

# REFLECTING ON PEACE PRACTICE PROJECT

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## **Consultation Report: Understanding Cumulative Impacts**

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# Consultation Report: Understanding Cumulative Impacts

## Introduction

In 2007, the Reflecting on Peace Practice project (RPP) undertook an effort to explore systematically how cumulative impacts in peace practice occur. The evidence gathered by RPP and summarized in *Confronting War* pointed to many factors that have *prevented* programs from “adding up” to have an impact on the overall conflict situation. Yet, while RPP gained the key insights in that phase that the effectiveness of peace initiatives depended in large part on their strategic links to the driving factors of conflict and their “linkages” to efforts at other levels, sectors and target groups, there was little practical evidence about what constitutes an effective linkage. It was clear that we need to learn more about what contributes to the “adding up” process and, consequently, how practitioners can work to improve the cumulative impacts of all peace efforts in an area.

At this writing, cumulative case studies have been completed in Aceh, Burundi, Cambodia, Cyprus, Haiti, Israel/Palestine, Mindanao, Mozambique, Northern Ireland, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Tajikistan and are underway in Liberia and Guatemala. All have focused on contexts or moments in time in which there has been progress towards peace, in some cases sustained and in others not. These cases examined specifically whether and how multiple peace efforts have had cumulative positive impacts at particular moments, and how/whether activities and successes at the community or local level and at the national level have been linked to provide sustainable changes and momentum toward peace. CDA’s 2006 study on the impact of peacebuilding on violence in Kosovo has been included in the discussion for comparison, as it addresses similar issues.

The third Consultation on Understanding Cumulative Impacts was held in Boston, Massachusetts on January 26-27, 2010. Thirty people participated in the Consultation, including donors, practitioners, the authors of the case studies and CDA staff. The Consultation focused on five of the most recently completed cases: Cambodia, Haiti, Mindanao, Mozambique and South Africa to pursue the questions described above.

During the first day, participants analyzed the five cases in small groups and presented insights and observations in the plenary. During the second day, participants identified and discussed themes that cut across the different cases and the relevance of themes that emerged from the previous two Consultations. While no definitive patterns emerged from the cases analyzed during the Consultation, the discussion did highlight a number of relevant factors that will be pursued in greater depth in forthcoming Issue Papers and in Feedback Workshops that will begin in spring 2010.

## Importance of Defining “Progress” and “Success”

There was a great deal of discussion regarding how “peace” and “success” or “progress” are defined in these situations, due to their importance in shaping the peacebuilding agenda. Two dilemmas in particular were raised:

a) *Short-term vs. long-term.* First, several of the cases showed some “success” or “progress” in the shorter-term in ending violence. Political structures were created or reformed, but in several cases these structures did not do what was intended of them. Cambodia and Mozambique, for example, have seen increased consolidation of control of the state by one party and dynamics of corruption, as people engage in conflict by other means. Participants raised concerns that structures and practices are being established or tolerated that may stabilize the situation in the short term, but make it difficult to deal with the underlying structural conditions that contributed to conflict in the long-term. At the same time, it was noted, in Cambodia, for example, while problems still exist, and conditions for conflict remain, people are not mobilizing against the government. For a number of reasons, many Cambodians welcome the relative stability, for now. Western notions of democracy are not a high priority at this stage. Questions were raised about:

- Whose definition of “peace” or “progress” should prevail at any particular stage?
- Is a goal of “good enough stabilization” acceptable, while leaving quite a bit of unfinished business? (And acceptable to whom?)
- Can short-term conflict mitigation (“conflict management”) build space for longer term peacebuilding that addresses deeper structural issues, and how?
- Is there evidence of “successful conflicts” in which it is worthwhile to risk violence in order to address important issues? For example, corruption was described by participants as a stabilizing but destructive force, with a possibility that violence may re-occur if it is challenged. Participants asked how does one bring about change (social revolution, i.e. in Haiti) without bringing on violence?

b) *What to do about unfinished business?* This question emerges from the concern about acceptance of short-term stabilization at the expense of long-term resolution of deeper structural issues. How important is it to deal with unfinished business, and which unfinished business is important? Will (premature?) declarations of “progress” or “success” limit the ability to deal with unfinished business in the longer-term? In nearly all the cases in which there was acknowledged progress (e.g., Cambodia, Mozambique, South Africa), there was also a great deal of unfinished business. Mozambique has been hailed as a success for the United Nations, yet there remains a small group of soldiers who have not been integrated and power has been consolidated by one party—and this unfinished business may create risks of violent conflict after 17 years. As one participant noted, “Is 98% success enough, or does one need to focus on unfinished business?”

