanne works with the Parades Commission and the DunCrun Cultural Initiative; a capacity building project for the Loyalist community. Cheyanne was formerly the Interim Director of The Coexistence Initiative; an international organisation which seeks to make the world safe for difference. She has published on both conflict and development issues.

Julie Shouldice

Ms. Shouldice is working as a Research Officer with the Policy and Evaluation Unit - INCORE on Evaluation and Conflict Resolution. She has an undergraduate degree in Political Science from the University of Toronto and a Master's Degree in Peace and Conflict Studies from the University of Ulster. Julie has worked in the Balkans: as a Human Rights Monitor in Croatia and with refugees from Kosovo. Most recently, she was a Branch Manager with the Canadian Red Cross, designing, delivering and evaluating community-based programmes. She continues to be involved in various aspects of disaster and emergency relief.

'The aim is not to avoid failure,
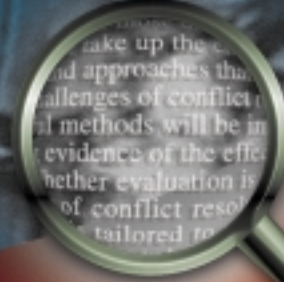*rather the aim is to give triumph a chance'*

- Huw Weldon

The Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Interventions

PART II:
EMERGING PRACTICE & THEORY

Cheyanne Church

Julie Shouldice

INCORE

Conflicts of an ethnic, religious, political and cultural nature continue to dominate the world's attention. Since 1990, over 150 wars have taken place, most of which are recurrent, protracted and intra-state, and there is little evidence that such conflicts will decrease significantly over the coming decades. Ninety percent of our states are now multi-identity states and most governments are having difficulty dealing positively with such diversity.

Addressing the causes, effects, solutions and post-settlement impacts of such wars has been the role of the UNU Institute for Conflict Research at the University of Ulster (INCORE) since it was established in 1993. INCORE is a joint research institute of the United Nations University and the University of Ulster. It seeks to address the management and resolution of contemporary conflicts through research, training, practice, policy and theory. INCORE's vision is of a world where the knowledge and skills exist to make non-military management of ethno-political conflict the norm.

The Research Unit undertakes, commissions and supervises research of a multidisciplinary nature, particularly on post-settlement issues, governance and diversity, and research methodology in violent societies. The *Policy and Evaluation Unit* is committed to bridging the gaps between theory, practice and policy. It seeks to ensure that conflict-related research and practice is incorporated into grassroots programming and governmental policy.

INCORE

University of Ulster
Aberfoyle House
Northland Road
Derry/Londonderry
BT48 7JA
Northern Ireland

Tel: + 44 (0)28 7137 5500
Fax: + 44 (0)28 7137 5510
Email: incore@incore.ulst.ac.uk
Website: *www.incore.ulst.ac.uk*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

PREFACE

This paper is the result of the second phase of the UNU/INCORE[1] research project on the evaluation of conflict resolution interventions. The first phase sought to identify the current perceptions, attitudes and practices regarding evaluation held within the conflict resolution practitioner, funder and evaluator communities. It resulted in a publication, The Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Interventions: Framing the State of Play, *which provides readers with information about current practices in the field and a possible framework regarding the different uses of evaluation from a learning perspective.[2] Additionally, it summarises the major questions and challenges facing those involved in this work and offers guides to resources on a variety of topics related to conflict resolution evaluation (CRE).*

Phase Two of this project saw a meeting convened of 24 individuals from around the world who are actively engaged with issues related to conflict resolution and evaluation (see Appendix 2 for full participant list). Held in Northern Ireland, July 4-5, 2002 this meeting/workshop sought to advance the discussion around a number of the questions and challenges raised during the original research. Throughout the two days of intensive discussions four themes were identified as crosscutting through a number of these questions and challenges. This paper not only captures the essence of the discussion around these emerging themes but also aims to further develop the issues through research and analysis.

The two publications resulting from this project are complimentary in nature but are intended to stand alone. Whereas the first publication offers a comprehensive presentation of the current activity in CRE, this piece narrows its focus to themes that emerged from the discussions of the questions and challenges in this area. Reading part one will give the reader a broader understanding of CRE but is not a prerequisite to understanding this work.

---

[1] The United Nations University's International Conflict Research Centre at the University of Ulster (UNU/INCORE) seeks to address the causes, effects, solutions and post-settlement impacts of violent conflict. Further information may be found at www.incore.ulst.ac.uk.

[2] This document may be ordered from INCORE or is available on-line at http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/home/policy/projectsumm.htm

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evaluation has the potential to contribute to learning and to improve the conflict resolution projects that are implemented in the field. Yet, many of the evaluation approaches that are currently in use cannot be adapted for implementation in conflict resolution (CR) environments, where the context is constantly changing and the time-frame for results can extend over years or even generations. Furthermore, the fear exists that evaluation may expose the fact that conflict resolution might not achieve the results that have popularly been attributed to its work.

However, despite the challenges, valuable information can be gained through the evaluation process. This paper seeks to summarise thinking on a number of the challenges that have been encountered by conflict resolution evaluators in the hopes of enhancing evaluation practice and therefore its potential contribution to this field.

Emerging Practice

As evaluations of conflict resolution projects become more common, those who are actively engaged in this work highlighted two areas for consideration - the evaluator and politics. Each of these areas is broken down into a number of issues:

The Evaluator

Roles of the CR Evaluator: A CR evaluator can take on different roles depending on the goal or purpose of the evaluation. A typology of roles - the 'operative', the 'consultant' and the 'learning facilitator' - provide a continuum of responsibilities for the evaluator.

Level of Engagement: There is also a spectrum of engagement between the evaluator and the project. At one end is the external evaluator with no previous interaction with the project. At the other end is self-evaluation, conducted by people internal to the project. In the middle is a range of options with a compromise between these extremes.

Ethical Responsibilities: An evaluator has the responsibility both to do no harm and to examine whether the evaluation itself is ethically responsible. Developing a code of conduct for CR evaluators is one possible way in which this challenge could be addressed.

Politics

Politics of Selection: Decisions about factors such as when the evaluation is undertaken, the duration of the evaluation, the questions to be answered and the type of feedback process, can be politically motivated. This can affect the credibility and value of the evaluation's findings. However, in some circumstances, these decisions are made out of expediency or ignorance, rather than political motives. In such cases, awareness of this challenge is a useful tool for mitigation.

Politics of Dissemination: The issue of who owns the evaluation and who determines its distribution can affect the information that is provided through the process. These factors have the potential to impact on future programming, funding and policy decisions.

Emerging Theory

Through discussion with experienced evaluators, practitioners and funders, two gaps in the theoretical understanding of conflict resolution emerged. Exploring these gaps is not only important to evaluation but also critical to the development of the field as a whole.

Micro-Macro Connection

An important issue for the field to address is if, and if so, how, change is effected beyond the direct participants in a project. By examining 'whom' the project seeks to change or influence as a base, it becomes possible to determine whether other tiers (whether individual, community, society or nation) are also influenced through the work. By developing a better understanding of what information is transferred and how, the field can develop more effective and targeted programmes.

Evaluating the Ideas that Underpin our Actions

Many of the theories and assumptions that underlie conflict resolution work are not articulated or explored in the evaluation process. Yet, incorporating this aspect into evaluation could help determine whether project underachievement is due to poor implementation or conceptual inaccuracies in the project design. In order to assist with this process, definitions of key concepts were clarified:

Theories of Conflict determine the origin(s) or cause(s) of conflict.

Theories of Conflict Resolution consider what needs to happen to bring about the resolution of a conflict and therefore set the overarching goal of what one is trying to achieve (e.g. equality, diversity).

Theories of Practice establish a method or strategy for addressing a conflict.

Theories of Change are generalised beliefs about how and why widespread change can be generated in a violent conflict.

Working Assumptions about Change refer to specific assumptions made at the level of project design and implementation about the transformative effect of each discrete action/activity.

To understand how these different concepts interrelate, see Diagram 8 on page 37. Theory-based evaluation, which explores how and why an initiative works, provides a possible starting point for future evaluations of working assumptions and theories of change.

Sufficient experience has now been acquired in conflict resolution to allow the field to become more critical of how interventions are conducted and more sophisticated in analysing their effects. However, the information gathered through the evaluation process is often under-utilised and overly simplistic. By considering more of the factors that influence the project and its evaluation, it is hoped that better evaluations will be produced that contribute to an improvement in both practice and theory.

INTRODUCTION

When conducted effectively, evaluation can be an essential ingredient to learning and therefore to improvements in the conflict resolution[1] field. It has the potential to enhance the programmatic[2] work that is being done at the field level, increase funder confidence about what their investment is accomplishing, and reduce public and government scepticism about the impact of conflict resolution work (Ross, 2001). However, as a field, conflict resolution (CR) tends both to fear and to avoid evaluation.

Currently, conflict resolution evaluation (CRE) is an *ad hoc* process that conforms to the needs of the moment and is limited by a lack of skills, understanding and resources. CRE is often based on generic evaluation approaches that do not meet many of the unique needs of this field. Approaches that assume a project will be conducted in a static environment with a set start and end point cannot be adapted for conflict resolution interventions[3] which operate in a situation where the context is constantly changing and where the desired impacts[4] may not occur for years or even generations. Additionally, there is never a single interpretation of events in a conflict situation - rather multiple realities exist simultaneously for different actors and parties. A snapshot of one moment in the project misses the many dimensions in which the work is being carried out and many of the subtleties that are central to peace work (Bush, K., Meeting Discussion, 2002). By their very nature, conflict resolution interventions try to effect changes in intangible areas such as perceptions, trust, attitudes, levels of cooperation and relationships. Thus, some of the key challenges for conflict resolution

---

[1] The use of the phrase 'conflict resolution' is not meant to refer to a particular theory or ideological preference. Rather it is a general term to encompass a variety of activities and approaches to resolving disputes and transforming conflict.

[2] Project, programme and intervention will be used interchangeably in this paper to refer to all conflict resolution work undertaken in the field.

[3] The phrase 'conflict resolution intervention' is a general term referring to all initiatives developed to build peace, address the root causes of conflict, improve human security, increase recognition of human rights, bring equality, promote diversity or build new sustainable political institutions.

[4] An 'impact' is the positive or negative consequence of the outcomes of an intervention (either intended or unintended).

evaluations are to find ways to measure these changes, to test the sustainability[5] of the change and to ascertain its effect on the overall peace process. The approaches used to date have had very limited success in responding to these problems.

Most conflict resolution practitioners are convinced that the work in which they are engaged is both useful and productive - an assessment often based on their own interactions and perceptions rather than on quantifiable data or qualitative research results. Evaluation is resisted because it has the potential to uncover ineffective work and/or explode myths central to the belief systems of the field. If comprehensive evaluations were to show that some of the activities undertaken in the past fifty years under the mantle of conflict resolution did not in fact lead to the anticipated ends, it could potentially undermine the credibility of the entire field. Without evaluation, however, the field loses the opportunity to benefit from a learning process that would contribute to the improvement of practice.

What constitutes successful achievement of conflict resolution goals, however, needs to be further explored and articulated by the field. The aims of many projects are abstract - such as 'improving inter-community relations' or 'creating a peaceful atmosphere' - and to be made useful these statements need to be translated into concrete and measurable accomplishments. At a theoretical level, the field needs to consider whether a project should be deemed 'successful' if it has accomplished the activities laid out at the beginning of the intervention or whether the notion of success should also include a contribution to peace writ-large[6]. Even in cases where good work is being done, individual projects are unlikely to be able to live up to idealistic images of directly contributing to the achievement of overall peace. Partial successes are often important and the field needs to appreciate how they matter and move a conflict in the right direction. If the bar of expectations is set too high, evaluation will highlight what has not been achieved rather than what has (Ross, M., Meeting Discussion, 2002).

