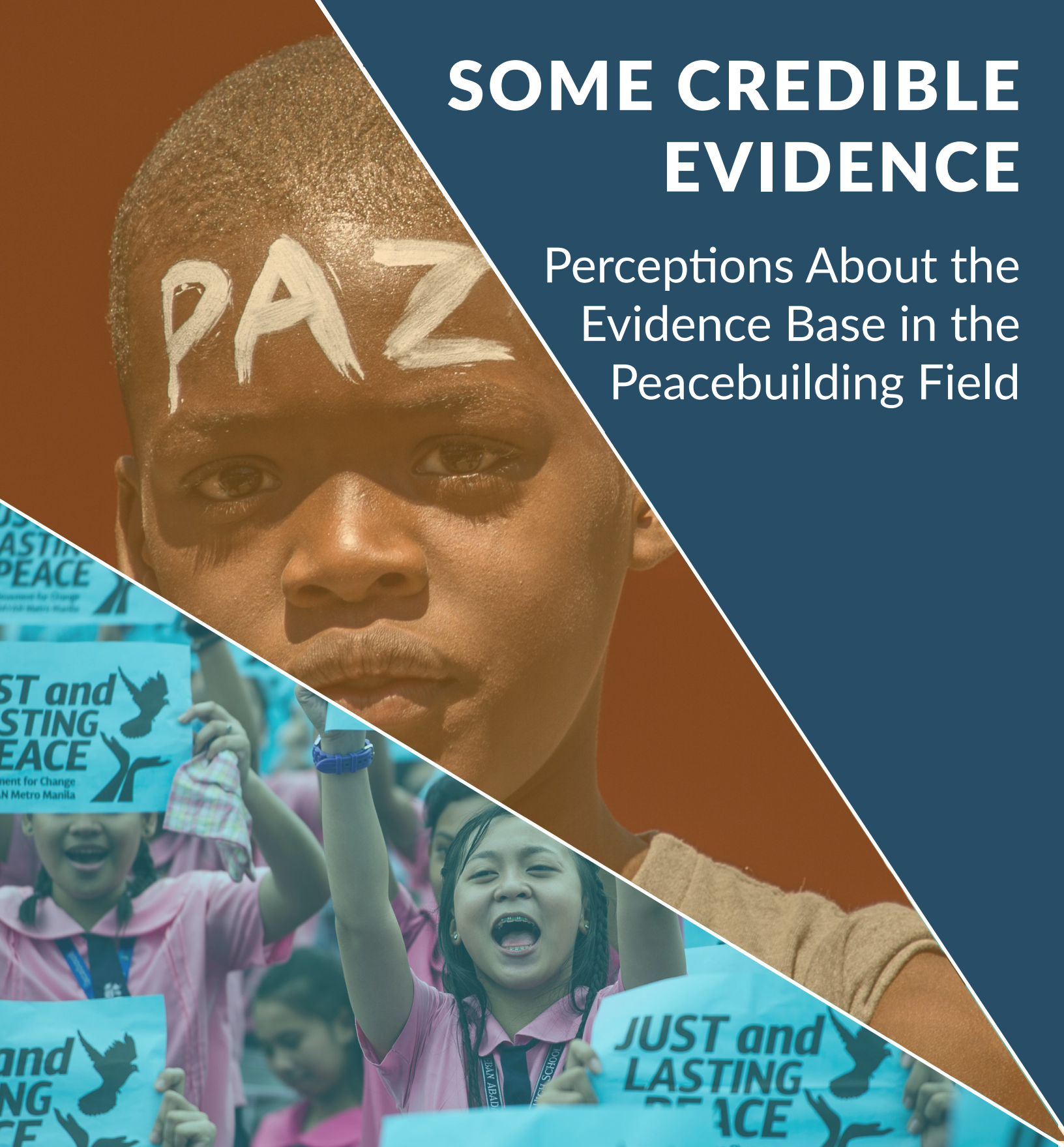


# SOME CREDIBLE EVIDENCE

Perceptions About the Evidence Base in the Peacebuilding Field



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FUTURE



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Peacebuilding

# SOME CREDIBLE EVIDENCE

## PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE EVIDENCE BASE IN THE PEACEBUILDING FIELD

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*One Earth Future Foundation (OEF) is an incubator of innovative peacebuilding programs that designs, tests, and partners to scale programs that work hand-in-hand with those most affected by conflict to eliminate the root causes of war. OEF believes in a world beyond war, where sustainable peace is truly possible.*

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#### Cover Images:

A boy with the word "Peace" written on his forehead, participates in a "march for peace" at Rio de Janeiro's Alemao favela on April 4, 2015 to protest against the death of a ten-year-old boy shot dead by the Brazilian police during a confrontation with drug traffickers two days ago. CHRISTOPHE SIMON/AFP via Getty Images

Highschool students hold banner calling for just and lasting peace in time of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's first 100 days in office in Manila on October 7, 2016. NOEL CELIS/AFP via Getty Images

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past 30 years the idea of “evidence-based practice” has become a dominant perspective in a variety of fields. This idea is built on pillars of learning and accountability, and emphasizes that organizations should develop systems for predicting and monitoring the impact of their work, report the results of this monitoring, and over time develop better and better approaches to driving impact.

While this basic idea is not particularly contentious, the details of how it is implemented raise debates about what kinds of evidence should be considered valid and who gets to decide. In the peacebuilding field specifically, these questions have been complicated by parallel conversations identifying the need for peacebuilding interventions to be both multidimensional and complex as well as built on the specific conflict dynamics experienced by locals affected by the conflict. At the same time, the developing discourse on evidence-based practice has in the formal research and academic literature emphasized fairly strong positions about research methods and the need for (on the one hand) experimental methods or (on the other) for locally derived and nuanced understanding to be privileged.

*How is evidence-based practice implemented? What kinds of evidence should be considered valid? Who gets to decide?*

In the context of this fragmented discussion, this report attempts to identify whether the peacebuilding field as a

whole shares an understanding about what kind of evidence is needed or useful and where such evidence exists. It reports on a survey of 207 self-identified peacebuilders across different subgroups in the peacebuilding field, including academics, civil society organization practitioners, philanthropists, and others. Key findings include the following:

- Overall, the field reports fairly strong consensus about the need for evidence and what it should look like. This consensus is nuanced and pragmatic, and does not strongly reflect either of the major perspectives in literature of the ongoing debate about evidence and methods. Participants strongly preferred multiple studies using mixed methods as a foundation and considered multiple case studies to be a minimum for endorsing interventions. Participants acknowledged that in practice, the minimum evidence they looked for in making a recommendation was lower than the abstract idea of what kind of evidence was needed to support an intervention.
  - A large minority of responses, 15-20%, entirely rejected the idea of methods as a meaningful way of thinking about what kind of evidence is needed. These participants instead emphasized the idea of careful and rigorous data collection as more important than any specific method.
- Overall, participants reported higher confidence in the evidence base for which conditions are needed for achieving sustainable peace than in how to effectively deliver these interventions.



Colombian Orlinda Mesa, victim of the armed conflict in her country, speaks about her embroidery, part of the exhibition, "La vida que se teje" (Embroidered Life), at Antioquia's museum in Medellín, Colombia on May 11, 2016. Photo: RAUL ARBOLEDA/AFP via Getty Images

- Participants were asked to assess the evidence supporting interventions based on whether they think there is a strong evidence base showing that this condition is needed for long-term peace, and second, based on whether there is an evidence base showing how to effectively deliver it.
  - Participants reported fairly high confidence in the evidence on the conditions needed for peace, and in particular the structural or general conditions needed for peace in the absence of active conflict; 70% of the conditions for peace before conflict and 90% of those in post-conflict peacebuilding had scores corresponding to “some credible evidence exists” or higher. There was less support for conditions needed for crisis response (20%), crisis prevention (0%), and peacemaking (67%).
  - Very few interventions to deliver the conditions identified were found to have evidence supporting them. It is significant that only three—increasing women’s engagement in economic and political life, education, and including women in peacemaking processes—had a mean score corresponding to “some credible evidence” or higher. This suggests that there is fairly widespread endorsement that these are effective interventions.
  - Participant knowledge appeared relatively siloed, with many more participants responding to items about peacebuilding in the absence of conflict than responding to items about peacemaking. This was particularly true for crisis prevention and crisis response.

These findings suggest that the field has reached greater consensus on the conditions relevant for sustainable peace but still needs progress on understanding how to deliver these conditions.

Based on these findings, our recommendations for the peacebuilding field are as follows:

- 1. THE FIELD NEEDS MORE RESEARCH AND PUBLISHED IMPACT ASSESSMENTS TRACKING HOW BEST TO DELIVER THE CONDITIONS NEEDED FOR PEACE.** The perspective of the field is that very few interventions have evidence supporting them. Fixing this will require more published impact assessments and research projects identifying what interventions work and in what contexts. This may in turn require more willingness among those in the peacebuilding field to release the results of internal monitoring and evaluation findings.
- 2. THE FIELD NEEDS A CLEAR WAY TO DISCUSS RIGOR AND QUALITY OF EVIDENCE SEPARATE FROM THE METHODS DEBATE.** These findings suggest that participants are relatively disinterested in the methods debate that has been happening in the academic literature. Participants instead emphasized the idea of having multiple approaches to evidence collection, and the idea that rigor was more important than method. The field will benefit from a way of talking about rigor that is distinct from methods.
- 3. THE FIELD NEEDS A COMPREHENSIVE CORE PEACEBUILDING TYPOLOGY THAT IS MORE WIDELY ACCEPTED AND UNDERSTOOD.** In developing this survey, we sought to generate a way of talking about the scope of peacebuilding in both time and the conceptual domain that could frame the survey. Such a typology is necessary for any attempt to understand the peacebuilding field as a whole, but to date, each individual organization or researcher must develop their own because the field does not have a widely shared and accepted typology. Addressing this will improve the ability of the field to generate evidence and share learning.
- 4. THE FIELD WOULD BENEFIT FROM ATTENTION TO THE FULL SPECTRUM OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT INTERVENTIONS.** The majority of participants in our survey were more comfortable talking about the evidence around structural peacebuilding than about interventions during active conflict, and especially interventions around discrete crisis moments. This reflects where peacebuilding organizations tend to work, but underscores the risk that fast-moving crisis or conflict moments may require peacebuilding organizations to work outside of their specific expertise. A shared core understanding of all interventions available, and their evidence, would support more comprehensive interventions.
- 5. THE FIELD MUST CONFRONT THE TENSIONS BETWEEN MEASURING THE NARROW AND THE SYSTEMIC IMPACTS OF OUR WORK.** The framing of this survey followed the approach in the existing research of treating the distinct conditions and interventions as discrete domains that can be measured independently. However, the past several years in the peacebuilding field have been characterized by a recognition that the conditions for peace are mutually supporting and must be addressed in tandem. As the field develops better evidence for the discrete interventions executed, we must also develop a way of measuring and understanding systemic impact and the relationships between the different conditions.

## INTRODUCTION

Very few people in the peacebuilding field would disagree with the basic premise that the field should understand what works and what doesn't work and should preferentially do what works rather than what doesn't. As with many things, the devil is in the details. Debates about how we know what works and what doesn't, what kind of knowledge is used to develop that understanding, and how this all relates to funding can be contentious.

It is possible to read the debates that exist around the idea of "evidence-based practice" and come away with the perception that the peacebuilding field does not have a sound and shared knowledge base, or that we are indeed operating from very different ideas about what that knowledge base might be. The diversity of framings of the conversation and starting points may make it easy to misunderstand what standpoint others are operating from. This report presents information from a scoping survey of 207 members of the peacebuilding field about the various perceptions of "evidence" for the field, with the hope that this will reduce misunderstandings and identify points of common ground. The survey finds that overall, the field is operating largely from a shared understanding of both what evidence is and where evidence exists. This shared understanding does not mean that the existing debates are trivial or frivolous: the questions around the epistemology of "evidence" are important and ongoing. However, it does suggest that the field as a whole has a considered, shared starting point about what research and evidence currently exist and where more is needed.

*This survey provides a foundation for discussion about where the debate around evidence is most specific and pointed, and suggestions for what researchers, practitioners, and funders may want to consider in the development of theories of change and framing of their work.*

This survey is not a map of where the evidence is: such mappings require establishing a perspective on what types of evidence should be included. Others in the field have provided excellent systemic reviews or meta-analyses on questions including where gaps exist in the evidence,<sup>1, 2</sup> what the evidence is around democratic transitions,<sup>3</sup> and what the major theories of change and their supporting evidence are for the peacebuilding field.<sup>4, 5</sup> This survey is instead a survey of perceptions of where the data are and what approaches should be considered as a basis for evidence. From that perspective, it provides a foundation for discussion about where the debate around evidence is most specific and pointed, and suggestions

for what researchers, practitioners, and funders may want to consider in the development of theories of change and framing of their work. It provides an initial review of the discourse around "evidence-based practice" in international work and peacebuilding, presents the intent of the survey and its key findings, and concludes with some implications from these findings.

