THINKING EVALUATIVELY IN PEACEBUILDING DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING:

Three Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) and Do No Harm (DNH) -infused options to strengthen the effectiveness of peacebuilding strategies and programs

Resource Guide

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The Peacebuilding Evaluation Consortium (PEC)

The Peacebuilding Evaluation Consortium (PEC) is a project of Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP) in partnership with CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, Mercy Corps and Search for Common Ground (SFCG). The project is funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY) and is field-wide effort to address the unique challenges to measuring and learning from peacebuilding programs. The PEC convenes donors, scholars, policymakers, local and international practitioners, and evaluation experts in an unprecedented open dialogue, exchange, and joint learning. It seeks to address the root causes of weak evaluation practices and disincentives for better learning by fostering field-wide change through three strategic and reinforcing initiatives: 1) Developing Methodological Rigor; 2) Improving the Culture of Evaluation and Shared Learning; and 3) Fostering the Use of Evidence to Inform Peacebuilding Policy.

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects

CDA (www.cdacollaborative.org) is a US based non-profit organization committed to improving the effectiveness of those who work internationally to provide humanitarian assistance, engage in peace practice, support sustainable development, and conduct corporate operations in a socially responsible manner. Our donors and partners support CDA because we combine rigorous analysis with pragmatic field-level work and deliver practical tools to field staff and policymakers alike.

CDA is known as a leader in peacebuilding effectiveness work. We help peace practitioners, and organizations improve the relevance and accountability of programming through better tools for conflict analysis, program strategy, design, and monitoring and evaluation. CDA has also contributed to influential policy guidance, such as the OECD/DAC guidance on evaluating conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GLOSSARY

AfP - Alliance for Peacebuilding

CDA - CDA Collaborative Learning Projects

DNH - Do No Harm

DM&E - Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation

EA - Evaluability Assessment

FCAS - Fragile and Conflict Affected States

M&E - Monitoring and Evaluation

OECD - Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

PEC - Peacebuilding Evaluation Consortium

PQA - Program Quality Assessment

pwl - peace writ little

PWL - Peace Writ Large

RPP - Reflecting on Peace Practice Program (CDA)

TOC - Theory of Change

UN - United Nations

USIP - United States Institute of Peace

1. Introduction

1.1 What is this Guide—and what is it not?

> This Guide provides tools and guidance for integrating greater **EVALUATIVE THINKING** into design, implementation and monitoring of **PEACEBUILDING** initiatives, to enhance program quality, ensure that they maximize their potential for impact and are prepared for a formal evaluation when it is necessary.

The Guide puts forward three options: (i) **Program Quality Assessments**, (ii) **Evaluability Assessments**, and (iii) **Strategy and Program Reflection Exercises** using findings and lessons from CDA's Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) and Do No Harm (DNH) Programs as criteria for effective and relevant peacebuilding engagement.

This is *not* a Guide on how to evaluate peacebuilding efforts … it *is* about how to **apply Evalua*tive* Thinking to peacebuilding strategies and programming**.

This resource responds to the need for *clearer evaluative thinking and practice* during peacebuilding strategy and program design, and implementation, and stronger monitoring mechanisms to improve the evaluability of peacebuilding initiatives. It provides concrete guidance for practitioners on how to implement different 'evaluative' options – short of formal evaluations.

This Guide does not provide guidance on planning or conducting an evaluation. Nor does it provide a comprehensive overview of other evaluation approaches available to address the questions raised in the processes outlined by the Guide.

The Guide can be used during peacebuilding strategy and program design, during program planning and set-up, during implementation, and during the preparation for a formal evaluation. It is also relevant for engagements that are ending, instead of or complementary to other assessment processes or a formal evaluation.

> **Evaluative Thinking |** ongoing process of questioning, reflecting, learning, and modifying.
>
> "Critical thinking applied in the context of evaluation, motivated by an attitude of inquisitiveness and a belief in the value of evidence, that involves identifying assumptions, posing thoughtful questions, pursuing deeper understanding through reflection and perspective taking, and informing decisions in preparation for action." aea365.org/blog/tag/evaluative-thinking

> **Peacebuilding |** this Guide uses the following two interpretations of 'Peacebuilding':
>
> (1) "Direct work that intentionally focuses on addressing the factors driving and mitigating conflict"; and
>
> (2) "Efforts to coordinate a comprehensive, multi-leveled, multi-sectoral strategy, including development, humanitarian assistance, governance, security, justice and other sectors that may not use the term peacebuilding to describe themselves."
>
> (Schirch 2013, Glossary)

1.2 Who should use the Guide?

This Guide is intended for use by different audiences:

- Peacebuilding practitioners designing and implementing programs;

- Peacebuilding managers who supervise others on program design, implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), and who are involved in strategic programming and funding decisions;
- M&E professionals operating in conflict-affected contexts, and working on peacebuilding initiatives;
- Commissioners or managers of evaluations;
- Evaluators willing to experiment with alternatives to formal evaluation processes.

1.3 Origins of the Guide

Program Quality Assessments (PQAs), Evaluability Assessments (EAs) and strategy evaluation[1] already exist in evaluation practice, and have been used widely in non-peacebuilding fields. As part of its broader efforts to enhance program relevance and effectiveness within the peacebuilding field, CDA has developed a specific approach to *Strategy and Program Reflection* for peacebuilding engagements, and adapted *PQA*s and *EA*s to the specific needs of peace practitioners. For this purpose, lessons from CDA's Reflecting on Peace Practice and Do No Harm Programs have been integrated and used as criteria for effective peacebuilding work.[2] *Sections 4*, *5* and *6* will describe *PQA*s, *EA*s, and *Strategy and Program Reflection Exercises* in more detail.