Despite these limitations, evaluations of conflict resolution interventions continue to be conducted for a variety of reasons. Practitioners primarily tend to undertake evaluations to fulfil grant requirements set by funders, as well as

to learn about what did and did not work so as to improve their practice. Conversely, funders are principally motivated by a need to ensure that their own agency goals are being met by reviewing the funding allocations they have made. These differing motivations can cause frustration when they are not communicated amongst parties involved and the end results of the evaluation only serve the needs of one actor (Church and Shouldice, 2002).

Discussions about differing motivations, expected outcomes and relationships in the evaluation process often lead to an examination of the role of power in relationships between stakeholders - practitioners, evaluators, funders and project participants/beneficiaries. The conflict resolution field is uncomfortable with the concept of 'power' and tends to reject realist power-based notions of analysis, instead approaching issues from a collaborative and cooperative perspective. This discomfort provokes resistance to engaging deeply in dialogue about, and implementation of, evaluation because such engagement would require addressing issues of power directly (Hoffman, M., Meeting Discussion, 2002).

Despite the aforementioned challenges, useful information can be gleaned through the evaluation process in many cases. However, this learning is rarely internalised in the organisation or disseminated within the field. The evaluation processes have traditionally had few opportunities to feedback and interactively share the reflections of the evaluator with practitioners. Moreover, few practitioners have the time and space to consider the comments and recommendations emerging from the evaluations (Gormley-Heenan, C., Meeting Discussion, 2002). Competitiveness between conflict resolution agencies, particularly for funding, has also decreased the motivation to share lessons about practice (Church, M., Meeting Discussion, 2002). Finally, even if individual projects or practitioners have the opportunity to learn from the evaluations in which they participate, this information needs to be translated into policy if it is to be institutionalised.

This paper is the second publication resulting from a research project to explore evaluation and conflict resolution interventions. The first paper[7] aimed to identify and summarise the state of evaluation within three communities in this field; practitioners, funders and evaluators. In the process, it raised a series of

---

5 'Sustainability' refers to the durability of an intervention's results after it has concluded.

6 'Peace writ-large' is a concept borrowed from the Reflecting on Peace Practice Project (www.cdainc.com/rpp) that refers to 'peace in the big picture' or the overall situation in the country.

7 Church, C. and Shouldice, J. (2002). *The Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Interventions: Framing the State of Play*. Derry/Londonderry: INCORE. (ISBN: 0 9549 4061 9 or available online at http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/home/policy/projectsumm.htm)

questions and challenges that warranted further investigation and discussion. To this end the second phase of the project convened a meeting of twenty-four individuals engaged in these issues. During this meeting four issues emerged that were cross-cutting to a number of the questions and challenges.

This paper seeks to summarise and advance the thinking on these nascent themes. The discussion of themes, digested from a spectrum of experiences of individuals who are actively engaged in CRE, does not merely summarise the meeting dialogues, however, but also incorporates independent research and analysis. The themes include both emerging practice for conducting evaluations, and theoretical gaps and questions that the field of conflict resolution needs to address in order to advance. Although the gaps in theory are not necessarily areas commonly under consideration when conducting an evaluation, advancements in such thinking would significantly improve an evaluation's capacity to accurately assess the outcomes[8] and impacts of programmes. In turn, this would provide substantial benefit to the field as a whole.

---

[8] An 'outcome' is the short-term change that results from an intervention's activities.

EMERGING PRACTICE IN THE EVALUATION OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION INTERVENTIONS

As the evaluation of interventions gradually becomes more common, a body of expertise will develop that can feed into and improve the evaluation process' ability to handle the nuances of conflict programmes. A nascent pool of information is already beginning to develop, as was evidenced in the 2002 meeting in Northern Ireland. Two main areas for consideration emerged: the way an evaluator interacts with stakeholders and the politics surrounding the evaluation process.

Emerging Practice: Roles, Relationships & Ethics

The interaction between the evaluator and the stakeholders encompasses three issue areas. First is a discussion of the different roles that a CR evaluator can play. Second is a reflection on the varying levels of engagement that an evaluator can have with a project while still maintaining credibility. Both of these issues illustrate a tension between detached and participatory stances. Finally, there is a consideration of the ethical responsibilities inherent to conducting evaluations. By documenting and disseminating the learning of the participants from the Northern Ireland meeting, it is hoped that others involved in conflict resolution evaluation will benefit from their experience.

I. Emerging Roles of the CR Evaluator

Mirroring advancements made in general evaluation several years ago (Weiss, 1998), a diversity of roles for the conflict resolution evaluator is becoming evident. The function an evaluator plays in the process is primarily dependent on the goal or purpose of the evaluation. However, there are a number of other factors that influence this decision such as the parameters set by the evaluation commissioner, the time and money available for the evaluation, the scope of the evaluation and the source of the funds. These aspects contribute to the determination of who the most appropriate evaluator would be.

Emerging practice suggests that there are three different roles an evaluator can adopt: operative, consultant and learning facilitator. The roles are presented here as a typology in order to illustrate the spectrum of options. This typology should not be interpreted as a hierarchy of choices, as each of these roles is useful in different situations. As can be seen in the Function column of Diagram 1, each role builds upon or adds to the previous. It is important for stakeholders not only to be aware that evaluators' functions can differ but also to take the time to determine which role is best suited for the type of evaluation to be performed and to set the parameters of the evaluation accordingly. Careful selection of the role that the evaluator is to play will help to define the results expected through the evaluation, which, in turn, leads to fewer misunderstandings and frustrations about motives and expectations between participating stakeholders.

Diagram 1: Roles of Evaluators

	Function	Commonly Instigated	Stakeholder Involvement	Output
Operative	Describe project Conduct logical analysis Assess objective achievement	Project conclusion	Primarily controlled by evaluator who convenes relevant stakeholders	Assessment Report
Consultant	All of the above + Expand survey to include unintended and negative impacts Establish means to 'use' evaluation results	End of pilot project or end of new phase in established project	Led by evaluator Joint process for establishing usefulness and learning	Assessment Report Feedback Workshops at end of the process
Learning Facilitator	All of the above + Actively engage in driving project development Attempt to link project learning into the larger organisation	Beginning of the project Runs throughout	Evaluator facilitates stakeholders All actors empowered to engage with the process	Assessment Report Feedback workshops throughout process Future Recommendations Establishment of Learning System

The first role - the 'operative' - sees the evaluators engaging in conventional evaluation activities. Their role is to describe the project, provide a logical analysis of what has occurred and assess the achievement of project objectives. The operative would usually be brought in at the end of a project (e.g. after a cycle of funding has ended). This type of evaluator would ensure that the project conformed to agreed parameters and that it was progressing as all stakeholders had anticipated. They would produce a report containing a description of the project and their analysis as to its achievement of success.

The second role, which has a slightly broader remit, is that of 'consultant'. Consultants would complete the same data collection as the operative but would expand their information gathering to include unintended positive and negative impacts. The primary distinction between these roles is that the consultant would also actively assist practitioners and funders with the learning process through efforts such as developing recommendations for improving the project and setting up feedback seminars to discuss their findings. This type of evaluation would be most useful for projects in a pilot or test phase, or for established projects that are elaborating new hypotheses or new practices in their work. It could also be useful in situations where practitioners want to ensure that they are using the appropriate methods and approaches to reach their desired ends. It provides both a broader exploration of the effects that the project is having within its context and an opportunity for stakeholders to revisit the findings and learn from the work.

Finally, an evaluator who engages throughout the duration of a project is the 'learning facilitator'. As before, this type of evaluator is involved in the collection of data about both intended and unintended project outcomes and impacts. However, the learning facilitator also actively drives the development of the project - and potentially the organisation. This type of evaluator would help the stakeholders to reflect on the project throughout its implementation and would assist in the determination of future actions. Learning facilitators may also be involved in the creation of plans that will push the agency forward and in developing integrated learning processes for the future.

Evaluations vary in their quality and rigour, regardless of the type of evaluator selected (Spencer, 1997; Church and Shouldice, 2002). There are no standards of good practice for such things as the scope of information to be included or frequency and quality of interaction with the project under review. This makes comparison between evaluation results unreliable and can undermine the credibility of claims of effectiveness. Similarly, there are no standards set for

the skills and knowledge needed to undertake a CR evaluation. Anecdotal evidence indicates that it is rare to find an evaluator with both evaluation methods training and conflict resolution experience. Some evaluators have received training in general evaluation methodology and some have experience working in conflict but neither are necessary criteria when undertaking a CR evaluation. Although applicable to all the roles described, conflict-specific training is of particular relevance to the consultant and learning facilitator functions. Providing recommendations for improving the project under review or suggesting ways forward for the organisation require the evaluator to have the skills and competence commensurate with such a responsibility (Church, M., Meeting Discussion, 2002). To ensure a high quality evaluation that will be useful to those engaged in conflict resolution work, the field needs to encourage training in CR-specific evaluation and find methods to recognise qualified evaluators.

II. The Evaluator – Project Relationship: Levels of Engagement

Although popular perception holds that the only credible evaluator is an external evaluator (Church and Shouldice, 2002), other levels of engagement are now being explored in conflict resolution work. The differing degrees of engagement between the evaluator and the project can be conceptualised as a spectrum, ranging from external evaluation to self-evaluation, as depicted in Diagram 2.

Diagram 2: Spectrum of Evaluator Engagement

External Evaluator: Evaluator with no previous knowledge or involvement in the project or organisation

"Family-doctor" evaluator: External professional but not detached

Mixed evaluation team: Internal and external representatives

Self-evaluation
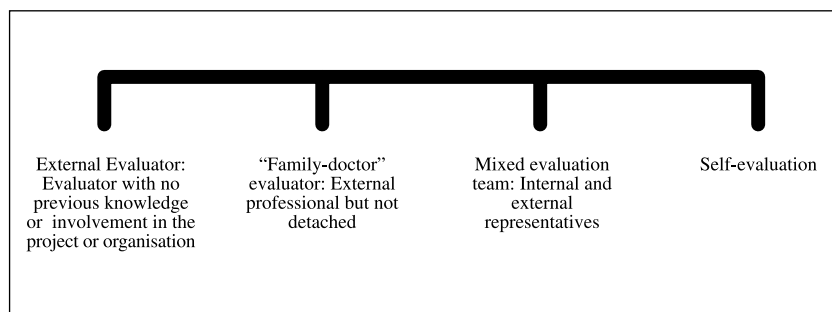
Located at one end of the spectrum, the external evaluator has no previous knowledge or prior interaction with the project or organisation. One of the common driving forces behind commissioning an external evaluator is the perception that only someone unbiased, neutral and removed from the project

can evaluate it objectively and transparently. However, experience in conflict resolution work has shown that utilising an evaluator who is completely ignorant of many aspects of the project can be detrimental.

There are several ways in which an external evaluator may not be the most appropriate for this type of intervention. Evaluators who are parachuted into a conflict situation where a CR project is taking place may miss important factors related to local culture and customs (Abdalla, A., Church, M., Large, J., Meeting Discussions, 2002). Moreover, it is difficult for the evaluator to understand what success has been achieved from a contextually sensitive perspective, without considering the environment in which the project is operating (Makalima, B., Meeting Discussion, 2002). Finally, any information gained during the evaluation that is not codified in their final report will be lost, including decisions about the execution of the evaluation and the weighting of factors under consideration (Parker, S., Meeting Discussion, 2002).