## The Evolution of Evidence-based Practice

Despite how prevalent the idea of evidence-based practice is in modern social impact work, the term itself, and the larger enterprise of the deliberate, structured, and intentional use of data collected with the goal of improving the processes of large institutions, is fairly young. The idea of evidence-based practice appears to have its roots in the term "evidence-based medicine," coined in 1991 by researchers at McMaster University.<sup>6, 7, 8</sup> It connected to an emerging, contemporaneous conversation about outcome-based approaches to government taking place under names such as "reinventing government" in the United States,<sup>9</sup> or "modernising government" or "evidence-based policymaking" in the UK.<sup>10</sup> This approach called for governments to be more deliberate and discrete in planning for the outcomes of their work, measuring their success and/or failure, and being accountable to the public by justifying their expenses through specific references to their measurements. Major philanthropic donors also saw similar emphasis on improving their impact through the use of better-informed approaches to grant-making and assessment. In 2007, the Rockefeller Foundation coordinated a discussion among major investors on the idea of "impact investing," emphasizing the idea of measuring and tracking the results of investments and grants.<sup>11</sup>

In peacebuilding, this movement coincided with greater Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation (DM&E) professionalization in the field, an associated broadening of the definitional boundaries of peacebuilding, and the incorporation of beneficiary voices in practice. These three pressures developing simultaneously created internal tensions within the peacebuilding field as the field confronted questions of democratizing knowledge production, broadening the scope of what should be considered peacebuilding, and developing more narrow and specific evidence all at the same time. However, the practical and ethical issues of working in conflict areas on the complex issues of peace mean that methods from development programming are not directly transferable to peacebuilding. As a result, reviews of the evidence for peacebuilding have tended to suggest that the evidence is mixed and spotty, with some interventions having some support and others less. This was the conclusion of the 2020 3ie Evidence Gap Map<sup>12</sup> (EGM), but it did however note a 150% increase in the evidence base compared to the 2015 version, "primarily due to the steadily increasing publication of impact evaluations of interventions

aiming to build peaceful societies in fragile contexts.” While highlighting this promising growth, the 2020 EGM continued to find that the evidence base is fragmented, with limited evidence across the majority of approaches. Of particular note, the 2020 EGM identified a gap in impact evaluations of multi-dimensional programming, with few studies assessing the effects of integrated approaches to peacebuilding despite the growing emphasis on the multi-dimensional system of peacebuilding.

The development of this discourse over the past several decades has generated significant criticism and debate, both specific to peacebuilding and more broadly. Several key issues relevant to peacebuilding include the tension between learning and accountability and the related questions of research versus practical assessment, and the debates around rigor and methods with associated issues of epistemology and structural power. Each of these are briefly introduced below.

### Learning Versus Accountability

The discourse in the medicine and policy fields around evidence-based practice highlights two different, contrary themes on the purpose of evidence—learning versus accountability. The initial emphasis of evidence-based medicine stressed learning: the systemization of approaches to research and gathering evidence, and the development of a tight feedback loop between research, practice, and teaching to emphasize approaches that produced the best outcomes. In contrast, the foundation of government approaches to evidence-based policy emphasized accountability: using data to show the public how public money was spent and the results of their investment. Both approaches include elements of the other: a pure learning-based approach necessarily includes defining which methods do not work, leading to formal or informal criticism of their proponents. Similarly, a pure accountability approach incentivizes actors to pay attention to which approaches work best to avoid failure.

*These debates have significant implications for organizations whose work, including funding, relies on decisions made by governments and funders.*

However, the different purposes are distinct, and the tension between learning and accountability is a theme that plays out in many of the debates around evidence-based practice to this day. This distinction is one reason why the debates can be contentious. Most organizations might support the idea of learning more about the field, but when funders and influential thought leaders define accountability and make subsequent funding decisions in terms of specific evidence,

questions of which kind of evidence counts become questions about which organizations will come out ahead in terms of funding and perceived success. These questions of power and accountability also underscore why the debate around evidence is not purely a theoretical debate: these debates have significant implications for organizations whose work, including funding, relies on decisions made by governments and funders.

### The Gap Between Research and Practice

A related issue comes up in the discussion around the “gap” between research and practice. Research is by definition an approach focused on learning. It is relatively less interested in questions of demonstrating impact when that impact is based on well-understood or well-supported mechanisms. Research is judged in part on originality and scope, meaning that in the modern academy, research is often more interested in identifying foundational principles or understanding broad dynamics of phenomena, rather than gaining a specific understanding of the effectiveness of a limited, single intervention or repeatedly demonstrating already accepted phenomena.

In contrast, the general focus of policymakers and practitioners is different, emphasizing more issues of evidence as accountability and proven success. Evidence in this community is more focused on the impact of specific interventions or demonstrations that approaches that have worked in the past continue to work in specific contexts. These differing foci mean that the incentives and interests of the research and policy or practice communities are somewhat divergent. The recognition of this divergence has led to a common framing that there is a “gap” between academia and practitioners.<sup>13</sup> While this is not wholly true—many practitioners pay close attention to research<sup>14</sup>—the evidence-based practice discussion has at times been a call to close this gap. However, not acknowledging the tension between learning and accountability goals in the way that evidence is developed and understood complicates the discussion around research and practice. It further highlights how work produced to support each of these distinct goals can nevertheless be useful for other goals, with appropriate translation.

### Epistemologies, Rigor, and Methods

Even at its genesis, the concept of evidence-based practice was controversial. While the basic idea of doing what works versus what does not is uncontroversial, the discussion around evidence and the evidence base is embedded in debates about power dynamics, tradeoffs, and how we know what we know.

The evidence-based practice movement has generated some sharp rhetorical differences between supporters of this

approach and its critics. On the one hand, Howard White, Founding Executive Director of the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), presents a distillation of the strong position of evidence-based practice when he argues that “most interventions don’t work, most interventions aren’t evaluated and most evaluations are not used. As a result billions of dollars of money from governments and individual donations is wasted on ineffective programmes.”<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, critics of the process point out that the way evidence is defined and weighed can be exclusionary. The significant power imbalance between funders and implementers means that the ability of large resource-holding bodies to define what constitutes “evidence” can unilaterally exclude valuable knowledge, prioritize specific knowledge practices above others, and exclude communities and groups from shaping the interventions that ultimately affect their lives.<sup>16</sup> This framing artificially “de-politicizes” a system of decision-making which is inherently political, hiding direct engagement with competing perspectives behind a technical process.<sup>17</sup>

These two viewpoints characterize a fundamental issue in this discourse: very few of the critics of evidence-based practice are opposed to the basic idea of learning which interventions produce the best outcomes and then planning and executing those specifically. However, many criticize the way that the discourse has played out, and specifically, the way that it has privileged some forms of evidence over others. One discrete way this has happened has been in the tendency for debates about evidence to become debates about data collection methods. Although academic research and the evidence discourse are different, the movement in favor of evidence-based practice has borrowed heavily from academic methods, including placing a heavy emphasis on randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and experimental methods. These are privileged in academic social science because they allow for a clean and obvious assessment of causality and remain the gold standard for causal inference.<sup>18</sup> In practice, the epistemological debate has become more complicated: the RCT described in a research methods book is an ideal that does not always take place in reality.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, there are many conditions under which assessments that are not based on experimental methods may not prove causality absolutely, but nevertheless provide strong evidence that an intervention is the most likely cause of an observed impact.<sup>20</sup> These issues aside, under traditional scientific understandings of empirical knowledge, RCTs remain the best way for proving a link between a cause and an effect.

Criticisms of evidence-based approaches have therefore often become debates about methods and epistemologies—how best to define what evidence is and what should be considered high-quality evidence. In the development and economics sector, where the evidence-based practice movement gained traction relatively early compared to other fields, the term “randomistas” was coined to refer to people who prioritized

RCTs above other research methods.<sup>21</sup> This framed an ongoing debate between the randomistas who argue that rigorous methods (in particular RCTs) allow for a better development of knowledge about what works and what does not, and critics who argue that the emphasis on RCTs is reductive and exclusive.

Critics argue that this method tends to exclude any analysis or understanding of the larger causal phenomena outside the narrow scope of the study,<sup>22</sup> ignore the methodological and cultural biases that proponents bring to the table,<sup>23</sup> and exclude important knowledge and insights not generated through RCT methods. However, the emphasis on large-scale lessons rather than nuanced information about the individual experiences prioritizes the needs of the average over the needs of the individual and presumes policy aimed at the average will successfully support the individual—an unproven assumption for many of the complex programs implemented in these sectors, like poverty reduction, gender empowerment, and conflict resolution efforts.

A parallel critique of evidence-based practice has less to do with the debate about epistemology and more to do with its operationalization and opportunity costs. Part of this critique is fueled by the manner in which evidence-based practice has been integrated into development programming, where practitioners whose skills and capacities are focused on implementation and program management are being asked to develop and integrate technical monitoring and evaluation skills into their already underfunded work. There are often unbalanced distinctions for what needs to be evaluated and reported to donors as weighed against benefit, risk, and cost considerations for generating that evidence—including capacity, human, and resource costs and pushing the brunt of data collection onto already overburdened implementers. Time and effort spent in data collection and extensive development of theories of change is time and effort not spent implementing critical programs. These costs necessarily come at the expense of other actions, and in some cases a choice must be made between developing programming and developing the systems which measure that programming’s success.<sup>24</sup>

## Evidence-based Practice in Peacebuilding

In the past twenty years, the peacebuilding field has made significant strides in developing innovative strategies to measure and learn and in addressing the technical challenges of peacebuilding evaluation. However, much of this progress has been made in individual, isolated organizations. While there have been incremental improvements in the adoption of greater methodological rigor, enhanced opportunities for peer learning, and efforts to foster the use of evidence to inform peacebuilding policy and practice, many challenges remain,





(L to R) Director of Afghan Women Network (AWN) Mary Akrami, Afghan civil society and women's rights activist Laila Jafari, and Member of the Wolesi Jirga (lower house of the Afghan assembly) Fawzia Koofi attend the Intra Afghan Dialogue talks in the Qatari capital Doha on July 7, 2019. Photo: KARIM JAAFAR/AFP via Getty Images

including implementing rigorous DM&E in the fragile and complex environments in which peacebuilding programming occurs; balancing trade-offs between allocating resources to programming versus DM&E, leading to many organizations only doing the bare minimum for DM&E as required by their donors;<sup>25</sup> and a lack of consensus on how to define and measure success. These challenges reflect ongoing debates related to methods, improving DM&E capacity, and promoting stronger buy-in and use of evidence. Many provide the foundation for criticisms of evidence-based practice for the peacebuilding field and underlie much of the pushback against it to this day.

*If peacebuilding encompasses almost everything from development to institution-building, then what are the definitional boundaries of the peacebuilding field?*

The definitional boundaries of peacebuilding have also been developing over the same period as the discussion about evidence-based practice development. From a deeper understanding of positive peace<sup>26</sup> to an increasing realization about the relationship between development and peace,<sup>27, 28</sup> and to a dawning recognition and acceptance that peacebuilding efforts need to incorporate multiple interventions into a coherent, multidimensional engagement,<sup>29, 30, 31</sup> the definition of peacebuilding has been slowly refined. But the recognition that peacebuilding is a multi-dimensional field has complicated

the field: if peacebuilding encompasses almost everything from development to institution-building, then what are the definitional boundaries of the peacebuilding field?

This is a strategic question that has significant bearing on evidence-based practice in peacebuilding because it underscores the need to define both evidence and peacebuilding. As peacebuilding organizations and donors are pressing for greater evidence, the field struggles with understanding program effectiveness and impact at multiple levels. There has been little research into the interconnected impact of interventions across these levels, mainly because they have been implemented piecemeal, often do not use the same language to describe their outcomes and programming, and are often focused on a single context without any thought towards the broader system in which these interventions operate.

However, peacebuilding programs do not occur in isolation, and one's ability to see and understand programming in a broader context changes one's sense of what the programming means.<sup>32</sup> This emerging realization led to the systems thinking and complexity-aware movement within the peacebuilding field, leading to a growing recognition that the boundaries used to define peacebuilding efforts—geographical, political, systematic, etc.—impact not only the approach, but what constitutes evidence of success. Since peacebuilders often work in isolation from one another, a lack of understanding related to the broader system further hampers their ability to demonstrate the scope and efficacy of programming in a collective and consistent way.