These processes were developed following recommendations of a study by Cheyanne Scharbatke-Church in 2011, in which she explored how "Reflecting on Peace Practice" (RPP) concepts and tools were being used in evaluation.[3] She found that RPP concepts were being used in many peacebuilding programs, often implicitly, as de-facto 'standards' for understanding peacebuilding results, as a frame of inquiry for evaluations, as a means to assess relevance, as well as to strengthen program design during the design and implementation phase.[4] The parts of RPP that seem to be used the most were the *RPP matrix*, *key driving factors of conflict*, the *building blocks for peace/criteria of effectiveness*, *linkages*, determining *add-up to Peace Writ Large*, and *systems approaches to conflict analysis*. These approaches will be explained in more detail in *Sections 3-6*.

The Guide will use lessons and findings from RPP as criteria for assessing peacebuilding program quality, with the goal to work towards greater impact. This also includes insights from CDA's work on systems approaches to conflict analysis, peacebuilding program design, and M&E. In addition, to a less comprehensive extent but in a complementary fashion, insights and lessons from CDA's Do No Harm (DNH) program and ongoing work on conflict-sensitivity will also be used as principles for effective programming.[5]

More information about *peacebuilding evaluation* and *which evaluation options*:

→ dmeforpeace.org/introduction-to-the-field-Guide
→ dmeforpeace.org/evaluation-planning

* The PEC Online Field Guide to Peacebuilding Evaluation on DM&E

One might legitimately ask why we chose to use RPP and DNH criteria and tools, rather than other norms for peacebuilding programming and conflict sensitivity. On the peacebuilding side, we find that there are few, if any, widely accepted norms for program design and effectiveness beyond broad generalities. As Scharbatke-Church found, many policy makers and practitioners were already successfully using RPP as a

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[1] See (Patrizi and Patton 2011), for example, on strategy evaluation
[2] See (Reimann, Chigas and Woodrow 2012)
[3] Scharbatke-Church, *The Use of Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) in Peacebuilding Evaluation. Review & Recommendation*s
[4] The recommendation from Scharbatke-Church's report to CDA was to (i) build on existing work in RPP to support and strengthen the quality of peacebuilding intervention design in a way that sets the stage for more effective evaluation, and (ii) for CDA to use its lessons from RPP to contribute to the understanding of how to apply some of the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria for conflict prevention and peacebuilding work.
[5] It is often – wrongly – assumed that peacebuilding work is automatically conflict-sensitive. Lessons from practice show that this is not necessarily the case and that peacebuilding programming needs to apply the same rigor of conflict-sensitivity assessment as, for example, development and humanitarian programming. At the same time, there is also a significant level of confusion between 'conflict-sensitive programming' and 'peacebuilding programming'. A useful resource in this regard is (Woodrow and Chigas 2009)

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set of reasonable norms—so we could build on and enhance that application. And, while there are other models for conflict sensitivity (such as PCIA – Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment), they do not contradict DNH.

Section 2 of this Guide will introduce the main approaches and tools of both RPP and DNH as a foundation to understand how RPP and DNH approaches and lessons have been integrated into the three options presented in this resource.

The Guide brings together CDA's experience working with various program teams and program partners on the application of RPP, and DNH to strengthen peacebuilding strategy and programming with a view to enhance relevance, effectiveness, and conflict-sensitive programming. The Guide also builds on fin dings from two RPP and DNH infused Program Quality Assessments and Evaluability Assessments conducted in 2013 and 2014 with four partner organizations.[6] In addition, the collective experience of the Peacebuilding Evaluation Consortium has been leveraged to produce this Guide.

1.4 Why is the Options Guide needed – why evaluative thinking in peacebuilding

Peacebuilding and Evaluation – where do we stand?

The peacebuilding field has been struggling to agree on and adhere to universally recognized principles and standards for quality and accountability (e.g., for conflict analysis, theories of change, clearly articulated goals that are relevant from a peacebuilding perspective). In other development or humanitarian sectors there are standards such as the SPHERE standards in the humanitarian sector or the INEE minimum standards for education in emergencies. Likewise, the evaluation community operates with clear standards and principles.[7] On the other hand, definitions of what constitutes relevant and effective peacebuilding varies greatly across organizations.

At the same time, over the past ten years, the field of peacebuilding evaluation has significantly matured, and donors have increased their pressure to show concrete results. A range of Guidelines, frameworks and toolkits have been developed by peacebuilding and evaluation organizations and practitioners. The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Guidelines on the evaluation of conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities (OECD/DAC 2012[8]) are now one set of standards in the field. CDA provided key contributions to the OECD/DAC Guidelines, based on findings from both its Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) as well as Do No Harm (DNH) collaborative learning programs.

Increasingly, development and peacebuilding organizations are making a conscious effort to institutionalize peacebuilding program design and related monitoring and evaluation (M&E) approaches in their work. This includes prominent international non-governmental organizations such as Search for Common Ground,[9] Mercy Corps, CARE, Saferworld, and Catholic Relief Services. Multilateral organizations

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[6] Those were a PQA facilitated with International Alert in the South Caucasus (facilitator: Isabella Jean/CDA), a PQA facilitated with Interpeace in Mali (facilitator: Anita Ernstorfer/CDA), an EA facilitated with Norwegian Church Aid in Afghanistan (facilitator: Mark Rogers/independent consultant), and an EA facilitated with World Vision in Sri Lanka (facilitator: Cordula Reimann/Core Consulting & Training).
[7] See, for example, "American Evaluation Association Guiding Principles For Evaluators," American Evaluation Association, http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51
[8] In addition to the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria for all fields (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, and coherence), (OECD/DAC 2012) recommends three optional criteria to be used for peacebuilding, specifically: linkages, coverage and consistency with values/conflict sensitivity.
[9] See "DM&E for Peace Portal," Search For Common Ground (SFCG), http://www.dmeforpeace.org/

have also made efforts to be more rigorous about strategy design and M&E, such as the UN Peacebuilding Fund.