What happens to the credibility of the evaluator, however, if they develop an ongoing relationship with the project and the organisation? Do they lose their ability to provide neutral and unbiased assessment? Perhaps a more pertinent question to consider is the degree of importance placed on neutrality or even perceived neutrality. Some argue that an evaluator need not necessarily be unaware of the project or uninterested in its outcomes to be fair in assessing it (Austin, A., Meeting Discussion, 2002). As one evaluator explains, she can simultaneously be both 'part and apart' of the project. That is, she can be interested and engaged in what the project or organisation seeks to accomplish yet still able to evaluate the project from a detached perspective (Church, M., Meeting Discussion, 2002). One possible way to perceive this type of interaction is to compare the evaluator with a family doctor. Just like the doctor, the evaluator is expected to be professional, yet not neutral or detached from the best interests of the project. The evaluator would engage with a project over time and build up an awareness of its history and issues of concern. This would then allow for a more comprehensive and contextually relevant evaluation (Abdalla, A., Meeting Discussion, 2002). This depiction of a family doctor type of relationship moves one toward the middle of the spectrum.

Further along the spectrum, one finds a 'mixed' evaluation team made up of representatives external and internal to the organisation. This team could provide a compromise that satisfies the need for some people who are external to the project and others who maintain an ongoing attention to its development.

This balance would offer both perspectives - an external, neutral and unbiased reflection that meets concerns about accountability and transparency, coupled with an internal understanding of the contextual evolution of the project - providing a more multidimensional assessment.

This 'mixed' team approach is currently being implementing by a few pioneering agencies. One agency has implemented an evaluation structure whereby a staff member, who is not directly involved with the project but is still an employee of the implementing organisation, is included on the evaluation team. That individual is able to contribute useful background knowledge that the evaluation team needs to make its assessment and provides long-term continuity in the evaluation process. Additionally, the staff member receives a plethora of information - that can be fed back into the organisation - about the findings from the evaluation itself, as well as about considerations for structuring future projects and evaluation processes (Makalima, B., Meeting Discussion, 2002).

If participation on an evaluation team can provide a learning experience for practitioners, one might extrapolate that this could also be the case for funders - particularly desk officers. The opportunity to engage in an evaluation process would improve the feedback mechanism from field to funder and provide a different perspective on project goals and successes. Participating stakeholders would be furnished with a better comprehension of the evaluation process in general, which could in turn improve planning and implementation processes. Furthermore, funder involvement could help bridge the communication gap between funders and practitioners. While the authors acknowledge the resource implications in terms of time and finances, as well as the internal strategic planning that would be required for stakeholders to be included in some evaluation teams, the benefits to the field would be substantial.

At the other end of the spectrum is self-evaluation, whereby the people engaged in the implementation of the project conduct the assessment. This approach can be advantageous when resources, particularly money, are not available. Although not necessarily recognised as such, many elements of self-evaluation are currently used throughout the conflict resolution field as part of the monitoring process. Self-reports provide funders with regular updates on how a project is progressing, the challenges it has encountered and next steps for the project. Such reports could be expanded in both breadth and depth; responsibility for evaluation would then be placed directly with the stakeholders involved in the project.

However, two challenges would need to be addressed if this option were to be considered legitimate. First, self-reports may be overly optimistic about project achievements if their goal is to ensure continued funding rather than contributing to the body of knowledge of the field (Merson, B., Meeting Discussion, 2002). For self-evaluation to be effective, funders and practitioners alike would have to accept the importance of openness and not fear the results of their honesty. Second, the field would need to be prepared to accept the credibility of comments and reflections made by people internal to a conflict resolution programme. This would need to be considered a legitimate approach to evaluation rather than a lesser alternative to be used when no better options are available.

III. Ethical Responsibilities of the CR Evaluator

When choosing to engage in an evaluation, it was generally agreed that the evaluator accepts certain ethical responsibilities to all stakeholders involved with the project and to the integrity of the evaluation. Two aspects of this dominated the discussions at the Northern Ireland meeting. A first consideration is that the evaluators have a responsibility to 'do no harm' through their work (Large, J., Ross, M., Meeting Discussion, 2002). Although this phrase is borrowed from Anderson's work in the development and aid field, evaluations, just like the projects they study, must also be designed with care.

Evaluators need to consider the ramifications of their actions at both the individual and societal level. At the individual level, evaluators need to think about the impact of their work on local people, particularly the participants in the project. This is best expanded upon through an illustration. For some victims of violent conflict, silence can be a coping strategy. However, as part of the evaluation process they may be asked to talk about their experiences. The evaluation process therefore risks undermining the participants' coping strategy without offering the necessary support structure to provide assistance if it is needed (Goodhand, J., Meeting Discussion, 2002).

At the societal level, evaluation can potentially have an impact on the conflict in which the project is operating. For example, an evaluator enters a tense conflict situation to evaluate a cross-community dialogue project with leaders of opposing communities. The evaluator is permitted to meet with the participants in the programme because of the goodwill and trust established between the conflicting parties and the implementing agency. However, if the

evaluator does not operate within the norms of communication established by the agency (such as meeting with an equal number of representatives from each side) or is interpreted as being biased by one of the parties, this can severely damage the agency's credibility with the parties and constrain the dialogue process.

The second aspect discussed was the tension arising from determining whether an evaluator can still responsibly be involved in evaluations that have been framed in an unethical way. The decision of what constitutes an ethically responsible evaluation is, at the moment, determined by the individual evaluator. Considerations could include the exclusion of certain parties, groups or participants from the process, evaluation expectations that are unrealistic given the resources provided, or terms of reference set out in such a way that the outcome of the evaluation is predetermined.

In response to these ethical responsibilities, a number of people engaged in conflict resolution evaluation (Brusset, E., Clements, K., McKimm, C., Meeting Discussion, 2002) have suggested establishing a code of conduct for CR evaluators. Such a code could clarify many of the responsibilities of the evaluator. There is a range of issues that could constitute part of a code, such as the qualifications or skills the evaluator should possess; the expectation of integrity and honesty in completing a fair and unbiased evaluation; accountability to stakeholders involved in the project under review; particular respect and protection for project participants; and fiscal responsibility in the evaluation process. Although such codes exist for generic evaluators,[9] the authors propose that the challenges of working in conflict merit a separate code to reflect the practical and ethical complexities of the work.

Naturally, many questions arise about who would write such a code and how it might be used. A pre-existing network or umbrella organisation would be well placed to develop such a code and establish an international association of CR evaluators. The process of joining the association could be as loose or as structured as desired by the field - from prescribing minimum qualifications for CR evaluators, to requiring only an acceptance of the guiding principles of the code of conduct.

---

[9] See, for example, the Canadian Evaluation Society's Guidelines for Ethical Conduct. The document is available on their website at http://evaluationcanada.ca

Emerging Practice: Politics - The Invisible Hand?

It is commonly recognised that there are inter-organisational politics operating on the ground and between practitioners and funders. However, there is also significant politics within the evaluation process. Stakeholders can manipulate factors in the evaluation to achieve certain ends, such as the illustration of the positive or negative impacts of a policy decision; the continuation or cessation of a project; or the encouragement or discouragement of continued investment in a particular issue or region. As illustrated by these examples, the term politics in this context refers to the manipulation of the interplay of actors and forces, with the implication that there is an attempt to alter the outcome of the activity. Commonly referred to as power-politics or power-dynamics, when negatively inspired, it can have a series of consequences, such as impeding the neutral perception of evaluation and therefore decreasing its credibility, increasing distrust between stakeholders and eroding funder-practitioner relationships. Those engaging in the process need, therefore, to recognise the potential for politics to play a role so they can take mitigating action where possible. This applies particularly to the evaluator, who, as stated previously, has an ethical responsibility to be a neutral agent in the process. While recognising the relevance of the negative effect of politics between organisations, this paper focuses on two areas specific to evaluation in which politics can be influential.

I. The Politics of Selection

All aspects of the evaluation process are subject to some form of selection, including (but not limited to) who to hire, what indicators to select, who to talk with and what information to include in the final report. When done transparently, these issues are rarely a matter for consideration. However, when the political hand becomes involved, the value of the evaluation process can be nullified or the results discredited. Opportunities to make politically motivated choices are available to funders, practitioners and evaluators alike and can occur in both the planning and implementation phases of the evaluation process.

At the planning level, by setting the terms of reference, the evaluation commissioner makes significant choices about how the evaluation is structured, which can affect its outcome (Goodhand, J., Meeting Discussion, 2002).

Developing the terms of reference can include such decisions as:

- When the evaluation is undertaken;

- The required skills and experience of the evaluator or evaluation team and their subsequent selection;

- The duration of the evaluation;

- The perspective from which the project will be evaluated;

- The questions the evaluation seeks to answer;

- What type of feedback or reporting process will be used;

- The financial resources available.

The first example - when the evaluation is undertaken - offers a good illustration of the potential for politics to have a negative impact on the process. If, for instance, the commissioner of an evaluation seeks to terminate funding for a project and needs to show that the work is not having its intended effect in order to do so, he/she can initiate an evaluation during a turbulent time when external factors are likely to have an impact on the evaluation findings. Elections, breaking of cease-fires, or symbolic days of celebration could all throw project participants into a sudden strident viewpoint that could discount the positive changes a project may have effected. Although this is perhaps an oversimplified example, the potential for politics to play a role is clear.

The importance of the perspective from which a project is evaluated can also be easily illustrated through an example. When an evaluator reviews a project such as a women's peace centre, many different elements of the work could alter the focus of the evaluation. If the commissioner of the evaluation is predominantly interested in development work, the focus might be on what skills the women had gained and what type of economic supports the centre had provided. This would differ significantly from a funder focused on post-conflict peacebuilding. Such a funder might place a greater emphasis on whether cross-community ties had been established among women of different backgrounds. This can become a political issue when, for instance, a practitioner or agency is seeking funding from a particular funder or thematic programming area. If funds are available in one area - such as peacebuilding - an evaluator may be chosen who will emphasise whichever aspect of the work will appeal to the funder most.

The politics of selection can also be found in the implementation phase of an evaluation. Practitioners are able to exercise some influence over which staff members and project participants the evaluator speaks with, and thus whose stories are heard. This has the potential to be subject to political motives related to what the practitioner wants the evaluator to hear. For example, the evaluator could end up only speaking with participants who enjoyed the project and want it to continue - leading the evaluator to conclude that additional funding should be allocated to the implementing agency.

The evaluator also needs to be considered within the discussion on the politics of selection. Evaluators, as the main conduit of information between the project and the commissioner, act as a filter through which only some of the vast amount of information they receive is delivered (Langlois, T., Meeting Discussion, 2002). They are therefore in a position to determine what information is included and what is omitted, particularly in the final evaluation report. This can have particularly severe consequences when the evaluator takes on the role of a learning facilitator and makes recommendations as part of the evaluation. He/she has the potential to substantially influence the future direction of the project or organisation under review.