There does appear to be relatively strong agreement between academic research and practitioners and policymakers about what conditions are necessary to deliver sustainable peace. Academic research,<sup>33</sup> research reports from major IGOs such as the UN,<sup>34</sup> and government assessments<sup>35</sup> and policies<sup>36</sup> have all converged on the same basic understanding. Sustainable peace requires economic development, inclusive and accountable government seen as legitimate by society, and sufficient security and social service capacity to provide for human security. This does not necessarily extend to the level of implementation assessment, however, where the peace research community and the impact evaluation community are often seen as “speaking past each other.”<sup>37</sup>

The peacebuilding field has also generated significant new steps in locally driven and locally led approaches to understanding peacebuilding. Starting from the recognition that drivers of conflict originate at the local level, a significant amount of work has come from peacebuilding evaluators on how to develop and promote community-led or bottom-up assessments of the impact of peacebuilding work.<sup>38</sup> In one example, the Everyday Peace Indicators project has developed an approach to assessing peace that assumes that peacebuilding is best measured according to the locally driven understanding of what peace and conflict look like. As such, they use indicators developed by that culture specifically to evaluate program impact. This approach underscores one element of the methods debates that may be lost; there is nothing about this approach that requires that the indicators be solely qualitative, or that precludes the use of RCTs or

structured evaluations to assess the impact of the discussion. Instead, it prioritizes a discussion about the local relevance of indicators and how local knowledge is incorporated into the evaluation discussion.

The progress made in DM&E professionalization in peacebuilding, alongside the ongoing refinement of its definitional boundaries and the incorporation of beneficiary voices, is reflected in ongoing debates related to methods. Who and what defines success for a program? Who is included in shaping and evaluating interventions? What research method is used and who decides? What is evidence and which evidence is valued? What is the overall cost of DM&E and at what expense? Both the challenges to and successes in answering these questions provide the foundation for criticisms of evidence-based practice and underlie much of the pushback against it.



*Soldiers holding hands at a demobilization ceremony.*  
Photo: UN

## THE SURVEY

In this general environment of debate around evidence-based practice, One Earth Future and the Alliance for Peacebuilding launched this survey with the following goals:

1. Explore the definitional boundaries of “evidence” within the peacebuilding field, and identify whether there are major differences between perspectives within different communities in the field.
2. Using this definition of “evidence,” explore where the peacebuilding field as a whole believes that there is strong evidence for what can deliver sustainable peace, and where there is less evidence—both at the larger strategic level about what is needed and at the operational level—about how to deliver it.
3. Identify where there are confidence or knowledge gaps between different communities in order to connect people who feel that they have knowledge with others who need the information.
4. Use the above information to identify points of research focus in the peacebuilding field through identifying which research questions are seen as most useful but least supported and which interventions and conditions are seen as relatively well-supported.

To accomplish these goals, we reached out to a broad community of organizations and partners in the peacebuilding field to solicit input, seek collaboration, and collect the data. The project received initial input from the Peace and Security Funders Group and the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice at the University of San Diego.

### Sample

Study participants were identified through convenience and purposive sampling. We first reached out to peacebuilding partner and member organizations to help identify additional organizations to include in our sample. The final partners who helped develop the sample and promote the survey included One Earth Future, the Alliance for Peacebuilding, the Peace Science Society, the Peace and Security Funders Group, and the Better Evidence Project at George Mason University. Among the participating organizations, we developed an initial peacebuilding organizational sample based upon membership and email listservs. We sent out email solicitations to the listservs of supporting organizations and developed a public promotion on social media.

At the individual level, rather than draw a sharp line around who should be included, the survey asked participants who responded to self-identify if they saw themselves as part of the peacebuilding community. The initial solicitation asked

respondents to forward the email to their own networks and other local organizations that might not be part of the initial outreach.

The final sample included 207 participants distributed across various sectors in the peacebuilding field. To prevent any large organizations with a shared evidence culture or orientation from possibly skewing the results, participants were asked to voluntarily identify the organization for which they currently work. Most participants did not, but for those who did, duplicate organizations were not reported. Based on our initial organizational sample and participants’ reported institutions, we identified a 17.7% response rate at the organizational level. Because most participants did not report an institution, this is likely an underestimate of the actual response rate.

**Table 1: Participant Demographics**

		N	PCT
Gender	M	70	49%
	F	66	46%
	Nonbinary/other	2	1%
	Prefer not to say	5	4%
Age	Under 18	0	0%
	18-24	0	0%
	25-34	38	27%
	35-44	48	34%
	45-54	22	15%
	55-64	22	15%
	65+	10	7%
	Prefer not to say	3	2%

Current Sector	N	PCT	Lifetime Experience Sector	
			N	PCT
Academic	28	20%	78	55%
Think-tank or research NGO	14	10%	52	37%
Peacebuilding NGO other than grant-making	50	35%	89	63%
Other NGO, not grant-making	11	8%	40	28%
Government agency	6	4%	37	26%
International governmental organization	8	6%	44	31%
Private sector	10	7%	29	21%
Philanthropy or grant-making	13	9%	18	13%

## FINDINGS

The survey instrument asked participants to provide their perceptions on the peacebuilding evidence base through the following main topic areas: (1) evidence-based practice in the peacebuilding field and (2) conditions for long-term peace and effectiveness of interventions in the peacebuilding field.

Participants were asked to provide (1) their perceptions about the evidence base for different conditions that support long-term peace and (2) whether there is an evidence base showing how to effectively deliver these conditions across five different points in the conflict cycle: structural peacebuilding before conflict, crisis prevention, crisis response before large-scale conflict erupts, peacemaking during active conflict, and post-conflict recovery.

### Overall Orientation to “Evidence-based Practice”

Overall, participants were very supportive of the idea of evidence-based approaches but were less certain about the existing research supporting a strong evidence base for the field.

**Table 2: Responses to Questions About Evidence-based Practice**

Survey Question	Mean Deviation	Standard Deviation	Scale
How important is it to you that peacebuilding interventions are evidence-based?	4.31	0.75	1–5
To what extent do you agree with the statement “There is a strong evidence base describing what conditions are necessary for sustainable peace”?	4.63	1.56	1–7
To what extent do you agree with the statement “There is a strong evidence base describing which interventions in the peacebuilding field are most effective at achieving their program goals”?	4.15	1.62	1–7

*Overall, participants were very supportive of the idea of evidence-based approaches but were less certain about the existing research supporting a strong evidence base for the field.*

Mean score for the question “How important is it to you that peacebuilding interventions are evidence-based?” was 4.31 out of 5, indicating strong support. In contrast, scores on the two questions asking about the evidence base describing the conditions for peace and the effectiveness of interventions both hovered near the midpoint of the scale—both around 4 to 4.6 out of 7—suggesting uncertainty about the existing evidence. These scores did not vary across the different communities in the survey,<sup>39</sup> but they did vary by seniority: people with more years of experience in the peacebuilding field placed less importance on the idea of an evidence base, although the effect was small.<sup>40</sup>

Participants were somewhat in agreement with the idea that “There is a strong evidence base describing what conditions are necessary for sustainable peace.” However, they were less willing to endorse the statement “There is a strong evidence base describing which interventions in the peacebuilding field are most effective at achieving their program goals.” Participants’ general responses were borne out by their individual responses to specific interventions as reported later: there was a significant correlation between participants’ response to these overall questions and the mean of their later responses to a series of specific questions about the conditions and interventions supporting peace.<sup>41</sup>

The survey also included an open-ended question asking participants to volunteer their thinking about evidence-based practice in peacebuilding. In total, 87% (181/207) of participants responded to the question “What does the term evidence-based mean to you in the context of peacebuilding work?” Table 3 on the following page reports the results of a qualitative analysis of themes that came up in these answers.<sup>42</sup>

Individual responses varied across the sample, with participants drawing a distinction between what an intervention is based or supported on, the type or quality of evidence/method employed, how an intervention is designed or implemented, the influence of where an intervention occurs and who is involved, and the existence of specific components in an intervention.

The most common response, found in the first two most common categories, defined evidence-based practice with reference to some specific method or some concept related to the idea of evidence. In the latter case, there was a great deal of nuance in determining what an intervention is based on or supported by, indicating that evidence-based implies

**Table 3: Coded Responses to “What Does the Term Evidence-based Mean to You in the Context of Peacebuilding Work?”**

	N	PCT
<b>Founded on a Collection of Other Work</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>27%</b>
Supported by data	3	3%
Supported by evaluation	16	17%
Supported by facts	15	16%
Supported by field experience	2	2%
Supported by past programming	20	22%
Supported by personal experience	4	4%
Supported by previous research	33	35%
<b>Method or Process Employed</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>18%</b>
Tested method or approach	40	48%
Use of mixed methods (quant and qual)	25	40%
RCT/IE methods	5	8%
Case studies	2	3%
<b>Rigor or Quality of Evidence/Method</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>14%</b>
Rigorous	13	27%
Scientific approach	9	18%
Backed by Theory of Change	7	14%
Replication	5	10%
Meeting internal or external validity	4	8%
Peer-reviewed/public information	4	8%
Indication of causality	3	6%
Independence	2	4%
Triangulation	2	4%
<b>Indication of Programmatic Success</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>11%</b>
Proof of achieving desired outcomes/impact	26	68%
Using programming/approaches that have been proven to work/succeed	12	32%
<b>Inclusive of Beneficiaries/Local Perspective</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>6%</b>
Using Data for Decision-making	17	5%
Data-driven Design	14	4%
Context-specific/driven	13	4%
Other	10	3%
Presence of Indicators/Measures	9	3%
Reflects Learning	7	2%
Imposed Framework/Critique	4	1%
Employing Research Ethics	2	1%

being founded on a collection of other work, whether from data, evaluations, facts, field experience, past programming, personal experience, broad research, or some combination thereof. This category emphasizes the idea of a broad-based collection of research as the essence of evidence-based practice. It is perhaps significant that some respondents used terms such as “facts” or “data” in this response, as these terms both inherit the epistemological debates. Examples include:

*“Having reliable data to inform programming”*

*“Evidence-based: To me, this means the unavoidable reality or facts.”*

Evidence-based was also determined to be based upon the type or quality of evidence or methods used in an intervention and evaluation. Participants strongly supported the use of tested or proven methods, regardless of quantitative or qualitative approaches, and many specified mixed methods. Both case studies and impact evaluations/RCTs were specifically mentioned. Rigor and quality of evidence or method was supported by multiple distinctions, with participants highlighting the need for rigor, scientific methods, replication, independence, causality, theories of change, triangulation, meeting internal or external validity, and being peer-reviewed and publicly available.

*“At a very basic level it is a means to test effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts via quantitative and qualitative measures. A way of answering the question of whether the right efforts, the right people, etc. are collaborating towards sustainable peace and to put efforts into spaces where most needed.”*

Separate from what supports an intervention, many participants discussed the process of how an intervention is designed and implemented. These responses emphasize the design role of data or how information is turned to action, in particular using data for decision-making, at both the program level and also the funding and policy levels.

*“Evidence base in the context of peacebuilding work in my opinion means empirical data that inform the development of an intervention or support the findings of a research.”*

Participants also focused on the implications of context and inclusion as defining “evidence-based.” These responses indicated the need for the inclusion of local beneficiaries’ knowledge, perspectives, and validation, alongside contextually specific and driven programming.

Finally, participants emphasized specific components of an intervention or evaluation necessary for consideration as being evidence-based. Key components that were highlighted included the presence of indicators or relevant measures, a

focus on learning, and the use of research ethics.

Outside of these five main categories, there was a distinct population who criticized the idea of “evidence-based” in peacebuilding or discussed it as an externally imposed framework on the sector. This population identified issues similar to those in the following sections where participants rejected the framing of the survey’s questions.

*“I am highly skeptical of so-called ‘evidence-based lobby and advocacy’, wherein ‘independent’ researchers try to provide (usually) quantitative data that justifies rationalizations for doing short-term, project based (as opposed to relationship-based) work, which is more often shaped to the priorities of donors than to communities. It’s a passing, although dangerous fad, a flavor of the moment akin to logframes and theories of change.”*

### What Counts as Evidence?

We asked participants to respond to a series of questions about what kind of evidence was necessary to consider an intervention “evidence-based.” When asked this question in the abstract, participants strongly endorsed mixed method assessments and case studies over other forms of data collection methodologies.

**Table 4: Response to “What Do You Believe is Sufficient Evidence to Consider an Intervention ‘Evidence-based’?”**

Current Sector	N	PCT
Multiple mixed-method assessments	53	27%
Other	39	20%
Multiple case studies	32	16%
1 mixed-method assessment	26	13%
Multiple impact assessments	14	7%
Multiple experimental studies	8	4%
1 impact assessment	8	4%
1 case study	7	4%
Do not use	6	3%
Multiple quantitative studies	3	2%
1 quantitative study	2	1%
1 experimental study	2	1%

However, about one in five participants rejected the framing of the question: of the 20% who chose “Other” as a response, the majority (67%) discussed the need for a combination of methods to consider an intervention evidence-based with

no singular, preferred method. Participants noted that this combination should be driven by the context of the intervention while applying rigor and robustness. Additional responses included the need for local/beneficiary verification of the findings, the need for an expert-approved standardization of evidence, the inclusion of theories of change, and the need for some indicator of causality.

*Participants found impact assessments to be particularly valuable when working with policymakers and practitioners.*

Participants also drew a distinction between the concept of evidence as an abstract idea and evidence applied to specific questions of practice and recommendation. When asked what kinds of evidence were needed to recommend specific interventions to others or use them in their own work, participants reported different levels of evidence needed to support an intervention than were required to be evidence-based overall.<sup>43</sup> This was particularly pronounced with participants reporting a greater willingness to consider case studies as evidence in practice and recommendation. Further, participants found impact assessments to be particularly valuable when working with policymakers and practitioners.