Despite all the positive developments mentioned above, the peacebuilding field has been struggling to apply evaluations as a systematic professional practice. In 2011, a report by the Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP) noted that "[...] *the peacebuilding field seems to have reached a frustratingly long plateau in the use, understanding, and application of evaluation. As a result, most peacebuilding funders and implementers express dissatisfaction at the current state of evaluation.*"[10] Progress and practical learning have been slow. There is still no widely accepted methodological agreement about how best to conduct evaluations in complex and conflict-affected contexts (Paffenholz 2011).[11]

Four challenges are worth highlighting in this regard:

1. The *first challenge* is **how to measure the effects of micro-level interventions on macro-level conflict dynamics**. This refers not only to the challenges of attribution, but also to the highly complex non-linear processes of social change which cannot be captured by linear cause-effect logic (e.g., as manifested in some of the standard logical frameworks used in M&E systems). For that reason, systems approaches to peacebuilding and peacebuilding evaluation are capturing increased attention, but how to use them practically and systematically from a monitoring and evaluation perspective is yet underexplored.

2. The *second challenge* is that **many peacebuilding initiatives are not based on clearly defined strategy and design principles or criteria,** with either limited or no conflict analysis, unarticulated theories of change, or 'fuzzy' peacebuilding goals. This makes evaluation extremely challenging and highlights the need to apply an evaluative approach from the initial stages of program design, through implementation, and M&E –not simply at the end of a project.

3. The *third challenge* is that there is not yet a well-established '*culture of evaluation'* within the peacebuilding field, which often results in very **limited M&E systems and capacities**. Many peacebuilding practitioners don't have expertise with M&E, and many M&E experts don't have practical experience with peacebuilding. Many peacebuilders have resisted a systematic application of rigorous and professional results measurement tools and frameworks to their work. Many peacebuilding practitioners claim that it is too difficult to measure impact, given the complexity of the conflict factors at stake, highly dynamic and quickly changing environments, and the long-term nature of conflict transformation and peace efforts.[12] Several organizations have made progress in strengthening more integrated Design, M&E and Learning capacities; however, often capacities are concentrated in headquarters and are not replicated at the same level in country and field offices. At the same time, the combined pressures of scarce funding, the requirement to demonstrate results and the

More information about *standards in evaluation*:

→ dmeforpeace.org/introduction-to-evaluation under "Are there Quality Standards for Evaluations?"

Resources on *evaluating peacebuilding programming in a particular sector:*

→ dmeforpeace.org/evaluation, under "I am Interested in Evaluating Peacebuilding Programming in a Particular Sector. Are there Special Considerations and Tools?"

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[10] Kawano-Chiu, *Starting on the Same Page: A Lessons Report from the Peacebuilding Evaluation Project*, 8

[11] One of the most recent contributions in this regard is (Andersen, Bull, and Kennedy-Chouane 2014). See also (Corlazzoli and White 2011)

[12] This is one of five 'myths and misconceptions' identified by the AfP report (Kawano-Chiu 2011, 9 and following.) The other four are: "Staff in country offices must be trained social scientists"; "The primary purpose of evaluations is to highlight flaws and faults and assess when a program is a 'success' or 'failure'"; "The expectation is that nearly all projects will be 'successful'"; and "Countervailing forces against good evaluation practices are too entrenched to change".

need to establish peacebuilding as a legitimate field have led to a tendency among peacebuilding programs to 'over-claim' results (a challenge that is not unique to the peacebuilding field).[13]

4. **Commitment** to act upon assessment and evaluation results, and establishing a **culture of learning** is a *fourth challenge*. This is clearly not unique to the peacebuilding field. If the objectives, unit(s) of analysis, and purposes of evaluations are not clearly articulated, it decreases the likelihood that evaluations will lead to a change in practice and contribute to the uptake of learning in an organization. Often, local staff are left to their own devices with little continuing external support to implement the recommendations of evaluation reports.[14] Most literature on (peacebuilding) evaluation is clear about the fact that evaluation should never be "[...] *an end in itself. It should be a mechanism that contributes to accountability and learning at a variety of levels: project team, office, organization or peacebuilding field.*"[15] In practice, however, the donor accountability aspect of evaluations has received much more attention than the learning and program quality improvement aspects. Frequently, evaluation processes are not designed in a way that supports a conscious process of learning and adaptation.

Why do we need different evaluative options to strengthen peacebuilding strategy, design and implementation?

In times when there is increased recognition of the need for more adaptive and flexible programming approaches in highly complex and conflict-affected contexts (by donors and policy makers as well as program partners and local stakeholders), the application of different evaluative options becomes increasingly relevant. They can provide a foundation for nimbler and more adaptable decision-making, course correction on programming directions, and different options for engagement.

CDA has found several issues in the peacebuilding field that the use of these approaches addresses:

- **Many peacebuilding programs are not ready for formal evaluations**—either because they were not designed with evaluation criteria in mind or because they are not prepared in other ways. While donors often impose a requirement that programs perform an "evaluation", it is not always clear what standard they are applying and what the purpose of such an evaluation would be—nor are adequate funds provided for a full evaluation. Many donors (and implementing organizations) will be well-served by other evaluative processes that meet more modest objectives for program quality improvement.

- **Conducive environment**: In some situations, the conditions of conflict, violence and insecurity are not conducive to robust evaluation per the highest accepted standards of the American Evaluation Association or other international bodies, such as the OECD/DAC. Data may not be available. Access to certain areas may be limited. Posing certain types of key questions may exacerbate conflict or put program staff in danger.

- In most cases, program teams also have significant **M&E capacity development needs** which are usually not met and cannot be met by evaluations alone.