Although all engaged in the evaluation process should be aware of the negative impact politics can have, upon reflection it appears that these decisions may not always be negatively premeditated. Rather, they may be the result of ignorance or opting for what appears to be the easiest option. A desk officer in a government department, for example, may have fifty projects that need to be evaluated. For ease of coordination, the decision could be taken to commission all of the evaluations in July to allow enough time to analyse the results before the end of the fiscal year. However, for projects in Northern Ireland, July is often a time of heightened political tension and can be a period of greater violent conflict. As a result, these evaluations may not capture the full extent of change instigated because the political environment often overwhelms all aspects of people's lives. This example provides an illustration of a decision that could either be interpreted politically or simply as the result of the easiest route for the commissioner of the evaluation who has work goals and targets to achieve.

This process of taking decisions out of expediency or ignorance can also affect the practitioner. For example, when the evaluator arrives and asks to speak with participants from the intervention under review, the practitioner is most likely to arrange for the evaluator to speak with people who are easily

accessible and who are willing to participate. These people are also likely to have been the ones who were pleased with the work. Decisions related to timing, location and selection of interviewees, while seeming innocuous, can greatly affect who is able to talk to the evaluator, what information is gathered and how these results will then compare to previously collected data. Although the selection of the interviewees may have been based on efficiency, it has the potential to create a skewed impression of the project.

One possible route for mitigating many of these problems is to work on developing a better relationship between the funder and the practitioner. Although improving communication is an important aspect, all parties must also alter the lens through which information is processed. Currently, evaluation is often interpreted by practitioners as a judgement of their work. This tends to create suspicion and unease about the evaluation process. From this perspective, the practitioner is less likely to make suggestions or to discuss options for the evaluation with the funder. Conversely, the funder is aware that the outcome of the evaluation is likely to affect further funding allocations for the practitioner, so tends to be suspicious of the practitioner's desire to show the project in the best light.

Some evaluators are now asking all stakeholders to sit down together before the terms of reference are finalised to provide an opportunity for raising any concerns about timing, bias or methodology. This forum limits avoidable mistakes and improves the degree to which the evaluation is tailored to meet the specific needs and context of a particular project. Not only does this encourage all of the stakeholders to invest in the evaluation process, it also helps to ensure that the evaluation is useful and well directed.

II. Politics of Dissemination

A discussion about the politics of dissemination embraces two issues: ownership and distribution. Beginning with the latter, knowledge of who the information will be shared with can affect the information the evaluator is provided with during the evaluation process (Birkoff, J., Meeting Discussion, 2002). For example, if practitioners know that the information given to the evaluator will remain confidential they may be more willing to discuss certain aspects of their practice than if all of the data collected will be given directly to the funder or made available to the public. For this reason, a number of evaluators have begun to consider it within their ethical responsibilities to determine at the outset of the process who will own the final product of their

work and to ensure that all participants in the evaluation process are made aware of the implications (Makalima, B., Meeting Discussion, 2002).

In addition, depending on how it is disseminated, the completed evaluation report has the potential to impact on future programming and organisation policy decisions. If the final report of an evaluation, for example, confirms that a programme is exceeding expectations, the funder is likely to want to make that report prominent. Conversely, if the report shows that the programme has done good work but is below publicly stated expectations, the report may not be shared with the same vigour. This is a standard practice, to be expected in most situations. However, the potential for political motivations to have an influence occurs when, for example, a funder chooses to stop funding a particular organisation even though the last evaluation report shows that it has been doing excellent work. In this case, the funder could choose not to release the report because of its potential to contradict the decision taken. Alternatively, widely circulating a report that illustrates low performance can serve to stop funding not only from the involved funder but from others in the field as well. If one wanted to impair an agency, this would be a way to do so.

The way that evaluation results are disseminated can also have an impact at the policy level, either as a way of promoting changes in policy or for maintenance of the *status quo*. For example, the critical multi-agency review of the intervention in Rwanda was openly broadcast, particularly as a result of the outcry over the genocide and the public demand for an explanation of what had occurred. However, the outcome of the review was a change at the policy level whereby funds are now held in reserve for emergency operations that were not available prior to the Rwanda crisis (Bush, K., Meeting Discussion, 2002). In this case, publicly releasing an evaluation, although on the surface seemingly negative, led to a desired change in policy.

The ability of politics - selection or dissemination - to play a negative role is partially due to the perceptions of inequity of power held by many in this field. There is a predominant sense that funders hold the balance of power because they determine which programmes and initiatives will be supported and by what parameters they will be evaluated. The authors would suggest that one reason for this perception of imbalance relates to the inability of many conflict resolution workers to articulate what they do and to prove their claims of results. Evaluation has the potential to help practitioners articulate their achievements in a manner and language that provides evidence and credibility. Those programmes that truly meet the needs of the situation on the ground are

able to demonstrate that they have accomplished what they claim will be in demand, regardless of power dynamics and motivations, thereby decreasing the perception of inequality. With all stakeholders feeling more secure in their interactions, the potential for negative politics to drive an evaluation will decrease.

EMERGING THEORY IN THE EVALUATION OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION INTERVENTIONS

Through discussions with those with experience and knowledge in conducting evaluations, two gaps in the theoretical understanding of the conflict resolution process have become apparent. Narrowing these gaps is not only important for evaluation but essential to the development of the field as a whole. The first area considers the idea that the results of conflict resolution interventions may be 'transferred' between the micro and macro levels of society. The second gap relates to assessing the validity of the theories of change that underpin interventions in conflict situations. Current evaluation generally explores whether a project has met its stated goals but does not question whether the beliefs about how to instigate change on which the project is based are accurate.

Consideration of these concepts is in a nascent stage. As such there is less material for consideration than with issues pertaining to practice. Nevertheless these concepts have the potential to reach beyond evaluation and influence the entire field by refining many of our approaches to the work of resolving conflict.

Emerging Theory: Micro-Macro Connection

The terms 'micro' and 'macro' are entering into common use in the field of conflict resolution and particularly in discussions of intervention results. However, there remains much confusion about what these terms mean and very limited conflict-specific academic information about how the concepts interact with the field.[10] As part of the focus of this section is the process through which change is transferred beyond the direct participants in an intervention, it is important to have clearly defined terms with which to discuss this issue.

---

[10] A series of web searches, a review of 20 peace and conflict-related journals and a literature review found only eleven articles with a specific mention of the micro-macro dynamic.

One useful way to conceptualise this idea is by considering who the target of an intervention is, as illustrated in the left column of Diagram 3. A conflict resolution project can seek to influence individuals, communities or the entire society and the project will be planned and delivered differently depending on which tier its primarily target is (Church and Shouldice, 2002). The following diagram is used to illustrate the tiers of influence and their corresponding term in the micro-macro discourse:

Diagram 3: Micro-Macro Spectrum

Tiers of Influence[11]	Levels
Family Unit	Micro level
Social Network/Peer Group	
Community	Mezo level
Sub-National Region	
Society at Large/Country	Macro level
Regional Grouping of Countries	
International	

The correlation between the tiers of influence and micro-macro levels is not definitive. Micro-macro levels are a contextually-driven notion and as such may contract and expand along the tiers of influence as the situation dictates. For instance, in the situation where a conflict is limited to a sub-national region within a country, the levels would contract so work aimed at ultimately influencing this sub-national level would be considered working at the 'macro' level. Moreover, the tiers and levels are not discrete divisions that will necessarily progress in a linear sequence.

When applying the micro-macro levels concept, it is not the size of the project or the direct participants that necessarily determine the level the intervention is working at, but rather whom the process is ultimately attempting to influence or change. A 'macro' project attempts to effect change that will shift the overall situation towards peace, thus 'whom' refers to society at large. In contrast, a 'micro' project works to bring about change in more discrete units, thus 'whom' refers to individuals or family units. For instance, a project in Northern Ireland that seeks to assist individuals who have been evicted from

the province by paramilitary organisations is working at the micro level. However, if the aim of that project were expanded to attempting to stop evictions from occurring in the province as a whole, although still working with individuals within the paramilitary organisations, the project would be operating at the macro level.[12] A second illustration may prove useful. Consider a Track II intervention with the political and rebel leaders of the Congo that seeks to provide the basis for a peace agreement. The direct participants in this project are individuals but the work seeks to have an impact on the country as a whole. This project is therefore working at the macro level.

Most conflict resolution projects are targeted at one of the tiers of influence. Yet, it is commonly assumed that the information, learning or change that occurs throughout the project also has an impact in the other tiers as well. A central feature of many conflict resolution projects is their claim to be able to influence a broader population beyond the direct programme participants. How and if this process occurs, and how it can be tested through evaluation remain subjects of confusion within the field. Some key questions - particularly what this process will be called, what is being passed on through the tiers and how it occurs - need to be further explored.

First, with respect to nomenclature, numerous terms such as 'transfer', 'ripple effect', 'expanding effect'[13], and 'multiplier effect' have all been used to capture this concept. For the purpose of simplicity, the authors have chosen to use the term 'transfer' in this paper. This term, borrowed from the field of knowledge utilisation, is the process by which change is transmitted between levels or tiers. Yet, no consensus on terminology currently exists within the field.

Second, the field needs to determine what is being transferred. There is a spectrum of possibilities, such as information, metaphors, stories, experiences, attitudes, feelings, specific skills, institutions and new ways of thinking about relationships among the parties (Ross, M., Meeting Discussion, 2002). For example, if an Israeli youth participates in a cross-community exchange programme and interacts with a Palestinian youth, both young people may be able to transfer some of the stories they have learned, the experiences that they have had and the change in attitudes that they have undergone to members of their peer group or family.

---

[11] This diagram is adapted from the Tiers of Influence in Church, C. and Shouldice, J. (2002) *The Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Interventions: Framing the State of Play*. Derry/Londonderry: INCORE, p.39.

[12] Here the assumption is that a cessation of evictions would be a marked improvement in the overall status of peace.

[13] Term used by Dr Amr Abdalla.

The affirmative nature of the field means that there tends to be an assumption that any change transferred is positive. However, this is not always the case - negative experiences, attitudes etc. can also be transferred. If the Israeli and Palestinian youths have a negative impression of one another, those experiences can also be transferred to other tiers. This is important as it affects the strategies used in conflict resolution work. Through evaluation it may be found that attitudes shared through stories are better transferred within communities than statistics or personal experiences. Evaluation will also allow practitioners a better understanding of how to target their work to reach the broadest possible group of people.

Third, if this practice of transfer does occur, the process through which the new perspectives are shared between the tiers of influence also needs to be examined. At a practice level, there are a number of methods through which transfer can be promoted. These include the empowerment of communities; the development of new programmes; environmental changes; the acquisition of new insights; the sharing of images, experiences and skills; or imitation of others (Ross, M., Meeting Discussion, 2002). However, within this spectrum of options, the field also needs to determine what the essential multipliers are. In other words, which individuals, conditions or situations are critical for promoting transfer or maximising the transfer that occurs?

Once identified, through the use of these tools, projects may be able to have an impact on the tiers of influence beyond their target groups. The authors propose that this movement should be seen in terms of steps rather than as a direct impact from a micro project on the macro level. As seen in Diagram 4, a project that operates at one tier of influence may have a more potent impact on its surrounding levels and only to a limited degree at more distant levels. For example, a cross-community project that works directly with families is likely to transfer more of its impact to the individual and community levels than to the regional or national level. Similarly, if a dialogue project works with national leaders, its most potent influence will likely be at the societal or regional level. This does not mean that projects do not have impact at all levels. Yet, the most significant transfer occurs at the levels that are closest to the original implementation.