Roughly one in six participants chose “Other” as a response and provided open-ended responses for their reasoning. Similar responses were provided for the level of evidence required by participants before they could endorse interventions in their own work, to funders, and to policymakers due to the concept of evidence being an abstract idea. However, when considering the minimum evidence needed for funders and policymakers, multiple participants highlighted the influence of the funder and policymaker atmosphere on the evidence requirements. The funder atmosphere dictates the level of evidence based upon individual donor requirements on what would be considered sufficient and can vary quite drastically from funder to funder. The policymaker atmosphere referenced that policymakers are often only looking for “better than a coin-flip” recommendations, and therefore it has a more relaxed definition of what would be considered sufficient evidence.

### Phases of Conflict

Participants were asked to self-identify which phases of conflict they felt comfortable enough with to answer questions about the evidence base for. The typology of conflict that was presented reflects the way that One Earth Future thinks about conflict dynamics, and broke conflict into five phases: structural peacebuilding in the absence of direct conflict, crisis prevention aimed at preventing flashpoint moments that may trigger larger conflict, crisis response aimed at preventing crisis moments from becoming a larger conflict, peacemaking

**Table 5: Types of Evidence Needed for Endorsing Interventions**

What do you believe is the minimum amount of evidence needed for you to endorse an intervention to...					
People working in the field or use it in your own work?		Funders interested in supporting peace?		Decisionmakers in policy or practice?	
Multiple case studies	20%	Multiple case studies	19%	Multiple case studies	16%
Multiple mixed-method assessments	20%	Other	16%	Multiple impact assessments	16%
Other	18%	Multiple mixed-method assessments	15%	Other	15%
1 mixed-method assessment	9%	1 mixed-method assessment	11%	Multiple mixed-method assessments	15%
1 case study	8%	Multiple impact assessments	11%	1 impact assessment	9%
My own experience	7%	1 impact assessment	7%	1 mixed-method assessment	8%
1 impact assessment	7%	1 case study	6%	Multiple experimental studies	5%
Multiple quantitative studies	4%	Multiple quantitative studies	4%	1 case study	4%
Multiple impact assessments	4%	Multiple experimental studies	4%	My own experience	4%
1 experimental study	2%	1 quantitative study	3%	Multiple quantitative studies	4%
Multiple experimental studies	2%	My own experience	2%	1 experimental study	3%
1 quantitative study	2%	1 experimental study	2%	1 quantitative study	2%
		Funder history of funding	1%		

activities attempting to stop ongoing large-scale violence, and post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction.

Participants were asked first to identify which phases of conflict they felt knowledgeable enough about to answer questions related to evidence. Following self-selection, participants were asked a series of questions about the evidence identifying what is needed for peace, or “conditions,” and then the evidence or ways to deliver these conditions (or “interventions,” in this survey).

Based upon self-selection, participant knowledge appeared relatively siloed, with many more participants responding to items about peacebuilding in the absence of conflict than responding to items about peacemaking. This was particularly true for crisis prevention and crisis response, as evidenced in Table 6.

### Conditions for Peace

Participants were asked to assess each intervention based on whether they think there is a strong evidence base showing that this condition is needed for long-term peace. The scale we used asked participants to rate the conditions on a scale from 1–5, with the descriptions of “1 = no/almost no credible evidence, 3 = unsure, and 5 = some/strong credible evidence.”

For analysis purposes, on average, a score of 4 or higher indicates that participants report at least “some credible evidence” for an intervention. We use this as a break point in the analysis to identify the interventions generally seen as having supporting evidence.

**Table 6: Percent Responding and Mean Evidence Scores for Conditions and Interventions Across Phase of Conflict**

	% Responding	Mean for Condition	Mean for Intervention
Structural peacebuilding	65%	3.91	3.62
Crisis prevention	54%	3.70	3.55
Crisis response	43%	3.75	3.59
Peacemaking	57%	3.99	3.78
Post-conflict recovery	69%	4.10	3.69

### Conditions with “some credible evidence”

Quite a few specific conditions for peace were identified as having “some credible evidence” or more. The below table lists the conditions that fell into this category.

Participants report that the field has a fairly strong evidence base for what peace looks like: 70% of the conditions necessary for sustainable peace either before conflict (7 of 13 conditions) or consolidating peace after conflict (9 of 10) had a mean corresponding to “some credible evidence” or higher. There is less evidence available for what conditions are necessary for achieving peace in crisis moments. Only 20% of the conditions in crisis response (2 of 10) and none in crisis prevention (0 of 9) had scores corresponding to “some credible evidence.” Within the domain of peacemaking, 67% of the conditions (4 of 6) were identified as having “some credible evidence” or higher.

**Table 7: Conditions with “Some Credible Evidence” or More**

Condition	Mean
<b>Structural peacebuilding</b>	
Inclusive economic development	4.43
Increasing women’s engagement in economic and political life	4.34
Education	4.28
Improving inclusion in government	4.11
Interventions to reduce intergroup prejudice	4.09
Security sector reform	4.05
State capacity-building	4.00
<b>Crisis Response</b>	
Informal/track-2 diplomacy	4.16
Elite negotiation	4.09
<b>Peacemaking</b>	
Women’s inclusion in peacemaking processes	4.38
Elite negotiation	4.07
Informal/track-2 diplomacy	4.02
Peacekeeping interventions	4.02
<b>Post-conflict recovery</b>	
Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)	4.55
Inclusive development	4.30
Truth & reconciliation	4.21
Peace agreement monitoring	4.15
Security sector reform	4.14
Post-trauma recovery support	4.13
Peacekeeping	4.12
State capacity-building	4.11
Interventions to reduce intergroup prejudice	4.01

### Conditions with less than “some credible” evidence

Many conditions did not reach the level of having some credible evidence, although there was still a diversification of opinion. No condition was rated as having “almost no” credible evidence or lower on average.

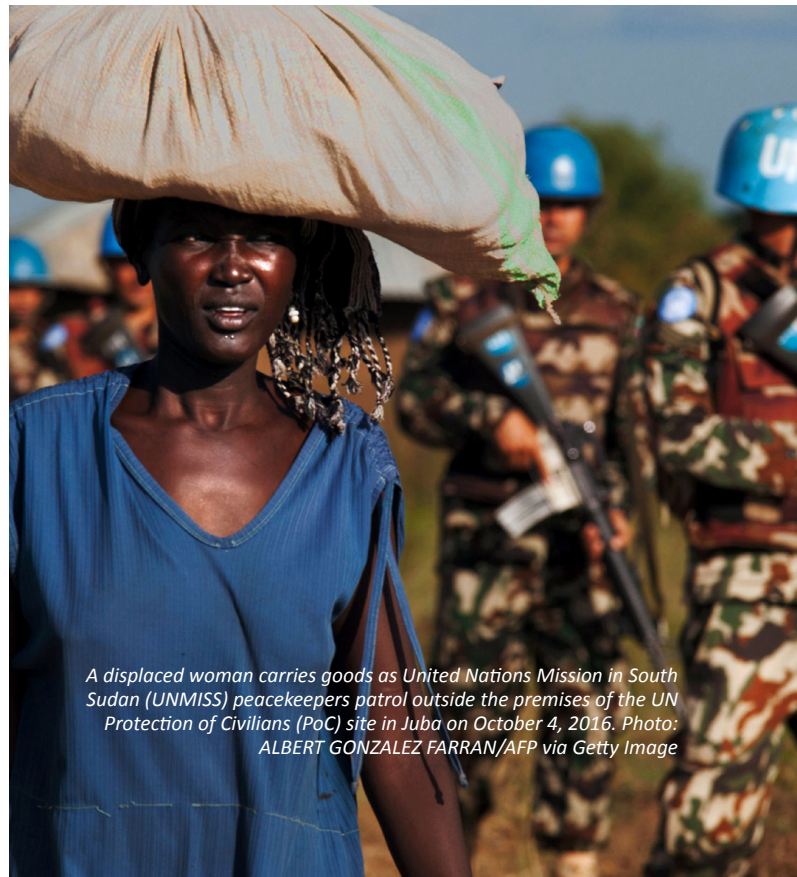
Crisis prevention through women’s engagement and track-2 diplomacy were rated relatively highly, as were conditions including civil society development. On the lower end, issues of violent extremism or preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE), including countering, combatting, preventing extremism, and deradicalization, were rated as having less evidence supporting their import.

*No condition was rated as having “almost no” credible evidence or lower on average.*

There was no significant difference between the assessments of different members of the peacebuilding community around these different conditions: in general, the peacebuilding field shared a more or less unified assessment across different subcommunities.<sup>44</sup>

### Interventions for Peace

Separate from the question of what conditions are needed for sustainable peace is the question of how to achieve said conditions. Participants were asked to assess each individual intervention based on whether they think there is an evidence base showing how to effectively deliver it.



*A displaced woman carries goods as United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) peacekeepers patrol outside the premises of the UN Protection of Civilians (PoC) site in Juba on October 4, 2016. Photo: ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN/AFP via Getty Image*



**Table 8: Conditions with less than “some credible evidence”**

Condition	Mean
<b>Structural Peacebuilding</b>	
Civil society development training	3.88
Anticorruption prosecution	3.81
Government transparency interventions	3.77
Healthcare	3.63
Media awareness training	3.38
Counter-radicalization/Preventing violent extremism (PVE)	3.01
<b>Crisis Prevention</b>	
Promoting women’s engagement in crisis prevention	3.98
Informal/track 2 diplomacy	3.97
Public mobilization/public pressure campaigns	3.87
Elite negotiation	3.84
Nonviolent strategy training	3.83
Peace-promoting message campaigns	3.56
Crisis forecasting	3.52
Media awareness training	3.45
Violent message filtering	3.26
<b>Crisis Response</b>	
Increasing women’s engagement in crisis response	3.88
Peacekeeping interventions	3.84
Public mobilization/public pressure campaigns	3.78
Humanitarian aid	3.77
Violent message filtering	3.64
Peace-promoting message campaigns	3.62
Nonviolent strategy training	3.47
Combating Violent Extremism interventions	3.23
<b>Peacemaking</b>	
Humanitarian aid	3.8
Public pressure	3.69
<b>Post-conflict Recovery</b>	
Deradicalization	3.33

### Interventions with “some credible” evidence or more

Compared to evidence on the conditions needed for sustainable peace, only 3 of the 48 different interventions reported mean

scores higher than the cutoff for “some credible” evidence for how to achieve each condition. These three only appeared in the structural peacebuilding and peacemaking categories, and two of them related to existing research on women’s inclusion in peacebuilding—from women’s engagement in economic and political life to formal peacemaking processes. The third, education, acknowledges the relatively large body of research on education in development and emergency contexts.

**Table 9: Interventions with “Some Credible Evidence” or More**

Condition	Mean
<b>Structural peacebuilding</b>	
Increasing women's engagement in economic and political life	4.11
Education	4.00
<b>Peacemaking</b>	
Women's inclusion in peacemaking processes	4.09

*Only 3 of the 48 different interventions reported mean scores higher than the cutoff for “some credible” evidence for how to achieve each condition.*

### Interventions with less than “some credible” evidence

Of the 48 interventions, 93.75% failed to reach the cutoff of “some credible” evidence or higher. None was below the cutoff of 3 for “unsure,” but the three lowest all related to preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE) response and deradicalization. These three conditions were extremely close to the cutoff of 3. Within Crisis Response, CVE interventions had a mean of 3.11; within Structural Peacebuilding, Counter-radicalization/PVE had a mean of only 3.03; and within Post-Conflict Recovery, Deradicalization had a mean of only 3.02.

### Gap between a condition’s relevance to peace and knowledge about how to deliver it

We also calculated the gap between the two ratings as one approach to identifying which issues are in need of more evidence. However, the rating can be affected significantly by the initial rating of evidence for it as a condition of peace since, as illustrated above, there is more variability in that rating than the second term in the equation.