Based on the above, the peacebuilding and evaluation community have been exploring a range of new approaches to evaluation.[16] This guidance builds on these developments to focus on guidance for

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[13] Scharbatke-Church, *Peacebuilding Evaluation: Not Yet All It Could Be, Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation. Section II*, 476
[14] Action Asia, *Examining RPP as A Tool for Evaluation - The Action Asia Experience*, 16
[15] Scharbatke-Church, *Peacebuilding Evaluation: Not Yet All It Could Be, Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation. Section II*, 471
[16] These include "most significant change" technique (Davies and Dart 2005), developmental evaluation (Quinn Patton 2011), and outcome mapping.

programs that seek to review and strengthen program quality and strategy, that are not yet ready for evaluation, or where formal evaluation may not be appropriate or desired.

1.5 When is this Guide useful?

The Guide is useful for both strategy and program design: it can be used to review and assess macro-level peacebuilding strategies, involving various projects and programs within one organization or across agencies, as well as at the individual project and program level.

Therefore, this Guide is intended to be relevant for a fairly broad range of initiatives pursuing either of the above, including shorter-term, medium-term, as well as longer-term initiatives.

The Stages of Conflict Figure (CDA 2016) implies a fairly smooth set of stages that move inexorably towards "stable peace." The reality is quite different, as processes start and stop, return to earlier phases (such as violence), make some progress and stall, and so forth.

Figure: Stages of Conflict (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2016)
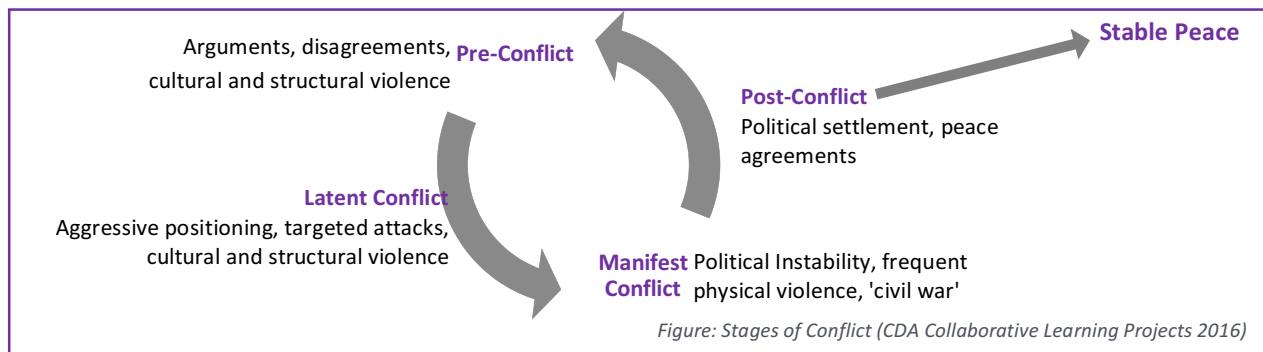
Peacebuilding programs may be oriented towards any of these stages or may accompany a peace process through several phases.

The three options offered in this Guide are intended to help practitioners and decision makers locate themselves in a range of peace efforts and achieve continuous improvement in effectiveness towards the larger goal of stable peace— what RPP calls "Peace Writ Large." Therefore, the Guide is expected to be helpful in a range of different conflict-affected contexts and not limited to a specific 'conflict phase'.

… the Guide is expected to be helpful in a range of different conflict-affected contexts and not limited to a specific 'conflict phase'.

2. Emerging Criteria and Programming Concepts in Peacebuilding

As not every reader of this resource will be familiar with the core concepts of RPP and DNH, this section provides a brief introduction to the main concepts and tools – the foundation of why and how we are using RPP and DNH as criteria for PQAs, EAs, and strategy and program reflections. For a more in-depth overview of each of these approaches, please refer to the bibliography.

2.1 Background RPP and DNH

Reflecting on Peace Practice

Launched in 1999, CDA's Reflecting on Peace Practice Program (RPP) offered practical answers to the core questions about *relevance* and *effectiveness* in the peacebuilding field. Relevance and Effectiveness are also two of the key OECD/DAC criteria for peacebuilding evaluation, and defined as follows:

> **Relevance** | assesses the extent to which the objectives and activities of the intervention(s) respond to the needs of the peacebuilding process, i.e. whether they address the key driving factors of conflict revealed through a conflict analysis. Relevance links the outcomes of the conflict analysis with the intervention's objectives, although the relevance of the intervention might change over time as circumstances change. Understanding relevance may also involve an assessment of the extent to which an intervention ties in with overall strategies and policy frameworks of the country or external partners. Different conflict groups or actors may have different perspectives on the relevance of an intervention and its results. (OECD/DAC, 2012, 56)
>
> **Effectiveness** | is used to evaluate whether an intervention has met its intended objectives with respect to its immediate peacebuilding environment, or is likely to do so. The key to evaluating effectiveness – and thus the linkage between outputs, outcomes and impacts – is finding out to what degree the envisaged results have been achieved and noting changes that the intervention has initiated or to which it has contributed. […] It is important to draw a distinction between two kinds of results. One is "programme effectiveness", i.e. to what extent the programme achieved its stated objective. The other is – if the programme met its objectives or goal – the immediate or secondary outcomes as they relate to peacebuilding and conflict dynamics identified in the analysis. (OECD/DAC 2012, 57)

CDA builds on this definition of effectiveness by introducing a distinction between program effectiveness and peace effectiveness:

> **Program Effectiveness** | focuses on assessing whether a specific program is achieving its intended goals in an effective manner. This kind of evaluation asks whether the program is fulfilling its goals and is successful on its own terms.
>
> **Peace Effectiveness** | asks whether, in meeting specific goals, the program makes a contribution to Peace Writ Large and has a positive effect by reducing key driving factors of conflict. This requires assessing changes in the overall environment that may or may not result directly from the program. In most instances this requires identifying the contribution of the specific program to PWL, rather than seeking clear attribution of impacts from discrete peace initiatives. Impacts at the level of PWL typically cannot be achieved by single activities and projects, but rather are cumulative, resulting from many different efforts happening simultaneously, especially when these efforts are deliberately designed to complement one another. Strategic linkages among efforts in a single context are therefore critical. (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2013, 28)

CDA's work on peacebuilding effectiveness began in 1999 with the launch of the Reflecting on Peace Practice Program (RPP). RPP posed a simple, albeit complex question: *What works- and what doesn't work – in peacebuilding*? RPP worked with hundreds of agencies and individuals, and conducted 26

peacebuilding case studies throughout the world to glean lessons applicable across conflict contexts and develop user-friendly toolkits. The resulting lessons are presented in *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners* (2003). Between 2007 and 2009, CDA undertook 16 case studies that investigated the **cumulative impacts of peacebuilding programs** in Europe, Africa, Middle East, Asia and Latin America. Findings from these have been published in issue papers, select publications.[17]

Building on this cumulative impact work, CDA has developed specific approaches to systems thinking and peacebuilding, including *systemic conflict analysis, systems mapping, and the identification of leverage points for change* as another means of expanding the peacebuilding effectiveness field. The experience and lessons gained through the years of RPP's operation are the foundation of CDA's current *Peacebuilding Effectiveness practice area*, which continues to promote learning in this field, both through *advisory services* and through ongoing *collaborative learning efforts*.[18]

Do No Harm

CDA's work on conflict sensitivity began in 1993 with the launch of the Local Capacities for Peace Project, which came to be known as the Do No Harm Program. Over the years, Do No Harm has involved hundreds of aid agencies, and more than 1000 aid practitioners from all over the world in its collaborative learning processes. The resulting lessons are presented in *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – Or War,* as well as many other publications and Guides available on the CDA website. Today, "*Do No Harm*" is relevant in practice as a *principle* and as a *tool* (the DNH Framework), and is used by many practitioners to describe their work on conflict-sensitivity.

The purpose of the following section is to introduce basic RPP and DNH approaches and tools, which are used as criteria for program quality assessments, evaluability assessments, as well as strategy and program reflection exercises as highlighted in this Guide.

2.2 Key lessons from CDA's Reflecting on Peace Practice Program (RPP)

CDA has distilled the following key lessons through the various phases of practical learning from RPP:

I. Peacebuilding programs should be accountable to *Peace Writ Large*;
II. *Conflict analysis* is crucial. Good conflict analysis should:
    a. identify *Key Factors* and *Key Actors* vis-à-vis peace/conflict,
    b. identify the *Relationships* and *Dynamics* among them, and
    c. clarify *points of possible intervention*.
III. Analysis must be linked to programming and to Peace Writ Large through a strong *theory of change*;
IV. Programs must reach the *Socio-Political Level* in order to affect Peace Writ Large;
V. "*More People*" work must engage "*Key People*" and vice versa;
VI. It is important to engage the *hard-to-reach*;
VII. It is possible to assess the *impact of programs* on Peace Writ Large *if* they are based on conflict analysis, strong theories of change, and robust program goals.

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[17] For more information, please visit: http://cdacollaborative.org/
[18] For more information about CDA's work and/or RPP, please visit: http://cdacollaborative.org/

Key Lesson I: Peacebuilding programs should be accountable to Peace Writ Large

Peace Writ Large (PWL) is concerned with the "bigger picture" of a conflict. This "bigger picture" refers to the overall socio-political conditions in a given context. It can involve national level conflict dynamics (or in some contexts, sub-national or regional dynamics). Being accountable to Peace Writ Large means ensuring that initiatives address *key drivers of conflict* and make a contribution to the 'bigger picture'. This requires an explicit strategy for influencing those drivers, and a way to monitor and evaluate effects beyond the life of the project. It does not mean that all programs should be expected to produce concrete changes at the larger societal level. In fact, many programs are successful at smaller scale interventions, such as operating at the community level, or with small groups of people, thus contributing to 'peace writ little'. The impact of these interventions will not be directly observable at a societal level. However, CDA/RPP has found that many practitioners assume that their programs, because they have solid goals, will somehow lead to or support Peace Writ Large. This is not always the case.

Assessing contribution to Peace Writ Large is difficult, as most peacebuilding programs are discrete efforts aimed at affecting one (often small) piece of the puzzle, and no one project can do everything. *RPP has found that certain elements of program strategy and logic make it more likely that peacebuilding projects/programs will have an influence on Peace Writ Large.* Those are further outlined below – and are also at the core of the PQA, EA, and Strategy and Program Reflection Exercise described in this Guide.

Key Lesson II: Conflict Analysis is Crucial

Based on a review of dozens of peacebuilding initiatives, there is strong evidence about the relationship between conflict analysis and strategic and relevant programming in conflict-affected contexts.

Good conflict analysis should:

- identify *Key Factors* and *Key Actors* vis-à-vis peace/conflict,
- identify the *Relationships* and *Dynamics* among them, and
- clarify *points of possible intervention*.

Key driving factors of conflict are factors without which the conflict would not exist or would be significantly different. *Key actors* are people or groups that can significantly influence the conflict dynamics.

For a more detailed introduction on how to conduct conflict analysis, please refer to the CDA Training Manuals and the Conflict Analysis Framework developed by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict in collaboration with CDA Collaborative Learning Projects and Norwegian Church Aid (2016) (see *Section 8*, *Resources*).