Diagram 4: Steps of Impact
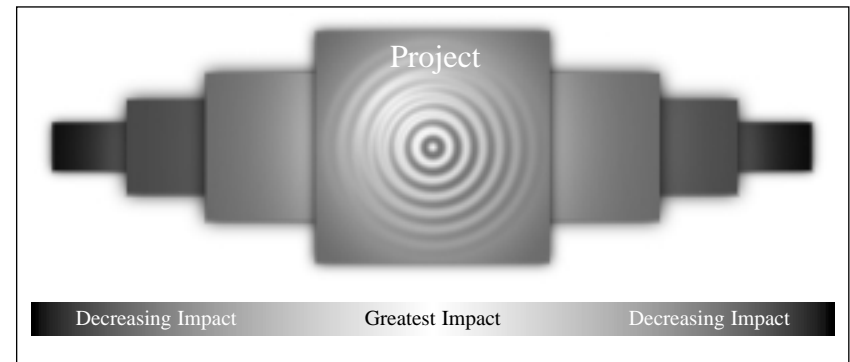
Finally, much of the uncertainty around what is being transferred and how transfer occurs comes from the difficulty with evaluating the theory and practice of transfer. The concept of transfer has been one of the foundational pillars of a number of projects, particularly at the level of elite interactions. Work by Kelman (1995) with Israeli and Palestinian officials, and by Arthur (1999) with Catholic and Protestant politicians in Northern Ireland, has attempted to show how intensive workshops with senior, politically influential individuals from conflicting groups could affect the peace process. The goal of the work was two-fold: to change the perceptions of the individual participants and to transfer those changes into the political debate and the decision-making process (Kelman, 1995). In this case, the work is done with individuals at the macro-level but seeks to transfer change to other aspects of the micro and mezo levels.

Kelman was able to show how his workshops had had an impact on the peace process by breaking down the process of transfer into a series of steps or conceptual 'links in a chain'. According to Kelman, it is the succession of these steps that accounts for the impact. Therefore, each step is individually tested using appropriate methods. For example, one of the steps in the process involves changing the nature of the interactions between participants. An empirical test for this change is to show an increase in analytical, non-adversarial discourse and a decrease in polemical, historical and legalistic arguments that emphasise blame. Similar processes are undertaken to observe and measure change at each step (Kelman, no date).

Determining how, when and why transfer occurs is important to the conflict resolution field as it would allow for the strategic development of projects that maximise their potential to effect change. Although there is a general belief that transfer occurs, the theory needs to be refined so that it can be tested and examined in practice.

Macroevaluation

Macroevaluation, defined as the process of determining the overall contribution to 'peace' of all individual conflict resolution projects in an area, constitutes a related gap in knowledge in this field. In essence, this asks how, why and whether all conflict resolution projects bring peace closer? Although there is a field-wide belief that this occurs, it is not understood why or how the outcomes and impacts of individual projects combine, or how this process can be evaluated. The task is not as simple as adding up the contributions that each individual project makes; many different levels, targets and sectors are involved, as well as the positive impacts of some projects being cancelled out by the negative impacts of others. It is also possible that the interaction between some projects creates a result that is greater than the sum of their individual parts. Macroevaluation needs to take all of these factors into consideration.

Upon further review, the authors determined that this process of assessing contribution is not limited to the 'macro' level and that similar processes could be undertaken at the 'mezo' level. For example, a group of small projects operating in a community may combine to determine their collective contribution to reaching a common goal. Although this evaluation is not carried out at the macro-level, the process of determining the overall contribution of the projects would be the same. A more inclusive term may then need to be considered that reflects the fact that the process can be executed at multiple levels. Some possibilities could include 'overarching impact assessment' or 'contribution assessment'.

Regardless of the level at which this process is carried out, there remain many questions about how best to assess multi-project contributions. Due to the newness of the task, however, the field needs to consider a number of different approaches and to recognise that a single standard model or methodology may not be an appropriate goal (Ross, M., Meeting Discussion, 2002). One possibility is to adapt methods currently used for cluster evaluations – where a number of projects in a particular thematic or geographic grouping that have

been supported by the same funder are evaluated together. The goal is to observe trends, accomplishments and gaps in the area of work (Birkoff, J., Meeting Discussion, 2002). Another possibility would be to explore the approach used by other macro-level assessments, such as the Strategic Conflict Assessment. This assessment mechanism, utilised by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), provides a macro analysis of a region of interest, using a multi-sector approach (Goodhand, J., Meeting Discussion, 2002).

Pursuing the notion of macroevaluation will be valuable for the field for a number of reasons. If positive contributions can be clearly identified, the findings could greatly improve the overall legitimacy and credibility of the field by proving what the work has been able to accomplish (Hoffman, M., Meeting Discussion, 2002). Such findings could also increase the standing of conflict resolution on the world political stage, encouraging the involvement of CR practitioners and theorists at the international policy level (Fitzduff, M., Meeting Discussion, 2002).

Finally, by being able to view the overall picture during the conflict, key issues can be identified; such as what is occurring, areas in which there are gaps, where project efforts are contradicting each other or where work is synergising to create a broader impact. Although some people in the field feel that macroevaluation would only be carried out at the end of a conflict or once an agreement has been fully implemented, this need not be the case. The findings from the work can provide useful strategic information that can assist with the implementation of the peace process. Further, the findings can also provide a measure of achievement towards the end goals.

There are a number of challenges to successfully implementing this idea. One in particular is the fact that a comprehensive understanding of the impact of conflict resolution cannot be accomplished in isolation. It is necessary to explore related fields and sectors, such as economics, development, democratisation and security. In a conflict or post-conflict society, all of these aspects interact in such a way that proving causality is very difficult. Moreover, the passage of time makes attributing an impact to any one project or sector virtually impossible. The field will need not only to look at its own methods for initiating macroevaluation but also to explore how to build bridges with other fields so that more comprehensive assessments can be undertaken.

Emerging Theory: Evaluating the Ideas that Underpin our Actions[14]

Throughout the meeting on evaluation of conflict resolution interventions in Northern Ireland the notion of 'theories of change' was repeatedly raised as an important issue for the field to address. This attention mirrored that given to the idea in several other meetings held recently on evaluation and impact in the United States.[15] Participants in these meetings stressed the fact that practitioners' beliefs about change, which are rarely articulated, underpin key decision-making processes in the development of conflict resolution interventions. Beyond this assertion, however, there was minimal discussion about defining the concept, identifying or describing different possible theories and developing evaluation mechanisms as a means of testing and refining these ideas.

The consensus about the importance of exploring theories of change coupled with the nascent nature of the conceptual discussion compelled the authors to look beyond the conference dialogue. The resulting research found a complete dearth of literature addressing theories of change in conflict resolution. However, numerous related concepts within the field were uncovered, as well as a model of theory-based evaluation developed originally for community development initiatives. During this research it became clear that narrowing the gap between theory and practice in this area could have significant benefits for conflict resolution as a field because evaluators would be able to determine, through the articulation and subsequent evaluation of theories of change and working assumptions, if project underachievement was due to poor implementation or conceptual inaccuracies in the project design.

An extensive search for information on, and references to, theories of change was conducted, using not only peace and conflict resources, but also resources from the fields of sociology, development and civil society.[16] The fruits of this research were extremely meagre. Literature on this topic is scarce to non-existent within the field of peace and conflict, although a vague mention of theories of change was found in a few places. Unfortunately, such references were generally limited to a few sentences in the conclusion or general references that did not explore the concepts, offer potential theories or examine their relevance to the field.

The phrase 'theories of social change' is common currency in the field of sociology. However, sociological theories of change tend to offer explanations of why change occurs rather than suggestions for how change can be initiated. In a few cases - Marxism, for example - a model of the nature of society and social change contributes ideas about how change may then be generated. However, in most cases, the contributions of sociologists are more descriptive than prescriptive and are all but impossible to apply to the production of change.[17]

In the 1960s, a subfield of sociology known as 'planned change' began to develop, with the intention of addressing this shortcoming.[18] In 1961, for example, Chin and Benne wrote an article entitled 'General Strategies for Effecting Changes in Human Systems'[19] in which they outlined three different approaches to change, relating beliefs about human motivation to the methods used to induce positive social change. This subfield is not easy to pin down as it draws on, and deals with, a number of different types of change and areas of focus (e.g. education, management, social work, behavioural change). Nevertheless, further investigation into this work may well provide valuable insights for the field of conflict resolution.

The research process was not successful in terms of identifying material specific to theories of change in relation to conflict resolution. However, in searching for theories, a number of related concepts - 'theories of conflict', 'theories of conflict resolution' and 'theories of practice' were revealed. As the research progressed the theoretical boundaries between these concepts became increasingly blurred and it became evident that there was a need for conceptual clarity. Analysis showed that these concepts were not only interrelated but also significant to the understanding of how theories of change interplay with decision-making and the subsequent potential of evaluation to contribute to the field. As a result, the authors decided on a secondary goal of attempting to clarify the meanings of these notions and their relationship to each other.

---

[14] Helen Barnes, Policy & Evaluation Intern, INCORE – Autumn 2002, contributed to research and analysis in this section.

[15] The issue was raised at both the Reflecting on Peace Practice Advisory Group meetings throughout 2001-2002 and the ACRON-RPP Meeting on Evaluation in Milwaukee, USA, March 2002.

[16] Details can be found in Appendix 1.

[17] For an outline of standard sociological theories of change, see Appelbaum, Richard P. (1970), *Theories of Social Change*, Chicago: Markham Publishing Co.

[18] For a brief account of the emergence of this subfield, see London, S. (1996, June) 'Understanding Change: The Dynamics of Social Transformation', [On-line] Available Internet: www.scottlondon.com/reports/change.html

[19] Subsequently updated, the latest edition, referred to in the Bibliography, dates to 1989.

Determining the relationships between these concepts was complicated by the fact that the term theory is used inconsistently in the field. Moreover, 'theory' implies grandiose notions of interrelated, logically driven systems which is far more complex than what is found in this context. As a result, conceptual summaries for the key concepts - 'theories of conflict', 'theories of conflict resolution', 'theories of practice' and 'theories of change - have been developed. The phrase 'working assumptions about change' is a new distinction, introduced because it was found that the field fails to distinguish between general sets of beliefs about how to generate widespread change and the working assumptions held by practitioners about the connection between specific activities and desired change. By making this distinction the concern with the use of the term 'theory' in the more practical notion of project planning and implementation is addressed, as well as showing the different stages in which conceptual theory and working assumptions become most relevant.

It is important to ascertain the relationship between these concepts because theories of change and working assumptions interact with the cognitive process of analysing and developing an action plan. Capturing the significance of those theories and assumptions depends on a clear understanding of that cognitive process and where each has the most impact. An appreciation of the distinction between theories of change and working assumptions can also be aided through the clarification of the relationship between concepts.