In the same vein, shifting of funding priorities soon after the first nonviolent election in Haiti was seen as contributing, in part, to the resurgence of violence in subsequent elections. In Cambodia, the ruling party was seen to benefit when international attention declined. Do shifting donor priorities and reduced attention resulting from progress or

success undermine sustainability of the progress, and undermine efforts to address unfinished business, which often requires deeper structural changes?

## Linkages

Analysis of the cases in this Consultation reinforced and refined conclusions that emerged from previous Consultations concerning the importance of linkages as a mechanism for achievement of cumulative impacts. Participants identified several kinds of linkages as important:

a) *Linkages across levels (micro—macro, Tracks 1-2-3, peace writ little to Peace Writ Large)*. In cases that did not show sustained progress, there was a pronounced lack of linkages. In Haiti, for example, much good work was being done both at the community level and at the elite level, but, as one participant commented, “there is a disconnect” between levels, “and the work is not brought to scale.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in Mindanao, the density of Track Two and Three initiatives was noted, but there was little evidence that this activity had penetrated traditional structures and people driving the conflict, and there was no credible Track One process to connect to. By contrast, in South Africa, the interactive component linking peace committees to the reform of the political structures was critical to the effectiveness of the National Peace Accord.

Questions regarding what constitutes a “good” linkage and how these linkages are forged emerged as significant areas for inquiry. Some types of linkages were identified in the cases analyzed in this Consultation, such as:

- Communication initiatives, including workshops, meetings, media/mass communication (newspapers, etc.) that made people feel that they were part of the process, that they understood the process and had an acknowledged role in it.
- “Middle-out” actors such as the churches in Mozambique that worked together toward similar goals with different actors in the conflict simultaneously;
- An overarching policy framework, such as the National Peace Accord in South Africa, linking and promoting interaction between local level (peace writ little) and political level/Track One activity.
- Scaling up of “peace writ little” successes to a critical mass that affects Track One. Participants also recognized this as a key challenge – how to bring local level work to scale?

Questions were raised about how *civil society* can work to forge linkages in circumstances either where elites feel threatened by it, or, as in the case of Mindanao, where there is “no credible Track One process to link to.” In some places (e.g., Cambodia), it was noted that significant small successes are achieved, but will not be allowed to “add up” because they would threaten key interests. In other words, as long as

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<sup>1</sup> It was noted also that, unlike Mozambique or South Africa, where churches, trade unions, and other actors provided such “middle out” linkages to both Track One and grassroots constituencies, such “middle out” actors did not exist in Haiti.

the peace writ little initiatives are considered “irrelevant,” they are not constrained, but also make little contribution to Peace Writ Large.

At the same time, in South Africa, for example, much grassroots work was undertaken long before the government was ready to engage, and there was a great deal of strategic thinking and vision about preparing the ground. When and how such peace writ little work can prepare the ground and bear fruit when no serious macro-level process exists remains a question for exploration. Are there also situations in which it would be preferable to avoid linkages between peace writ little and Peace Writ Large? Participants noted that there are occasions (e.g., Somaliland) where attempts to ratchet up smaller scale successes may undermine what has been achieved at the peace writ little level itself.

*b) Horizontal linkages (across different peace efforts).* In previous Consultations, it has been noted that processes in which cumulative impacts had been achieved often involved people building on what others had done—even if there had been no explicit efforts at coordination. Participants in this Consultation noted other sources of horizontal linkages (among different efforts) that helped them overcome fragmentation and lack of accumulation of impacts.