"Analysis is not optional; it is essential and obligatory for peace work"
RPP consultation participant

A Theory of Change | is an explanation of how and why an action is believed to bring about its planned objectives, i.e. the changes it hopes to create through its activities, thereby revealing underlying assumptions. A clear theory of change helps to articulate the logical flow from the starting point (analysis) to the goal of the initiative to the broader change the organization plans to achieve.

A practical formula for articulating a theory of change is the following:

If **x** [activity],

then **y** [expected change],

because **z** [rationale - why do you think this change will happen?]

Examples of Theories of Change[19]

Project level (individual level change)[20]

If *[activity]* children in this school are given individual treatment for trauma recovery,

then *[change]* they will develop increased ability to control their emotions and not act out against others, especially those who are different from them;

because *[rationale]* the activities will have helped them begin to heal from the psychological wounds of war and reduce their overall fear and sense of vulnerability at school.

If we wanted to move this engagement to potentially show results towards socio-political change:

[*Note: under these conditions, if we introduce inter-group skills (negotiation, mediation, problem-solving) to children of different religious groups together, then they will be able to learn them and use them to resolve disputes at school, including those that may arise between religious groups.[21]*]

Portfolio/Sector level (socio-political level change)

If *[activity]* we strengthen the capacities of select local and national level government institutions in violence prevention and coexistence;

then *[change]* interactions within the government and between state and civil society will be more constructive and inclusive,

because *[rationale]* local and national government institutions will be better equipped to deal with tensions more constructively and engage in forward looking, preventive approaches within government and in state-society relations.

[*Note: this sector theory of change is very macro-level and needs to be accompanied by more concrete and measurable theories of change at the program and project level. This would help further embed the theory in specific operational contexts.*]

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[19] For more background on the different levels at which theories of change can be useful (activity, project, program, portfolio/sector, country level etc.) please see (Woodrow and Oatley 2013)

[20] Babbitt et al, *Theories and Indicators of Change: Concepts and Primers for Conflict Management and Mitigation*, 9

[21] Ibid.

Theories of change operate at different levels. They can relate to micro-level changes (e.g. project level), usually associated with specific activities. They can describe how an overall program approach and goal will be achieved (e.g. how various justice and human rights initiatives achieve progress in that sector), as well as how achieving the goal will contribute to Peace Writ Large (e.g. how different sector activities across human rights, rule of law, and dialogue promotion will work towards reconciliation – if that is what had been identified as the vision for Peace Writ Large). **Theories of change need to be grounded in the particular context, and should be specific enough to be testable.**

Key Lesson IV: Programs must reach the Socio-Political Level in order to affect Peace Writ Large

Cartoonist: Sidney Harris

For peacebuilding programs to be effective, they must **link change at the individual/personal level to change at the socio-political level**. The individual/personal level includes attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, skills and interpersonal relations. The socio-political level includes relations among social groups, public opinion, social norms, societal institutions, and deeper elements embedded in social and economic structures and culture.

More in-depth reading on *theories of change*:

→ dmeforpeace.org/evaluation-planning
→ Woodrow and Oatley 2013
→ Babbit, Chigas and Wilkinson 2013

Individual/Personal Change	Healing/recovery Perceptions Attitudes Skills Knowledge
	Behavior Individual relationships
Socio-Political Change	Group behavior/relationships Public opinion Social norms
	Institutional change
	Structural + cultural change

RPP found that programming which focuses on change at the individual/personal level but never translates this into action or results at the socio-political level has no discernible effect on peace. In many cases, it is also important to link change at the socio-political level back to individual/personal level change—especially if the changes are to be meaningful and sustainable.

While the desired changes do not necessarily need to be observable at the national level, programs/projects should, at the level at which they are operating, affect the creation of institutions (formal or informal), result in locally-driven peace agendas and action, or lead to *collective* attitudes and

behaviors that reflect improvements in the key driving factors of conflict or peace at that level (e.g., increased security or perceptions of security, improved group attitudes or relations, resistance to violence, etc.).[22]

Key Lesson V: "More People" work must engage "Key People" and vice versa

Effective programs also **link work with "more people"**—i.e., people at many levels of society and in many sectors—**to "key people,"** people or groups that have the power or influence to decide for or against progress towards peace.

More People	Key People
Peace needs support and participation of the general population.	Peace cannot be achieved without involvement of certain people with major influence on the situation.

Work that influences "more people" or "key people" but does not connect or link to efforts to affect the other has limited impact.

Insights IV and V combined prompted CDA to develop a very practical tool used to assess program strategies: the **RPP Matrix** (See *Annexes 2.1* and *2.2*)

Key Lesson VI: It is important to engage the 'hard to reach'

Many programs operate on certain biases. They…

- engage with the "easy to reach" (those who want to work with us),
- work with those seen as non-political, willing to cooperate, less committed to violence, and
- focus on doing "good" vs. stopping "bad" (e.g., participatory community development, inter-ethnic dialogue, etc.) and do not deal with dynamics and people that promote or perpetuate violent conflict and/or fragility.

Therefore, it is critical for peacebuilders to ask themselves the following questions:

- What groups are systematically left out of peacebuilding efforts?
- Who is the peacebuilding community avoiding?
- Which groups might have a negative effect on peace efforts, and could undermine fragile gains?
- Who (if anyone!) has access to those groups?