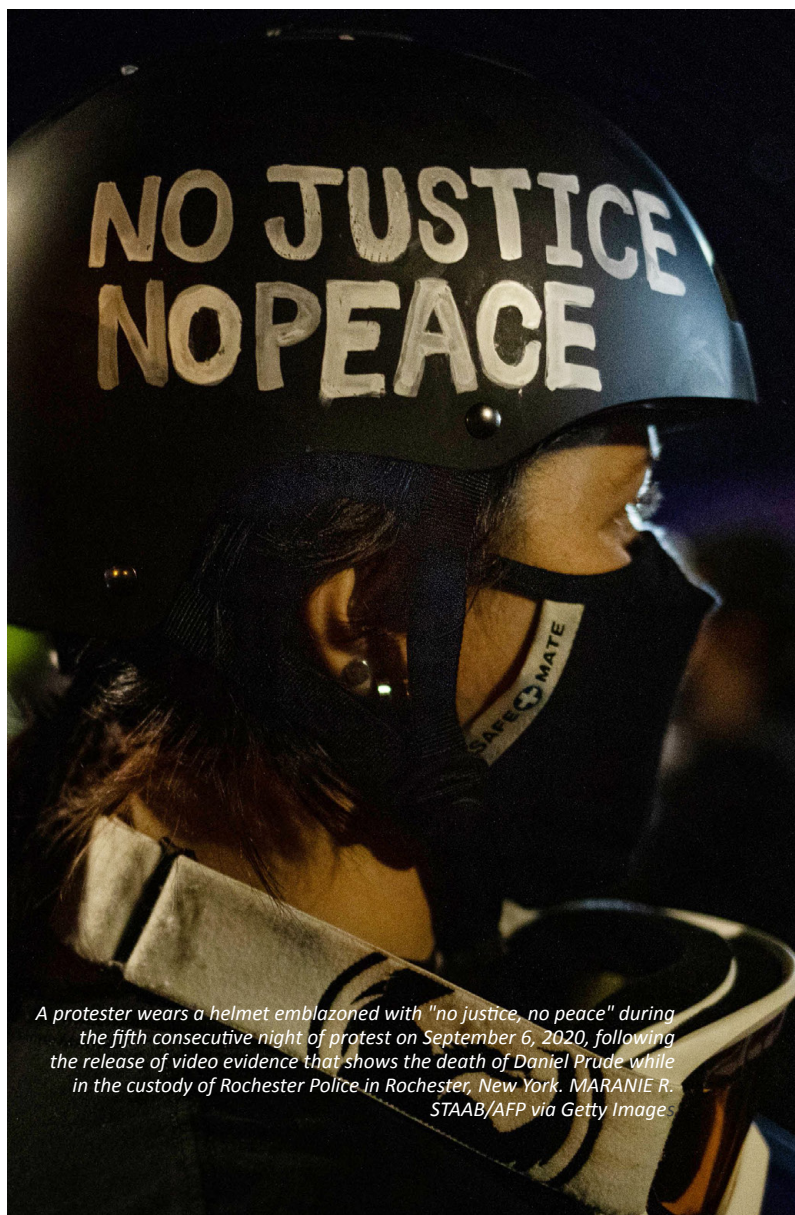
Consistent with that, the identified gaps in general followed the places where there is the most consensus around the evidence for what conditions are necessary. The gaps were larger, on average, in the areas of structural

**Table 10: Interventions with Less Than “Some Credible Evidence”**

Condition	Mean
<b>Structural peacebuilding</b>	
Inclusive economic development	3.83
Civil society development training	3.74
Interventions to reduce intergroup prejudice	3.74
Healthcare	3.63
Security sector reform	3.63
Improving inclusion in government	3.61
State capacity-building	3.49
Media awareness training	3.41
Anticorruption prosecution	3.40
Government transparency interventions	3.40
Counter-radicalization/Preventing violent extremism (PVE)	3.03
<b>Crisis Prevention</b>	
Public mobilization/public pressure campaigns	3.79
Promoting women’s engagement in crisis prevention	3.78
Nonviolent strategy training	3.75
Informal/track-2 diplomacy	3.64
Crisis forecasting	3.58
Elite negotiation	3.46
Media awareness training	3.35
Peace-promoting message campaigns	3.33
Violent message filtering	3.25
<b>Crisis Response</b>	
Humanitarian aid	3.83
Increasing women’s engagement in crisis response	3.79
Informal/track-2 diplomacy	3.69
Peacekeeping interventions	3.69
Public mobilization/public pressure campaigns	3.67
Elite negotiation	3.66
Peace-promoting message campaigns	3.56
Nonviolent strategy training	3.53
Violent message filtering	3.39
Combating Violent Extremism interventions	3.11
<b>Peacemaking</b>	
Peacekeeping interventions	3.81
Informal/track-2 diplomacy	3.78
Humanitarian aid	3.77
Elite negotiation	3.72
Public pressure	3.52
<b>Post-conflict Recovery</b>	
Truth & reconciliation	3.93
Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)	3.91
Peace agreement monitoring	3.90
Peacekeeping	3.79
Post-trauma recovery support	3.75
Inclusive development	3.71
Security sector reform	3.68
State capacity-building	3.63
Interventions to reduce intergroup prejudice	3.62
Deradicalization	3.02

peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery. Within these, themes of government reform—including capacity-building, inclusion, and transparency, as well as themes of economic development—arise as areas where the field feels that there is a large gap between the evidence showing how important they are for peace and the evidence showing how to deliver these conditions. Other areas with large gaps between our knowledge of the condition’s need and how to deliver it include DDR and negotiation (including elite and track-2) in crisis prevention and response phases.

Interestingly, there were a few interventions where the consensus was that there was more evidence for how to deliver these conditions than evidence showing they were a condition needed for long-term peace. Crisis forecasting, nonviolent strategy training, and humanitarian aid were all identified as having more evidence on how to deliver them than evidence showing they are relevant for long-term peace. This implies that the field knows how to deliver these interventions relatively well but may question if they are necessary conditions for delivering sustainable peace.



A protester wears a helmet emblazoned with “no justice, no peace” during the fifth consecutive night of protest on September 6, 2020, following the release of video evidence that shows the death of Daniel Prude while in the custody of Rochester Police in Rochester, New York. MARANIE R. STAAB/AFP via Getty Images

**Table 11: Gaps Between Evidence for Conditions and Evidence for Interventions**

Condition	Mean	Intervention	Gap
<b>Structural peacebuilding</b>			
Inclusive economic development	4.43	3.83	0.60
Improving inclusion in government	4.11	3.61	0.51
State capacity building	4.00	3.49	0.51
Security sector reform	4.05	3.63	0.43
Anticorruption prosecution	3.81	3.40	0.41
Government transparency interventions	3.77	3.40	0.37
Interventions to reduce intergroup prejudice	4.09	3.74	0.36
Education	4.28	4.00	0.28
Increasing women's engagement in economic and political life	4.34	4.11	0.23
Civil society development training	3.88	3.74	0.14
Healthcare	3.63	3.63	0.00
Counterradicalization/Preventing violent extremism (PVE)	3.01	3.03	-0.02
Media awareness training	3.38	3.41	-0.04
<b>Crisis prevention</b>			
Elite negotiation	3.84	3.46	0.38
Informal/track 2 diplomacy	3.97	3.64	0.32
Peace promoting message campaigns	3.56	3.33	0.23
Promoting women's engagement in crisis prevention	3.98	3.78	0.20
Media awareness training	3.45	3.35	0.10
Public mobilization/public pressure campaigns	3.87	3.79	0.08
Nonviolent strategy training	3.83	3.75	0.08
Violent message filtering	3.26	3.25	0.01
Crisis forecasting	3.52	3.58	-0.05
<b>Crisis response</b>			
Informal/track-2 diplomacy	4.16	3.69	0.47
Elite negotiation	4.09	3.66	0.43
Violent message filtering	3.64	3.39	0.24
Peacekeeping interventions	3.84	3.69	0.15
Combating Violent Extremism interventions	3.23	3.11	0.12
Public mobilization/public pressure campaigns	3.78	3.67	0.10
Increasing women's engagement in crisis response	3.88	3.79	0.10
Peace-promoting message campaigns	3.62	3.56	0.06
Nonviolent strategy training	3.47	3.53	-0.06
Humanitarian aid	3.77	3.83	-0.06
<b>Peacemaking</b>			
Elite negotiation	4.07	3.72	0.35
Women's inclusion in peacemaking processes	4.38	4.09	0.28
Informal/track-2 diplomacy	4.02	3.78	0.24
Peacekeeping interventions	4.02	3.81	0.21
Public pressure	3.69	3.52	0.18
Humanitarian aid	3.80	3.77	0.02
<b>Post-conflict recovery</b>			
Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR)	4.55	3.91	0.63
Inclusive development	4.30	3.71	0.60
State capacity building	4.11	3.63	0.49
Security sector reform	4.14	3.68	0.46
Interventions to reduce intergroup prejudice	4.01	3.62	0.39
Post-trauma recovery support	4.13	3.75	0.38
Peacekeeping	4.12	3.79	0.33
Deradicalization	3.33	3.02	0.32
Truth & reconciliation	4.21	3.93	0.28
Peace agreement monitoring	4.15	3.90	0.25

## ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Overall, these results suggest that despite the ink spilled over the methods debates and the ongoing absolutist tenor associated with some of those positions, the peacebuilding field, as a whole, has a nuanced and widely shared understanding about what kind of evidence exists and what kind is needed. In particular, this research shows that:

- **THE PEACEBUILDING FIELD VALUES THE IDEA OF “EVIDENCE” AND EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES;** participants from across all the different backgrounds and subcommunities within the field endorsed these ideas strongly and shared the same basic perception about the need for evidence.
- **THE FIELD DRAWS A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE ABSTRACT OR IDEALIZED IDEA OF “EVIDENCE” AND WHAT KIND OF EVIDENCE IS ACTUALLY SUFFICIENT FOR REAL-WORLD DECISIONS.** Participants in our survey responded differently to the question of what kind of evidence was necessary for something to be evidence-based compared to the question of what kind of evidence was sufficient for them to use or endorse approaches in their own work, to funders, and to policymakers. This explicitly reflected their acknowledgement that programming and policy decisions must be made, and that the role of research and evidence in supporting practice is not always to provide answers on the ideal step forward. Instead, the role of evidence is often to provide a best-guess next step forward as part of a longer research process.
- **TO THE EXTENT THAT PARTICIPANTS EXPRESSED A PREFERENCE ABOUT METHODS, THERE WAS A STRONG PREFERENCE FOR MULTIPLE STUDIES USING MIXED METHODS.** Pure “randomista” preferences were relatively rare, and instead participants valued mixed methods and repeated data across several studies. To the extent that single methods were preferred, qualitative methods were prioritized over purely quantitative or experimental methods, but these came secondary to a preference for multiple methods.
  - **Many participants rejected the methods debate in preference of an emphasis on the quality and/or rigor of the data and process.** The formal debate around methods has tended to emphasize idealized descriptions of different approaches, but participants pointed out that in the case of real-world, complex data collection, these idealized approaches were relatively less important than the care and attention paid to issues of bias, data sources, data collection, and analysis. As a result, the methods debate is a secondary consideration.
- **KNOWLEDGE WITHIN AND ACROSS THE FIELD APPEARS SOMEWHAT FRAGMENTED.** The majority of participants were comfortable responding to questions about evidence in broad peacebuilding structural engagements before and after conflict. Active peacemaking interventions—crisis prevention and crisis response—were relatively less understood, and fewer participants felt comfortable discussing the evidence around these stages of conflict.
- **THE FIELD APPEARS TO HAVE A RELATIVELY WELL-DEVELOPED UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR PEACE.** Considering structural conditions for peace, roughly 70% of the conditions asked about were identified as having some supporting evidence. This suggests that there is a solid evidence base describing what peace looks like. For those conditions without evidence—most notably those around P/CVE—this could suggest either that there is a need for more research, or alternately, a need to reconsider the dominant framing of these conditions in the current discussion.
- **IN CONTRAST WITH THE CONDITIONS FOR PEACE, THE FIELD APPEARS TO HAVE LITTLE BELIEF IN THE EXISTING EVIDENCE BASE AROUND INTERVENTIONS TO DELIVER THESE CONDITIONS.** Very few interventions reached the level of “some credible evidence” or higher.
  - **This was not true for all interventions, however.** Given a five-point scale, it is significant that three interventions—(1) increasing women’s engagement in economic and political life; (2) education; and (3) women’s inclusion in peacemaking processes—showed a mean score of 4 or greater. This suggests that there is fairly widespread endorsement that these are effective interventions.

As a whole, our interpretation of these results is that the field in general supports the idea of evidence-based practice, believes that there is already good evidence about what overall conditions for peace are needed, and wants more evidence about which interventions can deliver these conditions. This overall impression appears broadly shared by academics, practitioners, and people engaged across other subcommunities in the peacebuilding field.



Syrian students head to school on February 18, 2018, following days of calm in Damascus's Old City that has been bombarded by rebels entrenched on the capital's outskirts. LOUAI BESHARA/AFP via Getty Images

These results also suggest that awareness of interventions and conditions for peace are not evenly spread across the different domains of conflict and peacebuilding. There are identifiable “silos” in the field, with a particular gap between a dominant approach focused on peacebuilding in the absence of conflict and a smaller community focused on interventions during active conflict or crisis. To some extent, this reflects the nature of the peacebuilding field, and especially the work of the NGOs represented in this survey. Due to myriad issues, including the security and logistical challenges of operating in areas of active conflict and the ability of relatively small organizations to impact active conflict conditions compared to structural ones, alongside the breadth of work in the structural domain, the most typical (and arguably most effective) place for this sector to work is on addressing structural issues rather than engaging directly with active violence. However, it is valuable for the field as a whole to be more familiar with the evidence on a full spectrum of interventions that can impact their work, both in the short and long term. The conditions for developing long-term and sustainable peace include a variety of potential conditions that have both upstream and downstream impacts on supporting interventions. Within complex systems, any individual condition exists in relation to others as if in a spiderweb, and pulling on any single strand will affect many others. Decisions made at different stages of conflict and across different interventions influence the conflict dynamics, and inevitably, individual interventions as a result of this deep interconnectedness. It is critical for peacebuilders to be aware of and better understand the evidence on the impacts of peacebuilding interventions across the full system, not just their own sphere of influence, to better design and implement their own programming. Given the quickly adapting and fragile

environment in which peacebuilding programming operates, this need is even greater.