- A shared agenda (implicit or explicit). In Mindanao, it was noted, a tremendous amount of civil society networking has taken place, but people asked, “aligning for what?” A general desire and belief that “another way is possible” was not seen as enough to promote alignment. In Mozambique, by contrast, the peace NGOs had a similar approach and message, even though they did not coordinate; their effects gained cumulative effects because they were reinforcing a similar message with multiple actors on different levels.
- Shared values regarding principles and guidelines. In Northern Ireland, it was noted, the peace process became stuck, while there was a proliferation of initiatives and approaches. However, at the core the NGO community shared principles and directions—i.e., accountability and good governance. In Mindanao, by contrast, many of the actors profess shared values on the surface, such as a commitment to human rights, but still see these concepts and principles differently and have formed competing “networks” of organizations.

### **Domains of progress and “adding up”**

Case material and discussions in previous Consultations had suggested that one factor enabling the “adding up” of multiple peace initiatives is parallel progress in several socio-political domains that occurs relatively synchronously. The domains included:

1. Political arrangements (political processes, structures, culture, etc.)
2. Social fabric (social cohesion or disunity, trust or suspicion/fear and cooperation or tension among groups in society)
3. Policy (changes in laws, policies, rules, regulations or institutions that address conflict issues)

4. Stability/security (physical and psychological safety)
5. Economic (changes in prosperity, economic growth, employment, poverty, etc.)
6. Definition of the problem (changes in how key people see or define the problem or solution)

The notion of progress across a number of domains remained a useful framework for discussion of “adding up” of peace initiatives and development of momentum in peace processes. The cases and discussions in this Consultation presented some counter-evidence to the initial hypothesis, and raised a number of questions to be explored in the feedback workshops in the future.

a) *Economic domain.* The evidence from the cases had suggested that actual *progress* in the economic domain was not necessary or significant for cumulative impacts. The expectation of economic gain (or avoidance of loss) did emerge from several cases as a motivator for settlement and support for the peace process, and it was suggested that the hope or prospect for a better economic future may be sufficient to contribute to cumulative impacts. In other words, concrete benefits may not be necessary before people are ready to move on to or support progress in other domains; people may be willing to wait for economic benefits as long as they believe they will have access in the future. The significance of the \$7 Million Fund in Mozambique provides one example of the power of the hope for economic benefit; although much of the fund disappeared in the hands of the regional councils that administered it, it was cited as a success, because it was supposed to benefit the poor and raised hope.

To date, the evidence in the cases is not sufficient to draw conclusions. It was noted that the cases themselves do not discuss the role of economic development in the peacebuilding process in great depth. Consequently, the feedback workshops can be used to gather further evidence regarding the extent to which actions and progress in the economic domain contributes to the adding up of peace efforts.

b) *Definition of the problem.* While this domain is not of the same order as the others, the area of perceptions or attitudes about the problem and solutions emerged early on as an important domain for change or progress towards peace. The discussion was framed by examples at both ends of the spectrum: in Haiti, starkly different definitions of the problem (and, indeed, denial by some that there is a problem at all) led to ineffective work, while in South Africa, a shared definition of the problem and local ownership of the process were critical to success. So far, there is varied evidence regarding how and to what extent shared analysis or definition of the problem underpins cumulative impacts and synergies of multiple peace efforts in a conflict. In each case where there was progress, however, it was noted that some degree of shared analysis or definition of the problem (even if there was still a lack of broad agreement) emerged. For example, parties can come to consensus on the definition of the problem (e.g., legitimacy of the government in South Africa), reach agreement on a legitimate process for dealing with disagreements, or realize that the situation is “lose-lose” or that there can be no military victory. It was noted that something happened within each party to make them realize that they had to examine (and change) their positions to move toward compromise. What

kinds of conversations need to be had within a party, and what kind of space is needed for those, are important questions for further inquiry.

c) *Synchronicity of progress.* An initial hypothesis based on previous cases was that reasonably synchronous progress in all the domains was needed for impacts to cumulate. The discussions in this Consultation raised counter-evidence. In South Africa, while all domains did see progress, it did not occur at the same time; progress in the political domain far outstripped progress in other domains, which lagged behind. Similarly, in Cambodia, it was noted that development in one or two domains pushed others forward and was necessary for ending the violent conflict.