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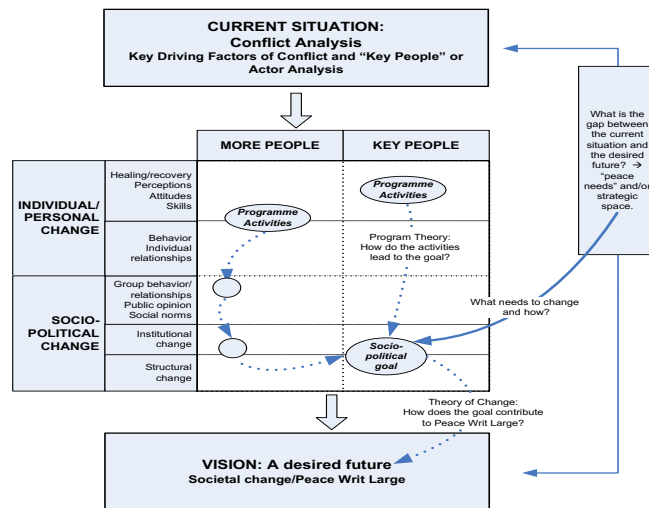
[22] For further reading refer to (Ernstorfer, Chigas and Vaughan-Lee 2015)

The 'hard to reach question' will not be examined to a great level of detail in this Guide. However, it is often one critical question in program relevance (next to others).[23]

Key Lesson VII: It is possible to assess the impact of programs on Peace Writ Large

For many years, the peacebuilding community has been avoiding a more rigid approach to monitoring and evaluation (see *Section 2*). However, it is possible to assess the impact of programs on Peace Writ Large *IF* programs:

It's almost enough to make an evaluator nostalgic for fuzzy goals.
Cartoonist: Mark M. Rogers

- are based on good conflict analysis – to ensure relevance,
- have a well-articulated theory of change, and
- have robust and well-defined goals.

We have already touched upon conflict analysis and theories of change. **Robust program goals** need to be set in terms of desired changes. Many programs set goals for personal change, including attitudes, perceptions, personal behaviors, skills, and relations among individuals—and change at this level is often necessary, though rarely sufficient.

However, programs that formulate goals as desired changes at the socio-political level, and/or have strategies in place that work with other programs and organizations operating at that level (if they don't do it themselves), are more likely to have impacts on Peace Writ Large.

Building Blocks for Peace (Criteria of Effectiveness)

Based on extensive case analysis and practitioner reflection, the RPP process identified five intermediate *Building Blocks for Peace* or *Criteria of Effectiveness* to support progress towards Peace Writ Large.

These can be used to assess, across a broad range of contexts and programming approaches, whether a program is making a meaningful contribution to Peace Writ Large.

1. The effort results in the creation or reform of political institutions to handle grievances in situations where such grievances do, genuinely, drive the conflict.

2. The effort contributes to a momentum for peace by causing participants and communities to develop their own peace initiatives in relation to critical elements of context analysis.

3. The effort prompts people to resist violence and provocations to violence more frequently.

4. The effort results in an increase in people's security and in their sense of security.

5. The effort results in meaningful improvement in inter-group relations.

These Building Blocks can best be thought of as *intermediate-level benchmarks or indicators of success* applicable to the broad range of peace work being done. The Building Blocks can be used in program

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[23] For further reading please see (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2012)

planning to ensure that specific program goals are linked to the larger and long-term goal of "Peace Writ Large." They can be used during program implementation to reflect on effectiveness and Guide mid-course changes, and as a basis for evaluation after the program has been completed.

For a more in-depth introduction to RPP's lessons and insights, please refer to the resources listed in the bibliography (*Section 10*).
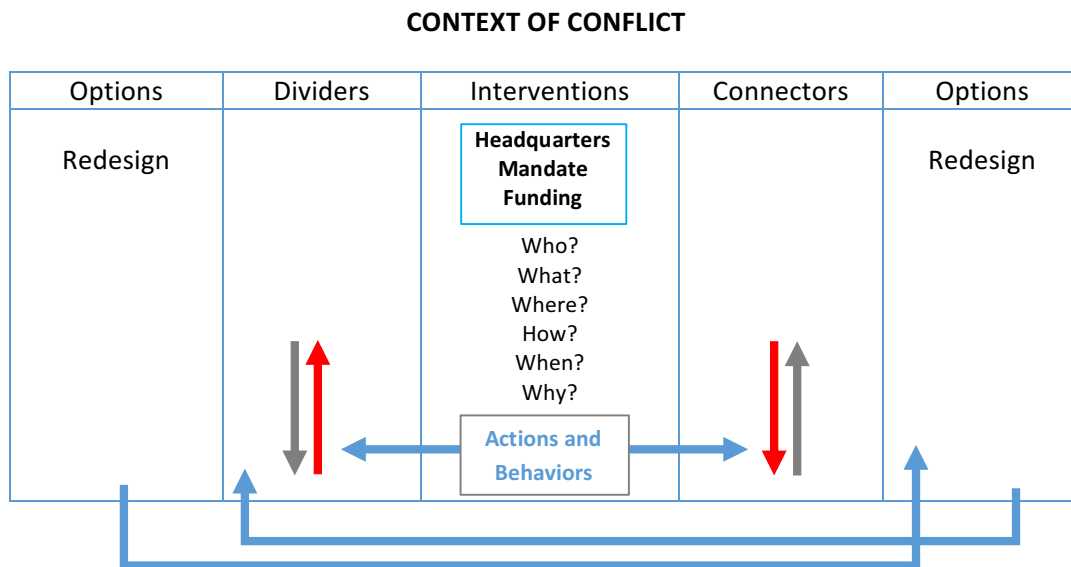
2.3 Key lessons from CDA's Do No Harm Program (DNH)

A conflict-sensitive approach minimizes the negative and maximizes the positive impacts of any interventions on peace and conflict dynamics. Many organizations work on conflict-sensitivity, and use the DNH approach developed by CDA – both as a tool, a framework, and a *'standard' for conflict-sensitivity.*

The collaborative learning process that CDA's Do No Harm program went through led to the following six main concluding lessons:

1. When an intervention of any kind enters a context, it becomes part of that context;
2. All contexts are characterized by both Dividers and Connectors;
3. All interventions will interact with both Dividers and Connectors, making them better or worse;
4. Interventions interact with Dividers and Connectors through their organizational Actions and the Behavior of staff;
5. The Details of an intervention are the source of its impacts;
6. There are always Options (e.g. for program re-design or doing things differently.)