## Recommendations

### **1 RELATIVELY FEW INTERVENTIONS ARE SEEN AS EVIDENCE-BASED, SO THE FIELD NEEDS MORE RESEARCH AND PUBLISHED IMPACT ASSESSMENTS TRACKING HOW BEST TO DELIVER THE CONDITIONS NEEDED FOR PEACE.**

Findings from the survey show that overall, the field is operating largely from a shared understanding of both what evidence is and where evidence exists. It suggests that the field as a whole has a considered, shared starting point about what research and evidence currently exist and where more is needed.

Participants reported that the field has a fairly strong evidence base for what peace looks like, with 46% of the evaluated interventions showing “some credible” evidence or higher. This was drastically different than evidence for how to achieve each condition, where only 6.25% of the evaluated interventions showed “some credible” evidence or higher. These findings suggest that the field has reached greater consensus on the conditions relevant for sustainable peace but still needs progress on understanding how to deliver these conditions. Using these findings as a barometer on assessing the state of the peacebuilding evidence base, this indicates that the field now needs to focus its research efforts more on how best to deliver the conditions needed for peace.

These survey responses suggest that the field is not overly concerned about what form these assessments take, although rigor matters. Instead, the field is interested in there being multiple assessments of the same interventions using multiple methods and is willing to accept even initial or case study assessments in places where evidence is scarce.

This conclusion is a challenge to the peacebuilding field, specifically because of (in part) the changing expectations around evidence-based practice. Many organizations already conduct some form of data collection focused on their impact. It is often an expectation by funders that peacebuilders will collect such data. However, for a variety of reasons these data are often not shared widely. Similarly, academic researchers continue to generate excellent research on the conditions for peace, but are relatively less engaged with impact assessments. There are some notable exceptions to both trends: for example, Search for Common Ground in the first case<sup>45</sup> and the work of the Empirical Studies of Conflict Group in the second.<sup>46</sup> However, in general the field can do more to generate research and impact assessments and to make them publicly available. This survey strongly suggests that with the limited exception of a few well-supported interventions, there is an overwhelming perception that more evidence is needed.

This suggests that there is a need for ongoing support for data collection and evidence generation across the field. To the extent that funders accept the need for evidence, and in particular, to the extent that they use existing evidence in making funding decisions, there is certainly significant need to consider how to fund new evidence-generation. Similarly, organizations that already collect data or are considering it and academics who specialize in research and data analysis have room for productive partnerships if the tensions between research-focused projects and other approaches to evidence can be bridged.

## **2 THE FIELD NEEDS A CLEAR WAY TO DISCUSS RIGOR AND QUALITY OF EVIDENCE SEPARATE FROM THE METHODS DEBATE.**

The findings in this study suggest that the field needs a cleaner, more consistent way to discuss evidence quality and rigor that is disconnected from a methods debate around quantitative or qualitative approaches. Participants in this survey valued the idea of evidence and acknowledged that good evidence allowed for the elimination of bias from the collection and interpretation of the data and greater representation of the accurate state of the world and the effects of specific interventions. In the existing conversation, these goals quickly translate into methods debates about how to achieve them, which in turn lead to intense debates over relatively narrow topics. A relatively large group of participants rejected the idea that method and rigor were equivalent, and instead called for an assessment of data and evidence that privileged rigor

regardless of method. This suggests that if such an approach could be developed, much of the debate around evidence may be mitigated by turning it from an abstract discussion about preferred methods to an explicit discussion about whether specific assessments met the broader definition of rigor. Establishing a generally agreed-upon standard that could assess rigor and quality of evidence regardless of the research methodology employed would be invaluable for the field.

Models for this exist. As a starting place, the Alliance for Peacebuilding has begun work developing a quality of evidence scale adapted from other research fields.<sup>47, 48</sup> A basic three-point scale (low, medium, and high) could be developed based upon meeting specific, agreed-upon minimum criteria for rigor and quality. In addition, specific weights could be added for meeting other agreed-upon criteria—such as employing structures for mitigating bias, having external or peer review, repetition of the study, etc.—to show movement across the scale.

Using these findings as a baseline across different interventions, this common, field-adapted scale could be employed to assess the evidence and provide a clear mapping of the current state of peacebuilding evidence that is separated from the debate on methods. However, the question of how to discuss rigor inherits the tensions within the larger conversation about evidence and how it is understood, making this a somewhat challenging issue to develop.

## **3 THE FIELD NEEDS A COMPREHENSIVE CORE PEACEBUILDING TYPOLOGY THAT IS MORE WIDELY ACCEPTED AND UNDERSTOOD.**

Responses to this survey reflect the ongoing discussion about how peacebuilding is broader than specific interventions around active conflict. Key aspects of the “positive peace” or “human security” framing of peacebuilding, which emphasize the idea that peace arises from a much broader sense of safety than a limited focus on violence, are visible in these findings. Issues including inclusive economic development, increasing women’s engagement in economic and political life, education, inclusion in government, and post-traumatic support were all identified as evidence-supported conditions needed for sustainable peace. This suggests widespread acceptance of the idea of positive peace, or at least relatively widespread acknowledgement that there is evidence supporting the idea that promoting peace requires more than stopping violence.

At the same time, the specific interventions across the five different points in the conflict cycle presented in this survey represent only one framework for identifying what topics and phases of conflict could be considered for peacebuilding. There are other frameworks encapsulating peacebuilding alongside an expansive definition of positive peace that open the door to considering a very wide range of potential interventions or conditions as part of the peacebuilding sphere.

To some extent, there is not one answer to the question of what constitutes peacebuilding. That conceptual question is a relatively abstract one, and contestation among different perspectives is natural. Different conceptions of peacebuilding will inevitably reflect the different perspectives of stakeholders, and (as the discussion around evidence has pointed out) may also reflect issues of power and epistemology. Because of that, it is probably a fool's errand, and potentially actively destructive to the goals of peacebuilding, to expect the field to have a single, universally accepted framework for what constitutes peacebuilding.

Those issues notwithstanding, the breadth of conditions and associated interventions identified by participants in this survey demonstrate that peacebuilding as a field would greatly benefit from at least a generally shared understanding of what is included in building peace. Education, for example, is something identified by participants in the survey as both a well-supported condition delivering peace and a well-understood intervention. Despite this, education is rarely a part of the peacebuilding discourse. In government "stabilization" planning, issues of government services, including healthcare and education, are somewhat more acknowledged, but governments are still struggling with questions about how to define the scope of stabilization strategies and their associated components. At present, there is debate over what kinds of domains constitute peacebuilding and also how best to think about the different phases of peacebuilding. This fragmentation in scope and language can contribute to missed opportunities for collaboration or shared learning.

Developing a peacebuilding typology that is peer-reviewed, approved, and used would be the first step in promoting shared understanding of the evidence around a full spectrum of interventions that can impact peacebuilders' work. It is important to note that creating conceptual boundaries is not a discrete, final event, but rather an ongoing process that allows for incorporation of new evidence, refinement, and conceptualization. However, it would be a beginning effort from which to advance the field and understand collective impact across specific geographic scopes, conflicts, and thematic areas.

## **4 THE FIELD WOULD BENEFIT FROM ATTENTION TO THE FULL SPECTRUM OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT INTERVENTIONS.**

This survey suggests that participants generally have discrete expertise, and in particular, more people were comfortable with speaking on the evidence around interventions addressing structural peacebuilding in the absence of violent conflict rather than peacemaking interventions designed to stop active conflict. A subset of participants were comfortable with peacemaking research, and a much smaller subset were comfortable with the evidence around crisis interventions.

Similarly, the perception of the evidence base followed this trend—participants felt that there was much more evidence available on the conditions and interventions needed for peacebuilding, both structurally and post-conflict, than on active peacemaking or crisis intervention.

To some degree, this trend reflects the capacity and attention of the peacebuilding field. Participants in our survey were overwhelmingly from civil society and non-state organizations, which means that the relative strengths and abilities of the organizations they are working with emphasize engagement over time with larger social structures rather than direct intervention in active conflict. It also reflects the nature of the discussion and especially the research around evidence in peacebuilding: because evidence around effectiveness is limited to specific interventions and specific contexts where it is collected, evidence tends to fall into discrete categories.

In practice, though, the application of this research is rarely so cleanly divided and segregated. Due to the emergent and interconnected qualities of the conflict system, crisis moments can emerge with little warning, and even when there is active conflict, it is common for structural peacebuilding to be needed in one part of a country concurrent with active peacemaking in another. The policymakers and organizations interested in working with peacemakers may not have the specific expertise to draw a distinction between peacemaking organizations and peacebuilding organizations. As a result, it is relatively common for an organization with one specific expertise to be asked to weigh in on policy guidance or programming in areas outside of their expertise.

As the peacebuilding field continues to create stronger conceptual definitions, it has also created narrower expertise. Because of this, the peacebuilding field as a whole would benefit from reaching outside of siloed experiences. While it behooves organizations and peacebuilders to be specialized in order to operate as part of an effective community of practice, the application of a community response then relies upon effective collaboration, which has often been lacking in peacebuilding and broader development responses. In recent years, there has been greater recognition of the role that violence, conflict, and insecurity play in broader development initiatives, particularly as large threats to sustainable development. Large global frameworks, including the Sustainable Development Goals, *Stabilization Assistance Review*,<sup>49</sup> and the World Bank's 2011 *World Development*<sup>50</sup> and 2018 *Pathways to Peace*<sup>51</sup> reports highlight peacebuilding at the center of development. However, the practical application of integrated and collaborative responses has been lacking. The passage of the Global Fragility Act in December 2019 represents a move away from business as usual and toward mandated, longer-term, more coordinated programming. It signifies a radical change and has potential to encourage this more necessary, effective collaboration in



*UN Observers Investigate Reported Massacre in Mazraat al-Qubeir Photo: UN*

broader development responses; however, this is only true if it is implemented in accordance with this intent.

Greater awareness-raising within and across sectors is also necessary to increase the understanding that peacebuilding is an integral aspect of development programming, where development and humanitarian programs transition frequently between emergency response, prevention, and resiliency-building.

While the results of the survey suggest that significantly more research is needed for interventions around peacemaking and crisis prevention or cessation, they also indicate that there are some interventions and conditions with relatively more support than others. This survey suggests that it would be valuable to develop a familiarity with the evidence supporting those conditions and interventions identified as having the most support. It is also necessary for peacebuilders to be familiar with those interventions and conditions seen as having the least support in order to avoid promoting interventions with little to no credible evidence.

## **5 THE FIELD MUST CONFRONT THE TENSIONS BETWEEN MEASURING THE NARROW AND SYSTEMIC IMPACTS OF OUR WORK.**

This survey followed the general conventions in the existing research and evidence of treating different conditions for peace and associated interventions as discrete, siloed phenomena. The questions asked about each independent condition and intervention as a specific thing separate from all of the other conditions. However, as the research on multidimensional peacebuilding has shown, the reality is that the drivers of conflict are always interconnected in a complex

system. Single and discrete interventions that do not engage with that overarching fact are likely to fail regardless of how effective they are on their own terms, as the positive impacts of those interventions will be undermined by broader conflict dynamics.<sup>52</sup> With greater evidence on the effectiveness of limited, single interventions and demonstrations that approaches which have worked in single contexts or conditions continue to work in both the same and expanded conditions, the field will need to explore the interconnected impacts of interventions across the entire peacebuilding and conflict systems.

Peacebuilding programs do not occur in isolation; deciding to intervene in one area influences other interventions and outcomes operating within the same system. As with the critiques of RCTs, focusing on only one intervention instance excludes any analysis or understanding of the larger causal phenomena outside the narrow scope of a study.<sup>53</sup> As an example, a program intervening at the national level to improve the capacity of law enforcement in P/CVE techniques—such as terrorist profiling and community policing—could have a significant impact on a program intervening at an individual level to deal with youth recruitment by establishing youth groups and providing technical training. Greater research needs to be conducted to determine the interdependency between intervention levels and programming. Without a deeper understanding of systems-level impact, this can easily lead to a misinterpretation of results on which aspects of a peacebuilding intervention—writ large—are impactful and to what degree, as well as potentially magnifying the cooperative effects between each intervention to drive impact.