In light of this analysis, the group hypothesized that synchronicity of progress may not always be necessary. Where the definition of the problem is contested, it may be important to work in all domains because there is no consensus on the definition of the problem. Where there is sufficient consensus, however, on what the problem is, it may be possible for one domain to move forward while the others catch up over time. The need for a connection between the nature of the progress in each domain and the driving factors of conflict was also raised; where driving factors are squarely in a few domains, it may be possible for other domains to lag behind without undermining progress in the overall process. It will be useful, participants noted, to test these hypotheses with the previous cases and in future feedback workshops.

## **Peace Agendas**

Issues of how peace agendas are defined, by whom and how they evolve came up repeatedly in discussions during the two days. Several aspects were highlighted.

a) *Converging agendas.* The notion that convergence of agendas acts as a mechanism for “adding up” emerged as early as the first Consultation (2008), in particular between pro-peace and non-peace agendas. In several of the cases considered in this Consultation, turning points often appeared to reflect a convergence of agendas. In South Africa, for example, the National Peace Accord was seen as the product, at least in part, of converging agendas between economic actors, churches, the people and politicians. Perhaps these structures “died a natural death” after 1994, when people believed the threat had passed, and the incentive for such peace structures diminished.

b) *Whose agenda?* Participants highlighted the role of leadership in engaging people in the peace process, especially at the “more people” level. The importance of local ownership of the process and the peace agenda for “adding up” was also underlined—especially in South Africa and Mozambique. Some participants articulated the notion of peacebuilding agendas as a mechanism for local leadership and ownership. In successful cases, it appeared to be important that local leadership articulated a clear peace agenda that operated as a point of reference. In South Africa, the leaders were able to use the values of nonviolent action, democratic structures and the Freedom Charter (among others), developed long before the 1980s, as a point of reference for moving the peace process forward and maintaining unity of purpose. In Mozambique, the church had a

clear vision for peace, and the clear and simple agenda articulated by the church served as a mechanism for synergy. The simple message of tolerance and dialogue guided their efforts to prepare the people for peace, helped the disparate efforts of many NGOs to achieve synergy, and helped to channel international assistance.

In Cambodia, by contrast, the differences between outsider and insider agendas were pronounced, and created dilemmas regarding the direction and ownership of peacebuilding. It was noted that there is a generational divide in Cambodia as younger people have not been exposed to the history of the conflict, which has created dilemmas about a current peace agenda. Do we (as outsiders) teach people in depth about the conflict, so that the younger generation knows what happened, or let them move forward without pushing reconciliation? One donor has chosen the former, and has met local resistance. Similarly, some believed that support of the Tribunal in Cambodia was part of an international agenda to achieve closure in Cambodia, and they questioned not only whether the funds might have been better spent, but whether such international support has inadvertently contributed to consolidating the power of the ruling party. In Haiti, imposition of an external paradigm of “post-conflict” demobilization/disarmament led to negative results. Some participants also noted the experience of NGOs in Mindanao, which, while held together by the notion that “another way is possible,” do not have a common agenda, and indeed see the concepts and principles of human rights, for example, quite differently. They have been less able to have a significant influence.

c) *Evolution of structures to meet evolving agendas.* There was considerable discussion about how peace infrastructure (such as the National Peace Accord/peace committees in South Africa and NGOs established in Mozambique to support implementation of the peace accords) are able to adapt as the context and agendas in the peace process evolve. Are they able (and should they) adapt to serve similar functions as the peacebuilding process changes? In South Africa, the peace committees were dismantled almost immediately after the 1994 elections by the government, which had the legitimacy to assume these functions. Participants asked whether these peace infrastructures could or should have been sustained to deal with the strikes and xenophobia that emerged in 2009. Similarly, in Mozambique, many NGOs are trying to shift from being champions of peace to taking on the challenges of promoting good governance. They too face the threat of disappearance, as they do not receive the international financial or political support they once had. A number of questions emerged from the discussion for further exploration:

- How are and should peacebuilding agendas evolve as progress is made? What is the relation and effect of outside actors and assistance on this?
- Can and should peacebuilding infrastructure established before, during or immediately after a peace process adapt to serve a new functions as the context evolves—and, in particular, where government has assumed these functions in a post-agreement context, but the elimination of the civil society-based peacebuilding infrastructure would leave a gap?