Conceptual Summaries:

Theories of Conflict determine the origin(s) or cause(s) of conflict. Examples include Innatist or Psychological beliefs about what makes individuals aggressive, Group-Identity theories such as Social Identity Theory or Miscommunication Theory and systems-level beliefs such as the power and resource-dominated Realist approach. These theories respond to the question: *Why is there conflict?* or *What went wrong?*

Theories of Conflict Resolution consider what needs to happen to bring about the resolution of a conflict and therefore set the overarching goal of what one is trying to achieve (e.g. equality, diversity). They try to answer the question: *What needs to be achieved to end this conflict?*

Theories of Practice establish a method or strategy for addressing a conflict. Most widely known are the six theory of practice examples for ethnic conflict outlined by Ross,[20] among which are community relations, principled negotiation and conflict transformation. These theories consider the question: *How can the change or goal as determined by the theory(s) of conflict resolution be achieved?*

Theories of Change are generalised beliefs about how and why widespread change can be generated in a violent conflict. An example might be the belief that peace comes through transformative change of a critical mass of individuals, or that peace will come about when it is in the interest of leaders to take the necessary steps (Woodrow, 2002: 1). Theories of change respond to the question: *What are the mechanisms through which the desired change(s) can be generated?* or *How is change generated in a society in violent conflict?*

Working Assumptions about Change refer to specific assumptions made at the level of project design and implementation about the transformative effect of each discrete action/activity. Projects have multiple actions/activities that make up a whole. Within the overall planning of a Track II series of dialogues, for example, the decision to hold a meeting outside the country of conflict is based on a working assumption about change. Working assumptions also underpin the selection criteria for participants, the choice of facilitation style and the proposed agenda, in addition to every other discrete action/activity that forms part of the project. These assumptions may or may not be related to a theory of change and are often implicit. They respond to the question: *How and why will this discrete action lead to the desired change?*

In order to understand how 'theories of change' and 'working assumptions about change' affect an intervention, the five key concepts defined above have been applied to a four-stage intervention lifecycle: conflict exploration, projectconceptualisation, project design and implementation and project evaluation.

---

[20] See Ross, M.H. (2000, November) 'Creating the conditions for peacemaking: theories of practice in ethnic conflict resolution' *Ethnic and Racial Studies volume 23, number 6*, pp.1002-1034.

Diagram 5: Stages of an Intervention
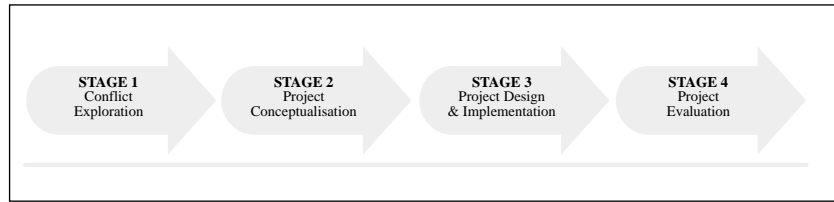
The authors recognise that this application is primarily from a theoretical perspective and therefore omits much of the practical issues associated. While theoretically-derived processes often lack practical application potential, in this case it is important to engage in the theoretical discussion to provide the foundations for a better understanding on which practical application possibilities can be grounded. The purpose of establishing the relationships between these concepts is neither to propose a new intervention lifecycle nor to argue that this is an explicit and accepted process in practice. In fact, the contrary is more the reality, where these concepts interact so seamlessly that little distinction can be found. By outlining these relationships in terms of a four-stage process, it becomes possible to identify where and how theories of change and working assumptions about change interact and become relevant in the theoretical intervention process.

Diagram 6: Development of Theoretical Foundations
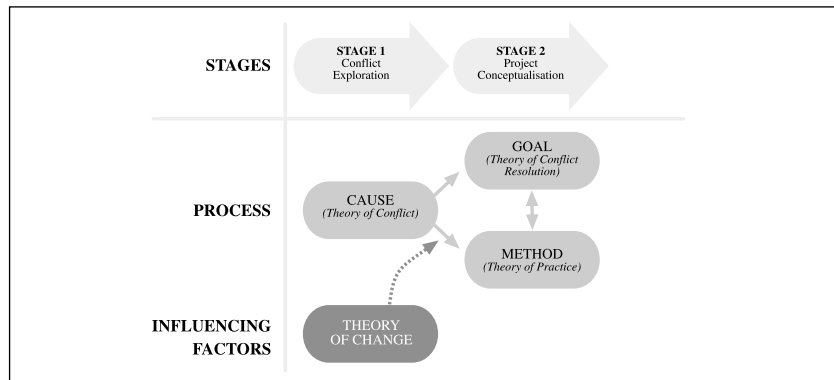
The first two stages provide the theoretical foundations for an intervention, while the third translates theory into practice and the fourth examines the results. As is depicted in Diagram 6, in the first stage, the cause(s) of the conflict is/are determined through careful analysis, thus establishing one's theory of conflict. Once determined, stage 2 involves an interactive process whereby overarching goals or what needs to be done to 'resolve' the conflict (theory of conflict resolution) and methods to do so (theory of practice) are established. The precise relationship between theory of conflict resolution and theory of practice is likely to be unique to each situation. Although there are various influences on the transition process from stage 1 to stage 2, an individual's theory(s) of change plays a significant role. In stage 3, these ideas (causes, goals and method) are translated into practice in the form of project design and implementation (see Diagram 7). The theory of conflict resolution provides the overarching goal or vision while the theory of practice offers the principles and parameters for project design. Fundamental to this translation are the working assumptions about change which (often implicitly) form the basis of many decisions.
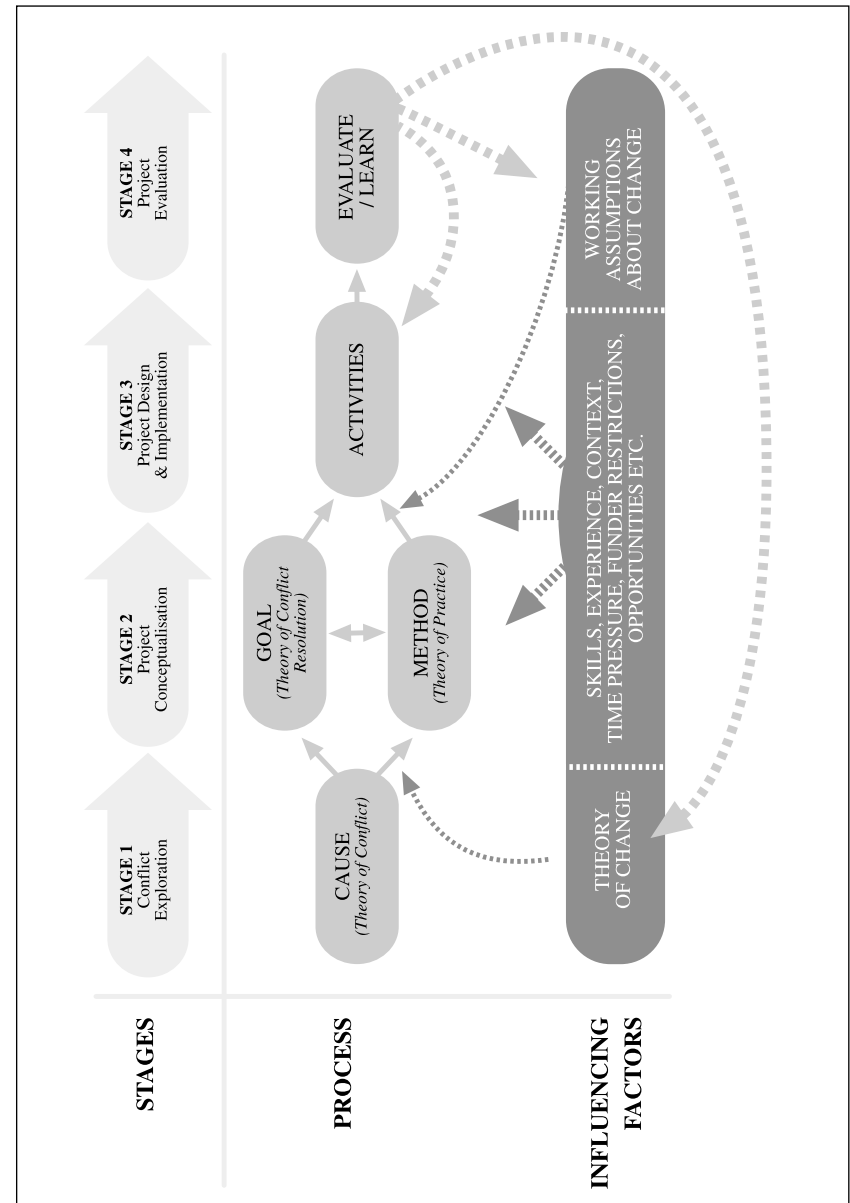
Diagram 7: Transition to Action
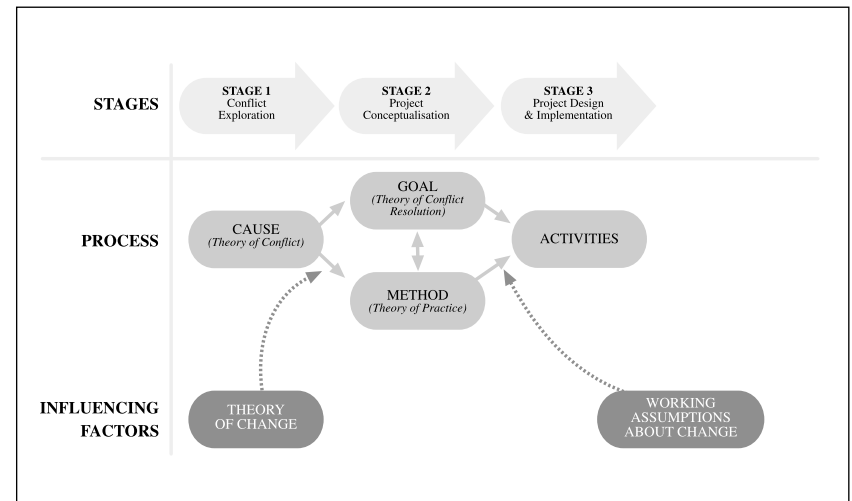
The final stage is project evaluation where, it is argued, three elements should be assessed: theory of change, working assumptions and implementation measures.[21] The results of this investigation should then feed back into the overall process. It is recognised that, in practice, much of what has been described is implicit. As is often the case, in attempting to structure and articulate an idea, an unrealistically 'tidy' or discrete concept develops. Nonetheless it is still a useful exercise to consider. A comprehensive depiction of these relationships may be found in Diagram 8.

The four-stage process is not as simple as the above description may suggest. For any given conflict, a practitioner could determine several causes (theories of conflict), derive numerous fundamental issues that need addressing (theories of conflict resolution), generate several different methods to be used (theories of practice) and therefore elaborate a variety of detailed activity plans. Furthermore there are other variables that influence this equation. Factors such as one's experience and skills, the specific conflict context, funder requirements, opportunities, time pressures and resource limitations (money or staff) also influence all stages of the process. These factors may often appear to be more influential than theories of change or assumptions because they are generally made explicit - something that the former would benefit from and an issue that will soon be addressed.

It is worth revisiting briefly the distinction between 'theory of change' and 'working assumptions about change.' While a theory of change is a generalised belief about how or why widespread change can be achieved, working assumptions about change link a discrete action with an explanation of how that action will instigate the desired change; in essence, why and how action x will create change y. Briefly shifting to the practical application of this distinction; one's theory of change would be a significant driver behind the type of project selected, such as mediation or non-violent protest, whereas the working assumptions about change would underpin the decisions regarding how to design the project.

---

[21] Implementation measures, in this context, is used as an umbrella term to refer to the multitude of other aspects of a project that can be evaluated, such as process and results.

Diagram 8: The Complete Process

In the intervention process described, working assumptions have their role in the transition from stage 2 to stage 3. General theories of change, meanwhile, have their greatest impact in the transition between stages 1 and 2. It is hypothesised that the theory of change forms, to some degree, the basis from which the working assumptions derive. That said, the relationship between a practitioner's theory of change and their working assumptions is an area that needs further study.