Rarely does any single approach, across any level, address the multiple potentially active conditions within a conflict system. The interconnectedness among peacebuilding programs and across sectors within any broad conflict system—be it political, geographical, or thematic—makes it difficult to design, implement, and evaluate effective programming. However, focusing exclusively on manageable and discrete program areas inherently misses the broader dynamics that contribute to effectiveness. As the field continues to progress in establishing the evidence base on how to effectively deliver conditions for sustainable peace, it will be critical to invest resources in further research on the systems impact of programming—to not only improve peacebuilding effectiveness, but further, to more deliberately choose within these systems where to intervene and operate.

*While the findings suggest that the field still needs progress on understanding how to deliver these conditions effectively, they show that the field as a whole is operating from a fairly shared understanding of what evidence exists and what is useful.*

## Conclusion

Our original expectation for this survey was that it would document the different epistemologies and understandings of the subgroups within the peacebuilding field in relation to evidence. We expected to find significantly greater gaps in understanding among our various communities, given ongoing debates. However, the results of the survey in fact showed a much greater consensus amongst those in the field on the need for evidence and the evidence supporting the relevant conditions for delivering sustainable peace. While the findings suggest that the field still needs progress on understanding how to deliver these conditions effectively, they show that the field as a whole is operating from a fairly shared understanding of what evidence exists and what is useful. This serves as a reminder that the field of peacebuilding is becoming increasingly professionalized, and the legitimate differences in opinion about what kind of research or evidence should be used in a perfect world is a separate question from our existing assessment of what kind of evidence is currently needed in practice. This shared agreement provides a good foundation for the field's next steps in the evolving conversation on evidence-based practice in peacebuilding.

## TECHNICAL APPENDIX

This section includes additional details about the survey, our approach to analysis, and details of the analyses themselves.

### Overall

Quantitative analyses were conducted using RStudio v1.3.959, including the packages “psych,” “gmodels,” “gplots,” and “apaTables.”

Missing data were deleted casewise unless otherwise noted in a specific analysis.

Qualitative analyses were conducted using Excel and RStudio for the thematic analysis and quantitative assessment.

### Qualitative Methods

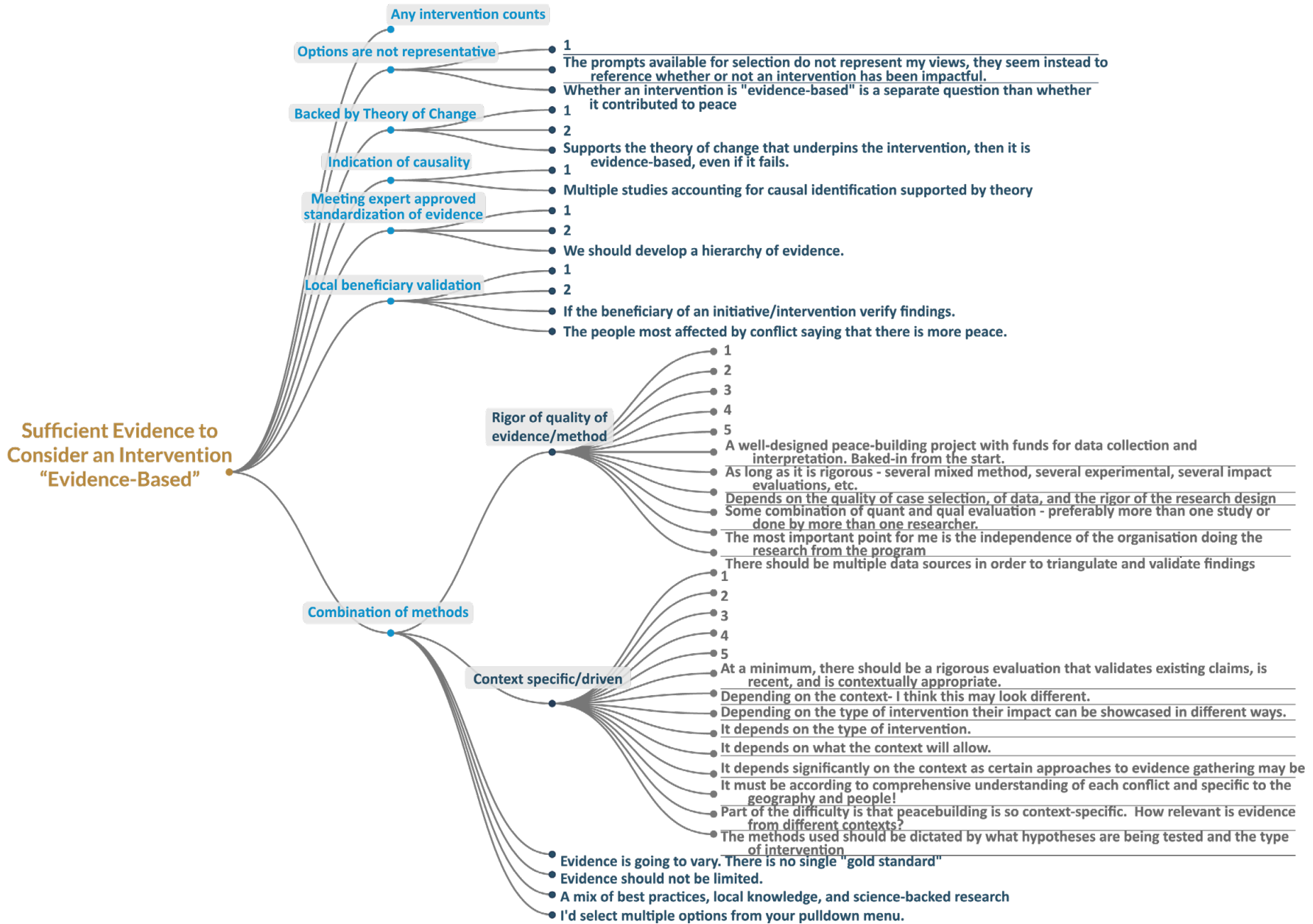
For the item “What does the term evidence-based mean to you in the context of peacebuilding work?” two coding teams separately conducted a thematic analysis using a traditional card-sort theme extraction method.<sup>54</sup> The two resulting thematic analyses were compared and found to contain the same overall coding structure, so minor differences between the two were reconciled using cross-team discussion.

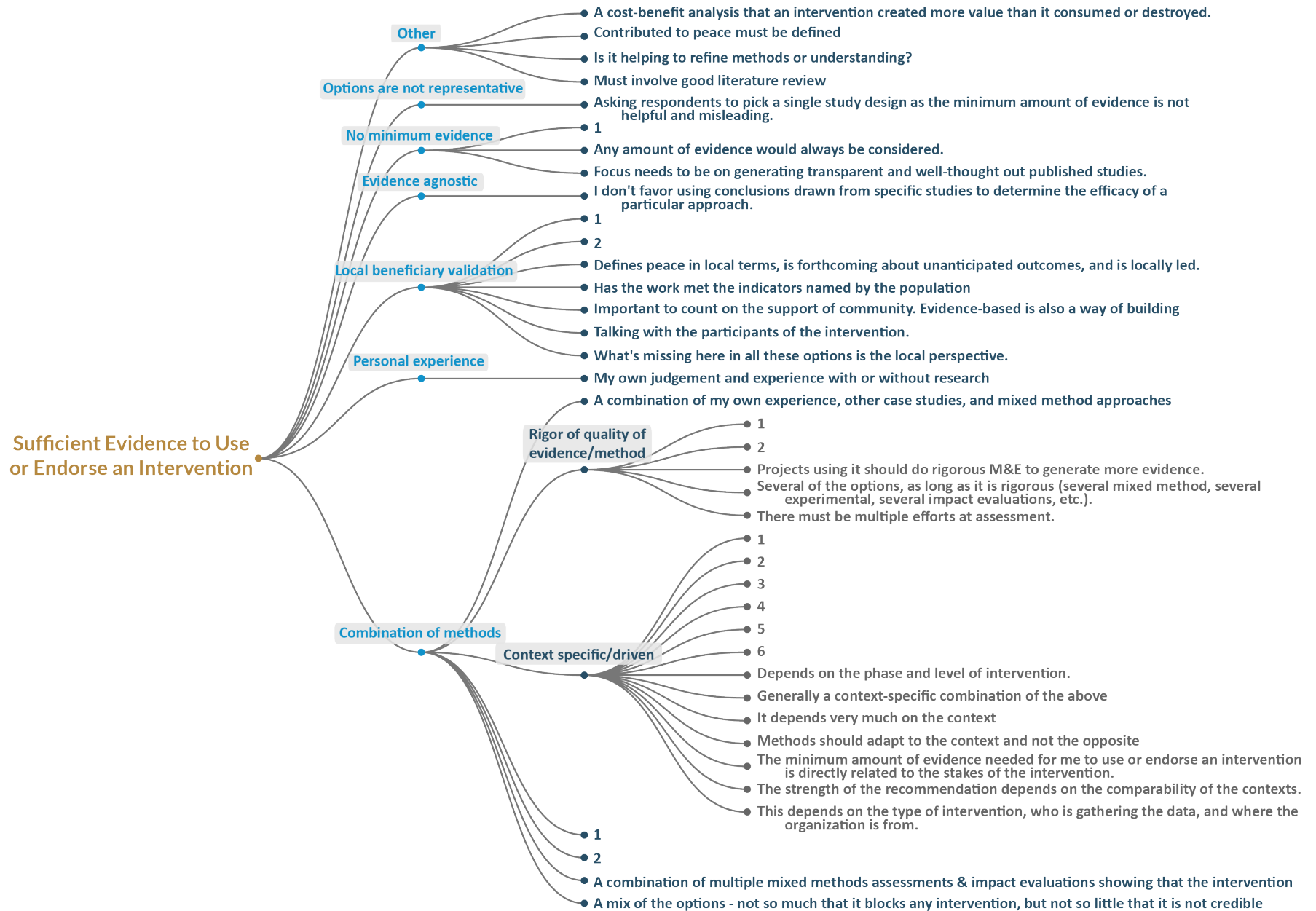
A thematic analysis approach paired with computerized theme analysis was applied on open-ended responses from participants who selected “Other” for the following questions:

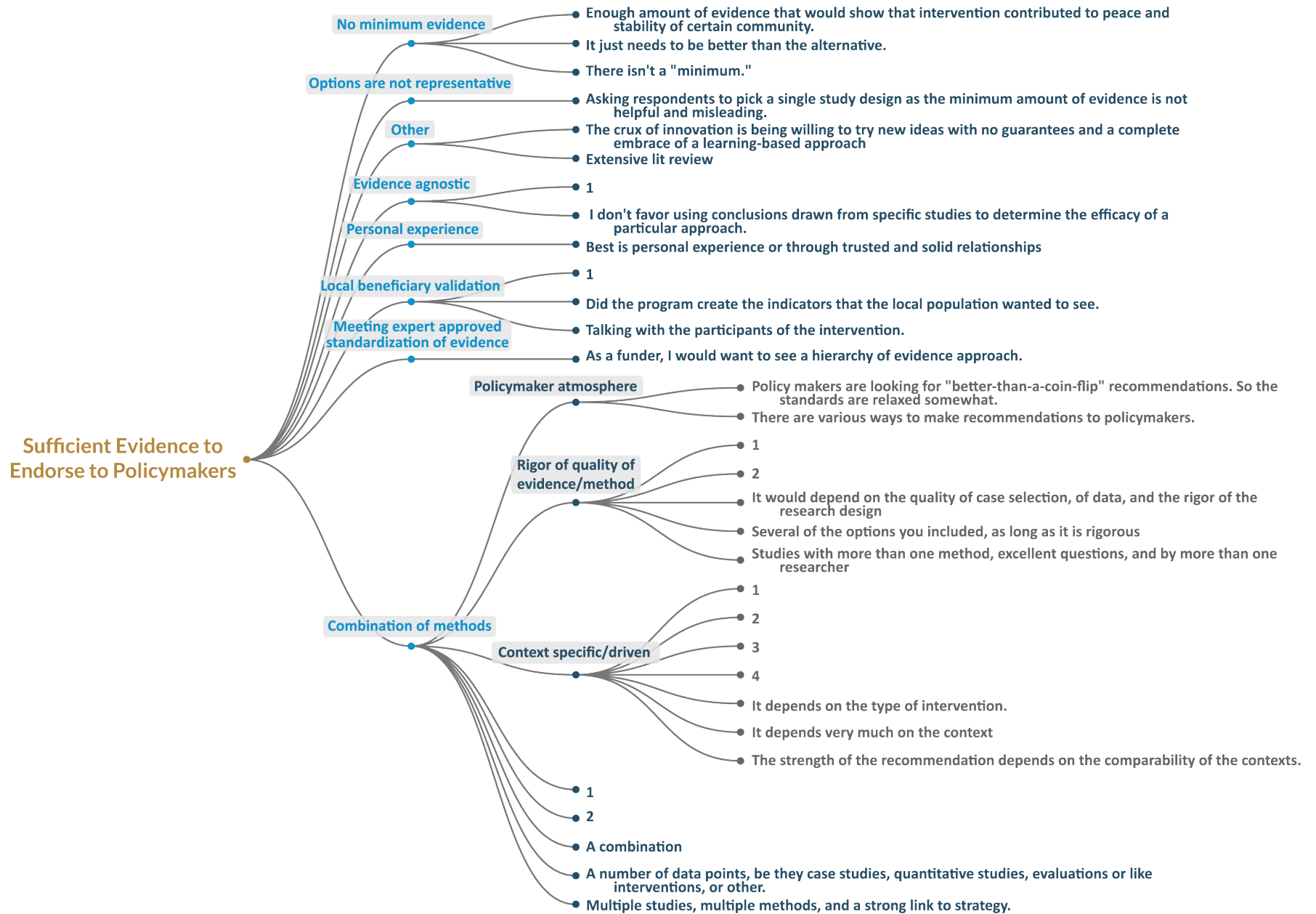
- What do you believe is sufficient evidence to consider an intervention “evidence-based”?
- What do you believe is the minimum amount of evidence needed for you to use an intervention in your own work or endorse it to people working in the field?
- What do you believe is the minimum amount of evidence needed for you to endorse it to funders interested in supporting peace?
- What do you believe is the minimum amount of evidence needed for you to endorse an intervention to decision-makers in policy or practice?