### **Insider-Outsider Roles and Relationships**

The relationship and effects of outsiders—outsider agendas, outside assistance and outsider presence—was a consistent theme throughout the discussions. A number of positive roles of outsiders were noted, as they have been in the past: taking action to (re)structure political incentives of key actors and bring them to the table, providing space for and mediation of agreements, support for implementation of peace agreements—both financial and political, among others.

A number of negative impacts of outsiders were raised throughout the two days. Two types of outsider impacts not emphasized in previous Consultations are highlighted here.

a) *Exportation of models, paradigms and tools.* The cases contained a number of examples of inadvertent negative impacts of exporting international paradigms of peacebuilding and assistance. The starkest example was Haiti, where implementation of a standard post-conflict DDR program in a context that did not share many characteristics of a more traditional “post-conflict” situation resulted in failure. There were further examples: implementation of decentralization in Mozambique that has enabled the government to extend and consolidate one-party rule at the local level, and outsider contribution to the consolidation of power by the ruling party in Cambodia. Participants noted that exportation of models such as the National Peace Accord or TRC that were effective in South Africa is not necessarily effective elsewhere, possibly because the same context of the top down and bottom up working together does not exist in many other places.

b) *“Success” and exit strategies.* International characterization of an intervention as a “success”—in Cambodia and Mozambique, for example—has significant implications for countries’ ability to continue to make progress on unfinished business once violence has ended and initial stabilization has been achieved. Another observation – related to local ownership – was that when we move beyond the stabilization mode, continued active outsider engagement may decrease local ownership. To reconcile this with “shifting priorities” too fast leads to unfinished business being left unattended.

### **Going forward: Issues and Feedback Workshops**

With nearly all case studies completed, the collaborative learning effort on Understanding Cumulative Impacts will move into a phase of preparing issue papers and soliciting feedback and experience more broadly from practitioners and policy makers. A number of issue papers reflecting the themes, patterns and ongoing questions will be prepared and used as a basis for discussions in up to ten feedback workshops to be conducted around the world. Consultation participants made several suggestions concerning what issues appear to be emerging as common themes and questions across the case studies and what issues are of greatest interest and concern to practitioners and policy makers in the field.

RPP is integrating these suggestions into Issue Papers that are currently being developed, including:

1. What is the relation of peace writ little to Peace Writ Large and the mechanisms through which peace writ little has an impact on Peace Writ Large?
2. What is the role of development efforts in supporting Peace Writ Large? How do developments and progress in the economic domain affect Peace Writ Large?
3. What is “progress”? When and how do people define and recognize “progress,” and how does a (peacebuilding and/or stabilization) process shift from one phase into another?
4. Sequencing and synchronization of progress: how is momentum built? To what extent and when does synchronous progress in multiple domains contribute to cumulative impacts?
5. Where there is an identifiable peace agreement, what was the unfinished business? How does unfinished business cause problems? Can peace infrastructures created for one phase of the process evolve and be used effectively to deal with the challenges of the next?
6. Where does leadership come from and how is leadership exercised and maintained to help achieve cumulative impacts?
7. What are roles and contributions of civil society actors to cumulative impacts? What are their limits?
8. What linkages are important for cumulative impacts, and what are good linkages?
9. What is the role and significance of a clear peace agenda, and how are effective peace agendas set?
10. Mechanisms for “adding up” and strategies for peacebuilding: To what degree is an explicit or implicit strategy for peacebuilding needed?
11. What roles and relationships between “insiders” and “outsiders” help peace efforts “add up?”
12. What are effective strategies for dealing with the “hard to reach?”
13. What is the role of game-changing events (e.g., the earthquake in Haiti), and what kinds of responses to them help build momentum to peace?