As mentioned above, unlike theories of conflict or practice, there are no dominant typologies that lay out the current theories of change in this field and virtually nothing available at present that purports to define, describe or test such theories. However, Peter Woodrow of CDR Associates has developed a draft set of theories based on an analysis of 26 'peace' interventions around the world, primarily initiated by external organisations.[22] Although Woodrow has chosen to refer to his models as Theories of Peacebuilding, the accompanying description suggests that they are closely related to the 'theories of change' of this paper: "A useful first step in enhancing our ability to develop effective strategies is to become more conscious of our underlying [beliefs] about how change comes about - that is, our theories of how to achieve peace." (Woodrow, 2002: 1) To date, Woodrow has identified and defined eight theories:

- The Individual Change Model, whereby peace depends on the transformative change of a critical mass of individuals;

- The Healthy Relationships and Connections Model, which posits that peace results from a process of breaking down divisions and prejudices between groups;

- The Withdrawal of the Resources for War Model, whereby interrupting the supply of people and goods to the war-making system will cause it to collapse;

- The Reduction of Violence Model, which suggests that reducing the levels of violence perpetrated by combatants or their representatives will allow peace to develop;

- The Root Causes/Justice Model, which holds that peace results from addressing underlying issues of justice, exploitation, threats to identity and security and people's sense of victimisation;

- The Institutional Development Model, whereby peace is ensured through stable/reliable social institutions that guarantee democracy and human rights;

- The Changes in Political Elites Model, which suggests that peace depends on political (and other) leadership considering it in their interests to take the necessary steps;

- The Grassroots Mobilisation Model, which holds that "When the people lead, the leaders will follow."[23]

  This is by no means an exhaustive list, nor is it intended to be so by Woodrow whose work is very much in its preliminary stages. Moreover, while drawn from practical case studies, none of these theories has been evaluated for effectiveness in producing the desired change.

Making the Connection: Evaluating Theories and Assumptions

The influence of theories of change and working assumptions on the planning and development of an intervention is clear. The focus now turns to stage 4 of the intervention lifecycle: project evaluation. The discussion begins with a look at the relevance of theories and working assumptions to the evaluation discussion. From there, a theory-based evaluation model, developed for the field of community development, will be discussed with particular emphasis on its applicability for conflict resolution interventions.

Initiating a theory and assumption evaluation of conflict resolution work could result in a number of benefits. Systematic review or evaluation of theories of change would provide the field with information about the potential effectiveness of different approaches to intervention in varying conflict contexts. This information would be invaluable in assisting an organisation to determine which project type (e.g. Track II diplomacy, youth exchange or single identity work) to utilise in a given scenario. In turn, consideration of working assumptions would enable practitioners to test and refine the assumptions that link intended outcomes (desired change) with selected activities. Evaluation which includes this focus would allow for distinctions between failures of implementation and conceptually flawed working assumptions; in essence, whether a project was poorly executed or whether the

---

[22] These case studies were conducted for the RPP process and many can be found on-line at www.cdainc.com.

[23] For further details, see Woodrow, P. (2002, November). *Theories of Peacebuilding* Unpublished Paper, p.1.

ideas of why activity *x* would create change *y* were inaccurate. This knowledge could then be applied to develop more effective programming.

Theories of change and working assumptions are relevant to an evaluation discussion in a second important way. Evaluators themselves come to the job with established theories and assumptions, which can affect the evaluation design and subsequent analysis. Efforts should be made to uncover these preconceived notions in order to minimise unintended effects on the evaluation (Strimling, 2002). In addition, as will be discussed below, evaluators can also play a significant role in facilitating the process whereby practitioners identify their own theories and assumptions. This facilitation can prove difficult for many practitioners (Connell and Kubisch, 1996), and evaluators' own notions need to be kept in check so as to avoid 'leading' the stakeholders down an inaccurate path.

Theory Based Evaluation - An Approach for Consideration

Indications throughout the conflict resolution field suggest that it has evolved to a point where it is now ready to turn inward and examine its own theories and working assumptions. Although not developed with conflict resolution interventions in mind, theory-based evaluation (TBE) has considerable potential for the field in this endeavour. In essence, TBE explores 'how and why an initiative works.'(Connell and Kubisch, 1996: 1). These ideas are, to date, not articulated in much of the field's work.

The use of the term 'theory' in the name of this approach differs from the way in which it has been defined in this paper. For Weiss, the founder of this approach, a theory is the 'set of hypotheses upon which people build their program plans' (Weiss, 1998: 55). With this, she combines both beliefs and assumptions in one concept. Although she shares the concern that the use of the term 'theory' could confuse interpretations of this approach if readers infer from the term a complex and interrelated set of propositions, she nonetheless continues to use it. Conversely, this article argues for a differentiation between beliefs as part of an individual's overarching theory of change and working assumptions as the more specific ideas that drive actions. Despite this, Weiss's use of theory of change to signify both beliefs and assumptions will be followed for the ensuing discussion on theory-based evaluation. One of the outstanding questions for the TBE method is indeed how one might adapt it to recognise that differences exist between the two in conflict resolution.

The idea of theory-guided programme evaluation was introduced by Weiss in 1971 and has been elaborated on by a number of different scholars since.[24] TBE asserts that an intervention can be broken into its component activity parts and the working assumptions that connect each activity to its desired outcome (change) can be hypothesised. The evaluation activity then collects data to identify how well each step of the sequence is borne out. 'The evaluation should show which of the assumptions underlying the program break down, where they break down, and which of the several theories underlying the program are best supported by the evidence.' (Weiss, 1997: 2). By focusing on how change is actually being generated, it is possible to tease out what is really working in specific situations and under certain circumstances.

Although theory-based evaluations utilise classic research methodologies, to date there is not a dominant application of the theory-based approach; nor is there one single method for uncovering the theory of change underpinning an intervention.[25] Connell and Kubisch (1996), considering Comprehensive Community Initiatives, have developed one way of applying TBE. Their three-stage application includes:

1) Surfacing and articulating a theory of change,

2) Measuring a project's activities and intended outcomes, and

3) Analysing and interpreting the results of an evaluation, including their implications for adjusting the initiative's theory of change and its allocation of resources.

Stage 1 - surfacing and articulating a theory of change - requires its own process. 'The evaluator starts by defining long-term objectives and works backwards from the endpoint through the steps required to get there. Early stages or intermediate objectives are then established for each step, so that the programme can be evaluated and if necessary modified, at any [time].' (Sefton, 2000: 14). The next phase is to identify the causal link - why activities result in certain outcomes - known as the theory of change.

---

[24] In particular Huey-tshy Chen, who has been working on theory-driven evaluation approaches since 1981. See also Connell and Kubisch (1996).

[25] There is limited literature available that directly articulates means to apply theory-based evaluations.

This evaluation approach offers a range of advantages to those engaged in the process. Those that are particularly relevant to the conflict resolution field or address current challenges for the evaluation of interventions will be explored here.

As Church and Shouldice discuss in *The Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Interventions: Framing the State of Play* (2002), the challenges associated with measuring the outcomes and impact of conflict resolution interventions are often revisited. Theory-based evaluation offers in-roads to three of these challenges. First, funding parameters often encourage short-term projects, with evaluations conducted before the intended impact is anticipated to have taken effect. The TBE evaluation approach, however, 'provides early indications of program effectiveness' and need not wait for final outcomes to appear or fail to appear.' (Weiss, 1998: 60). By breaking down the project into its component activities the evaluator can examine the intermediate stages to determine if they are progressing as anticipated and can therefore give an indication of whether the intended final outcomes will result. Second, the focus on intermediate steps builds adaptability into project design (Hughes and Traynor, 2000: 43), something that the constantly changing context of conflict situations requires. Third, as TBE considers how and why effects occur, it decreases - although does not entirely eradicate - the challenge of causation that agencies face when attempting to identify whether their project provided the impetus for the identified change (Weiss, 1998; Connell and Kubisch, 1996).

This approach also offers insight into how agencies in the field can decrease or neutralise unintended effects. 'As very few evaluators indicated that they currently look for unintended impacts as part of their strategy, the first challenge is to ascertain effective means of scanning for unintended effects of interventions, both during the course of the project and during the evaluation phase.' (Church and Shouldice, 2002: 49). While uncovering the theories that underpin programs, the evaluator can also facilitate the participants to reflect on theories that would explain unintended consequences. Discussing an unplanned or unwanted chain of events that the program may instigate could allow the agency to take steps to reduce or avoid consequences (Weiss, 1998).

Finally, when instigated early in the intervention, TBE can enrich planning and implementation because it encourages stakeholders to specify intended outcomes and the activities needed to achieve those outcomes, and to incorporate potentially relevant external factors (Connell and Kubisch, 1996). From the outset, this can expose contradictions between colleagues that may be detrimental to a programme's success (Weiss, 1998).

As ever, with advantages come disadvantages. Two of particular salience to the conflict field will be discussed. First, the generation of theories of change can be a difficult process. One of the suggested methods is to offer the practitioners involved a series of hypotheses as a starting point. In order to develop these hypotheses, the evaluator needs to have expertise in three areas; conflict resolution processes, evaluation research methods and the theory-based evaluation approach. As the meeting in Northern Ireland indicated, finding evaluators with the first two areas of expertise is difficult enough. Adding a third variable will further decrease the pool of qualified candidates. Second, those who propose this model acknowledge that it is a data and research intensive exercise, requiring practitioners to have not only the time to participate in the evaluation but also considerable finances to support an evaluator on a long-term basis. Excess time and money are two things that agencies working on conflict rarely have.

Despite these challenges, theory-based evaluation is a step in the right direction. Evaluating theories of change and working assumptions could provide catalysts that propel the field through its own evolution. There are many outstanding questions related both to the model proposed in the beginning of this section and to how theory-based evaluation would hold up when applied to conflict interventions. Exploration into both will serve to push the field forward.

CONCLUSION

Sufficient experience in the design and implementation of conflict resolution interventions has now been acquired to encourage more criticism of how the interventions are conducted and more sophisticated analysis of their effects. Phase Two of INCORE's research project on the evaluation of conflict resolution interventions sought to explore some of the questions and challenges associated with improving the methods of assessing the effects of the field's work. Through this exploration four crosscutting themes - two practice and two theory - emerged that are significant to the discussion of a number of these challenges. This paper aims to document those discussions and contribute to further research and analysis.

Many of the issues related to emerging practice concentrate on decisions that are taken throughout the evaluation process. Those involved in the evaluation make many choices - such as the type of evaluator they wish to have or the level of engagement of the evaluator - which will ultimately affect the utility and appropriateness of the information that is uncovered. As discussed in the section entitled Politics: The Invisible Hand, these choices are sometimes made out of ignorance or ease rather than a conscious decision based on an analysis of options. Stakeholders must become more aware of the possibility for these aspects to influence the evaluation and see the potential to make critical decisions that can improve the evaluation process and its findings.

From the perspective of emerging theory, as a field, CR needs to examine the theoretical foundations on which much of the work is based. Although the possibility of discovering that some approaches are not as effective as has been believed has created both a fear and an avoidance of evaluation by many practitioners, it remains an important next step to refining the way in which the work is currently done. It is particularly important to determine if project underachievement is due to poor implementation or is a result of conceptual inaccuracies in its design.

There are many subtle differences in the theories involved in the delivery of conflict resolution programmes - from theories of conflict and theories of conflict resolution to theories of practice and theories of change. The language and analysis used in discussions of theory must be deepened to reflect this complexity. It is only through a better understanding of the multiple theories that operate throughout the project lifecycle and affect the programmatic choices made at the field level that practice will be improved.