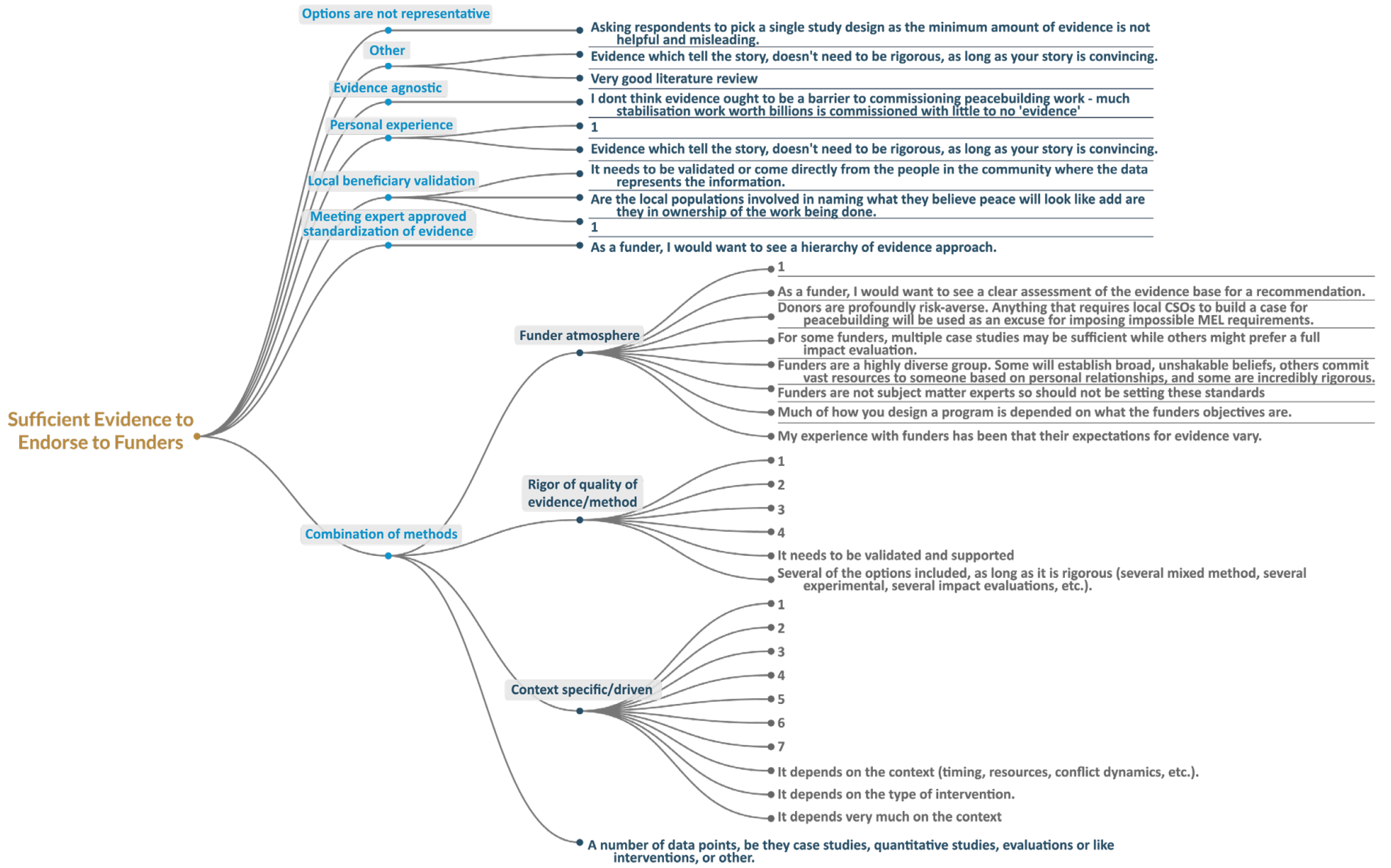
Through this process, thematic categories were created inductively through a method of open coding. Once thematic categories were developed, the qualitative data was coded and restructured within relevant thematic categories for final category-based analysis. Some responses were coded into multiple categories, so the final N does not equal the number of discrete responses.

The inductive development of categories was completed independently by two researchers and compared for validity and refinement prior to final restructuring. For a visualization of the thematic categories and raw data, please refer to the dendrograms. The following dendrograms provide a summarized hierarchical depiction of the raw data, but do not depict every response. The selections included best exemplify the full breadth of responses provided for each question within the coded categories.









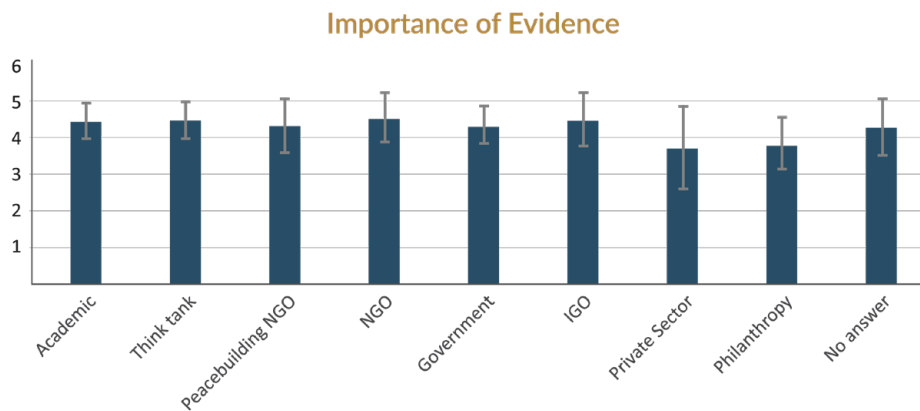
## Opinions About Evidence Overall: Group Differences

Initial tests of the three questions about evidence overall were done using ANOVA. A series of ANOVAs were performed to test for group differences based on professional sector, position, and education for the three outcome questions, then a unified ANOVA including all of the predictors and their interactions was performed. If any ANOVA showed a significant difference, a Tukey HSD test was performed to identify specific intergroup differences.

Across all of the tests, no significant differences were found for the questions “There is a strong evidence base describing what conditions are necessary for sustainable peace” or “There is a strong evidence base describing what conditions are necessary for sustainable peace.”

For the item “How important is it to you that peacebuilding interventions are evidence-based?” private sector and philanthropy participants showed scores lower than other participants.

However, these groups also had quite a bit more variance in their responses than the other sectors. The initial ANOVA found a difference within the professional sector that approached significance at  $p < .05$  ( $F(8,194) = 1.98, p = .051$ ) and the Tukey assessment found no significant difference. Similarly, when controlling for all other predictors, the full ANOVA found a significant difference within sector ( $F(8,66) = 2.413, p < .05$ ) but the Tukey HSD post-hoc test did not confirm this (although the difference between the academic and private sector responses did approach significance at  $p = .07$ ).



To assess seniority, linear regression was used. Three separate regressions were performed to assess whether seniority predicted any outcome. Of the three outcomes, only the importance of peacebuilding was significant at  $p < .05$ , such that increasing experience had a significant but small negative effect on perceptions of the importance of evidence.

Predictor	b	$\beta$	SE	t	p
<b>How important is it to you that peacebuilding interventions are evidence-based?</b>					
Intercept	4.57		0.10	44.029	<.0001
Experience	-.02	-0.24	0.01	-2.952	0.0037
<b>There is a strong evidence base describing what conditions are necessary for sustainable peace</b>					
Intercept	4.71		0.23	20.859	<.0001
Experience	-0.01	-0.05	0.01	-0.549	0.584
<b>There is a strong evidence base describing which interventions in the peacebuilding field are most effective at achieving their program goals</b>					
Intercept	4.28		0.23	18.274	<.0001
Experience	-0.01	-0.05	0.01	-0.588	0.557

## Correlations Between Opinions About Evidence and Ratings of Evidence

To assess the relationship between overall scores on the items “There is a strong evidence base describing what conditions are necessary for sustainable peace” and “There is a strong evidence base describing which interventions in the peacebuilding field are most effective at achieving their program goals” and ratings of interventions later, we calculated a mean score for each participant’s response across all items they rated in the individual conditions and interventions section of the survey. We then computed a correlation matrix including the two overall items and the mean scores for the individual items.

### Correlations

	Overall: Conditions	Overall: Interventions	Mean: Conditions	Mean: Interventions
Overall: Conditions	1			
Overall: Interventions	0.37***	1		
Mean: Conditions	0.23**	0.31***	1	
Mean: Interventions	0.29***	0.24**	0.67***	1

\*\*p < .01 \*\*\*p < .001

## Distribution of Opinions About What Defines Evidence-based Practice

We tested the distribution of opinions about what defines “evidence” using chi-square testing. First, we assessed whether there was a difference between the abstract definition of evidence in the item “What do you believe is sufficient evidence to consider an intervention ‘evidence-based’” and the specific use of evidence in supporting recommendations or the use of evidence in participants’ own work, to funders, and to policymakers. We conducted a series of chi-square tests assessing whether the distribution of responses in the latter three items varied significantly from the distribution of responses to the first item and between each other. All distributions varied significantly from each other.

	In Your Own Work	To Funders	To Policymakers
Evidence Overall	$\chi^2(121) = 347.81^{***}$	$\chi^2(132) = 244.56^{***}$	$\chi^2(121) = 305.54^{***}$
In Your Own Work		$\chi^2(132) = 428.32^{***}$	$\chi^2(121) = 350.28^{***}$
To Funders			$\chi^2(132) = 434.56^{***}$

## Sectoral Difference in Rating of Different Conditions and Interventions.

To reduce the risk of error associated with multiple comparisons, we only assessed differences between the peacebuilding field’s subsectors for the ten conditions and ten interventions with the highest standard deviation. We assessed differences using ANOVA, with the expectation of correcting the p-value to account for multiple comparisons. However, none of the assessments found a significant difference between subgroups even at initial assessment. The twenty items assessed were:

### Conditions

- Crisis response—Combating Violent Extremism interventions
- Crisis prevention—Violent message filtering
- Crisis prevention—Media awareness training
- Crisis response—Increasing women’s engagement in crisis response
- Peacemaking—Humanitarian aid



Crisis prevention—Peace-promoting message campaigns

Crisis response—Peace-promoting message campaigns

Crisis response—Nonviolent strategy training

Structural peacebuilding—Counter-radicalization/Preventing violent extremism (PVE)

### *Interventions*

Crisis response—Combating Violent Extremism interventions

Structural peacebuilding—Counter-radicalization/Preventing violent extremism (PVE)

Crisis prevention—Media awareness training

Crisis response—Nonviolent strategy training

Crisis response—Peacekeeping interventions

Structural peacebuilding—Healthcare

Post-conflict recovery—Deradicalization

Crisis prevention—Peace-promoting message campaigns

Crisis response—Elite negotiation

Structural peacebuilding—Improving inclusion in government

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- 40 Scores varied significantly by years of experience in the peacebuilding field, but the effect was small, corresponding to a reduction of about 1/10th of a point for every 6 years of experience. See Technical Appendix note 3 for more information.
- 41 Pearson's  $r$  for the relationship between score about outcomes/conditions and mean rating of evidence across outcome measures = 0.23; for the relationship between score about interventions overall and mean ratings across all interventions = 0.24; see Technical Appendix note 4 for more information.
- 42 See Technical Appendix note 2 on the qualitative analysis methods employed. Note that the total  $N$  reported in Table 3 exceeds the number of participants because responses could be coded into more than one theme.
- 43 Distributions varied significantly between the different kinds of usage and between the idea of evidence overall and the different kinds of usage. See Technical Appendix note 5.
- 44 See Technical Appendix note 6 for details.
- 45 Search for Common Ground publishes evaluations of their work at <https://www.sfcg.org/ilt/evaluations/>.
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