Evaluation has, to date, provided some useful information, yet it remains severely under-utilised and often overly simplistic. Through consideration of more of the complex factors that influence evaluation, the CR field will be able to produce better and more nuanced evaluations of its work that will serve to improve both practice and theory.

APPENDIX 1
Research Resources:
Evaluation and Theories of Change

Techniques included:

• **Generalised keyword web-searches.**

• **Reviews of publication lists of key academic institutions:**
 - Bradford
 - ICAR/GMU
 - LSE - CADU
 - Tufts - Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy

• **Reviews of conflict NGO websites:**
 - Berghof Centre
 - Clingendael (including their Conflict Research Unit)
 - International Alert
 - IPA
 - RPP
 - Saferworld

• **Consultation of library catalogues**
 - British Library of Development Studies
 - The LSE
 - Oxford
 - Queens University (Belfast)
 - University of Ulster

• **Keyword and index searches for 15 online conflict resolution journals**
 - ACCORD: African Journal in Conflict Resolution
 - Accord: conflict trends
 - Community Development Journal
 - Conflicts and Change
 - Cooperation and Conflict
 - International Affairs

 - International Journal On World Peace
 - Journal of Conflict Resolution
 - Journal of Peace and Change
 - Journal of Peace Research
- Negotiation Journal
- Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution
- Peace and Conflict Studies
- Peace Research Abstracts Journal
- Research in Social Movements
- Security Dialogue

• **Exploration of Development gateways reached via the IDS website**
- ELDIS
- Global Development Network
- International Institute for Sustainable Development Guide (Civil Society)
- Id21
- Participation Resource Centre and Bridge

• **15 emails to "thinkers" in the field and contacts who emerged during the research process.**

APPENDIX II:
Participant Directory
Conflict Resolution & Evaluation Meeting
Northern Ireland, 4-5 July 2002

Amr Abdalla - Affiliate Assistant Professor, The Programme on Peacekeeping Policy, George Mason University. Nationality: Egyptian, Country of Residence: US

Alexander Austin - Associate Researcher, Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management. Nationality: British, Country of Residence: Germany

Erin Baines - Social Science & Humanities Research Council, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Institute for International Relations, Liu Centre for the Study of Global Issues, University of British Columbia. Nationality: Canadian, Country of Residence: Canada

Juliana Birkhoff - Independent Scholar, Mediator, Facilitator & Trainer. Nationality: Canadian, Country of Residence: US

Emery Brusset - Director, Channel Research Ltd. Nationality: French, Country of Residence: France

Kenneth Bush - Assistant Professor of Conflict Studies, Masters Program in Conflict Studies, St.Paul University, Ottawa, Canada. Nationality: Canadian, Country of Residence: Switzerland

Cheyanne Church - Director, Policy and Evaluation Unit, INCORE. Nationality: Canadian, Country of Residence: Northern Ireland

Madeline Church - Network Coordinator, ABColumbia Group. Nationality: British, Country Experience: Colombia

Kevin Clements - Secretary General, International Alert. Nationality: New Zealander, Country of Residence: UK

Mari Fitzduff - Professor of Conflict Studies, The University of Ulster, Director of UNU/INCORE. Nationality: Irish, Country of Residence: Northern Ireland

Maria Patricia González Chávez - Independent Consultant. Nationality: Guatemalan, Country of Residence: Guatemala

Jonathan Goodhand - Lecturer, Development Practice, Department. Development Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies. Nationality: British, Country of Residence: UK

Cathy Gormley-Heenan - Research Development Officer, Community Relations Council. Nationality: Northern Irish, Country of Residence: Northern Ireland

Mark Hoffman - Lecturer in International Relations, London School of Economics. Nationality: US, Country of Residence: UK

Tony Langlois - Funding and Development Programme. Nationality: British, Country of Residence: Northern Ireland

Judith Large - Independent Consultant. Nationality: British, Country of Residence: UK

Ronald Lucardie - Policy Officer, Department for Quality Assurance & Strategy, CORDAID. Nationality: Filipino, Country of Residence: Netherlands

Bulelwa Makalima - Africa Programmes Manager, Acting Manager for National Programmes, Centre for Conflict Resolution, Cape Town. Nationality: South African, Country of Residence: South Africa

Cathie McKimm - Arts Officer, Down District Council. Nationality: Northern Irish, Country of Residence: Northern Ireland

Barbara Merson - Major Gifts Director, American ORT. Nationality: American, Country of Residence: US

Sarah Parker - Evaluation Coordinator, Cooperation Ireland. Nationality: American, Country of Residence: Republic of Ireland

Juliet Prager - Deputy Trust Secretary, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. Nationality: British, Country of Residence: UK

Marc Ross - William Rand Kenan, Jr. Professor. Political Science, Bryn Mawr College. Nationality: American, Country of Residence: US

Julie Shouldice - Post-Graduate Student, Magee College, University of Ulster. Nationality: Canadian, Country of Residence: Northern Ireland

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Appelbaum, R.P. (1970). *Theories of social change*. Chicago: Markham Publishing Co.

Arthur, P. (2000). *Special relationships: Britain, Ireland and the Northern Ireland problem*. Belfast: Blackstaff.

Bennis, W.G., Benne, K.D. and Chin, R. (1989). *The Planning of Change* (4th Ed.) USA: Holt, Reinhart & Winston.

Chin, R. and Benne, K.D. (1989). 'General Strategies for Effecting Changes in Human Systems.' In Bennis, W.G., Benne, K.D. and Chin, R. (1989) *The Planning of Change* (4th Ed.) USA: Holt, Reinhart & Winston.

Church, C. and Shouldice, J. (2002). *Evaluating Conflict Resolution Interventions: Framing the State of Play*. Derry/Londonderry: International Conflict Research (INCORE).

Conflict Resolution Evaluation Meeting: Session Summaries. (2002). [On-line] Available Internet:
http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/home/publication/conference/Summary.pdf

Connell, J.P. and Kubisch, A.C. (1996). 'Applying a Theory of Change Approach to the Evaluation of Comprehensive Community Initiatives: Progress, Prospects, and Problems. In Fulbright-Anderson, K., Kubisch, A.C. and Connell, J.P. (Eds.) (1999). *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives, Volume 2: Theory, Measurement and Analysis*. Washington, DC: Aspen Institute.

Connell, J.P., Kubisch, A.C., Schorr, L.B. and Weiss, C.H. (Eds.) (1995). *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives, Volume 1: Concepts, Methods and Contexts* Washington, DC: Aspen Institute.

Fisher, S., Abdi, D.I., Ludin, J., Smith, R., Williams, Steve and Williams, Sue. (2000). *Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action*. London: Zed Books in association with RTC.

Fulbright-Anderson, K., Kubisch, A.C. and Connell, J.P. (Eds.) (1999). *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives, Volume 2: Theory, Measurement and Analysis*. Washington, DC: Aspen Institute.

Hughes, M. and Traynor, T. (2000). 'Reconciling Process and Outcome in Evaluating Community Initiatives' *Evaluation volume 6, number 1.*

Kelman, H.C. (1995, January). 'Contributions of an Unofficial Conflict Resolution Effort to the Israeli-Palestinian Breakthrough.' *Negotiation Journal*, 19-27.

Kelman, H.C. (no date). *The Contributions of Non-Governmental Organizations to the Resolution of International Conflicts: An Approach to Evaluation.* Massachusetts: Harvard University.

Lippitt, Watson and Westley, (1958). *The Dynamics of Planned Change.* USA: Hardcourt, Brace and World, Inc.

London, S. (1996, June). 'Understanding Change: The Dynamics of Social Transformation' [On-line]. Available Internet: http://www.scottlondon.com/reports/change.html

Ross, M.H. (2000). 'Creating the conditions for peacemaking: theories of practice in ethnic conflict resolution' *Ethnic and Racial Studies, volume 23, number 6*, 1002-1034.

Ross, M.H. (2001). *Conceptualizing Success in Conflict Resolution Interventions: Evaluation Guidelines.* Prepared for Presentation to the Annual Meeting of the International Society for Political Psychology, Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Sefton, T. (2000, November). 'Getting Less for More: Economic Evaluation in the Social Welfare Field.' CASE paper 44. [On-line]. Available Internet: http://www.sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case/CP/CASEpaper44.pdf

Spencer, T. (1998). *A Synthesis of Evaluations of Peacebuilding Activities Undertaken by Humanitarian Agencies and Conflict Resolution Organizations.* London: Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Assistance (ALNAP).

Strimling, A. (2000, May). *Impact Evaluation Framework* Draft paper.

Weiss, C. (1995). 'Nothing as Practical as Good Theory: Exploring Theory-Based Evaluation for Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families.' In Connell, J.P., Kubisch, A.C., Schorr, L.B. and Weiss, C.H. (Eds.) (1995) *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives, Volume 1: Concepts, Methods and Contexts* Washington, DC: Aspen Institute.

Weiss, C. (1997). 'How can theory-based evaluation make greater headway?' *Evaluation Review, volume 21, number 4*, 501-524.

Weiss, C. (1998). *Evaluation.* (2nd Ed.) Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Woodrow, P. (2002, November). *Theories of Peacebuilding.* Draft paper.

Zaltmann, G., Kotler, P. and Kaufman, I. (1972). *Creating Social Change.* USA: Holt Reinhart & Winston.

Meeting participants referred to in the document:

Abdalla, Amr
Austin, Alexander
Birkoff, Juliana
Brusset, Emery
Bush, Kenneth
Church, Madeline
Clements, Kevin
Fitzduff, Mari
Goodhand, Jonathan
Gormley-Heenan, Cathy
Hoffman, Mark
Langlois, Tony
Makalima, Bulelwa
McKimm, Cathie
Merson, Barbara
Parker, Sarah
Ross, Marc Howard

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Cheyanne Church

Ms. Church is the Director of the Policy and Evaluation Unit - INCORE, which aims to bridge the gap between research, policy and practice. Her work focuses on improving the impact of research on policy and evaluation, which has culminated in a book entitled *NGOs at the Table: Strategies for Impacting Policy*, forthcoming, mid-2003 by Rowman & Littlefield (co-edited by Professor Mari Fitzduff). In addition to research, her activities in this role have included briefing government officials in Macedonia on conflict resolution strategies and techniques; co-ordinating work with the European Commission; being a member of the Reflecting on Peace Practice Advisory Group and conducting training on women and peacebuilding in India. She is also the Director of INCORE's International Summer School - an annual training opportunity for senior level policy makers, practitioners and academics. Cheyanne was formerly the Interim Director of The Coexistence Initiative; an international organisation which seeks to make the world safe for difference. She has published on both conflict and development issues and holds a MSc in International Relations from the London School of Economics.

'If you don't know where you're going, you'll end up somewhere else'

- Yogi Berra

Julie Shouldice

Ms. Shouldice is working as a Research Officer with the Policy and Evaluation Unit – INCORE on Evaluation and Conflict Resolution. She has an undergraduate degree in Political Science from the University of Toronto and a Master's Degree in Peace and Conflict Studies from the University of Ulster. Julie has worked in the Balkans: as a Human Rights Monitor in Croatia and with refugees from Kosovo. Most recently, she was a Branch Manager with the Canadian Red Cross, designing, delivering and evaluating community-based programmes. She continues to be involved in various aspects of disaster and emergency relief.