These lessons resulted in the creation of the DNH framework:

CONTEXT OF CONFLICT

Options	Dividers	Interventions	Connectors	Options
Redesign		**Headquarters** **Mandate** **Funding** Who? What? Where? How? When? Why? Actions and Behaviors		Redesign

For further introduction to the DNH framework please refer to the DNH resources listed in *Section 10*.

The following *Sections 4*, *5*, and *6* will provide detailed guidance and a step-by-step approach to Program Quality Assessments, Evaluability Assessments and Strategy and Program Reflection Exercises using RPP and DNH as criteria.

Principles of participation, partner and local stakeholder engagement throughout this document

Program Quality Assessments, Evaluability Assessments, and Strategy and Program Reflection Exercises provide excellent opportunities for program teams to work with their program partners, local stakeholders and donors to jointly develop a vision for strengthened strategies and programs in a participatory fashion.

Each team will need to determine what type and what level of partner engagement seems most appropriate and useful. In general, all these processes encourage a maximum level of program partner and local stakeholder engagement. No program quality assessment or Evaluability Assessment can be credibly done without a well-thought-out process of program partner engagement. In general, Strategy or Program Reflection Exercises should also involve partners to a certain extent. However, Strategy and Program Reflection Exercises might be the option most frequently used to support internal team alignment around program strategy – and not always involve program and other local partners.

The question of how program partners and local stakeholders are engaged in EAs and PQAs will need to be determined case by case. In some instances, the facilitation of a joint workshop with all relevant teams, partners, and donors is feasible and advisable. In other instances, separate processes of consultations and bi-lateral interviews are more appropriate, also regarding overall political and cultural sensitivities. In any case, especially for EAs, a certain amount of independence in data collection with local partners is essential for the credibility and robustness of the process.

3. What is the right option for my team? What are the basics we need to have in place to benefit from any of these options?

All three options put forward in this Guide are *learning tools* with different foci, different purposes, and different degrees of rigor (see *Section 7* for a summary overview of key features of PQAs, EAs and Strategy and Program Reflection Exercises vis-à-vis formal evaluations). All three options review program design and strategy, in order to maximize the potential impact of peacebuilding initiatives on conflict systems. However, these options are not designed as evaluations to assess the actual changes in-country.

Before deciding which evaluative option to choose, a few key questions will need to be answered:

Where are you in the life of the program?

What prompted the need to undertake one of these exercises?

What is the purpose and expected result of the process? How will you use what you learn through this process?

What is the nature of the exercise (which options and for what purpose) and related demands on team, staff and program partners: are existing capacities and resources sufficient?

What are the main lines of inquiry? Is data available to answer the key questions? How much data collection is needed? Data availability might also influence the choice of an evaluative process.

Team Cohesion: Is Senior Management on board? Do the donors need to be involved? Is there a common vision about the purpose/timing/requirement amongst staff and/or partners and everyone who needs to be involved? How will partners be included?

Who will lead and facilitate the exercise?

What is more appropriate – an internal, external or blended process? Sometimes a less formal process is more conducive to strengthening an initiative. It can be facilitated internally or with external support.

More resources on *whether your program is ready for an evaluation*:

→ dmeforpeace.org/evaluation-planning under "Is the program or initiative ready for evaluation?"

Choosing the Right Evaluative Option

The below table might help with decision making based on different types of purposes and intentions:

If your goal is to…		…you should…
…conduct an independent assessment of your program strategy reviewing conflict analysis, goals, theories of change, and program strategy…	→	…choose a program quality assessment.
…assess how ready your program is for an evaluation…	→	…choose an evaluability assessment.
…assess the performance of the interventions, review outputs, outcomes, and results, and assess implementation practices…	→	…conduct an evaluation.
…facilitate an internal, fairly informal process of reflection and improve your team's (and possibly your partner's) understanding of what makes a peacebuilding initiative relevant and effective…	→	…conduct a strategy/program reflection exercise – or possibly a program quality assessment (the latter applies the peacebuilding criteria more systematically).
…obtain an independent assessment of your program to show accountability[24] to your donor and/or program partners…	→	…conduct an evaluation.
…obtain an internal assessment of your work to show accountability to a donor and/or program partners		…conduct an internal evaluation or self-evaluation.
…analyze data availability, and understand the conduciveness of the context for your program's effectiveness…	→	…conduct an evaluability assessment.
…develop a common understanding within the project team (and possibly amongst partners) about the context, overall goals, theories of change, and program strategy, as well as strengthen skills…	→	…initiate a strategy/program reflection exercise.
…strengthen the capacity of your team and partners in program strategy development and implementation by assessing your program based on RPP criteria…	→	…plan for a program quality assessment.
…to train your staff and/or partners in RPP and/or DNH tools and approaches…	→	…not conduct any of these processes, but develop a/ RPP/DNH training program for staff and partners.
…to introduce basic M&E frameworks and approaches…	→	…not conduct any of these processes, but develop an M&E training program for staff and partners.
…analyze whether your initiative might need to be adapted if there are major changes to the context… (e.g. an election, or signing of a peace agreement)	→	…consider any of these options. But a strategy and program reflection exercise will, in most cases, be the most appropriate.

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[24] Not all formal evaluations for donors only serve the purpose of accountability. Some donors also conduct learning evaluations.

Regardless of which modality is chosen, the following conditions should be in place before conducting any of these processes:

Condition	Explanation
Willingness to challenge assumptions	RPP tools and lessons-learned occasionally provide challenging messages about what makes for effective peacebuilding. In particular, the process involves careful consideration of the theories of change underpinning the program – i.e. the very assumptions we have about how the program will contribute to change. The program team and program partners need to be open and reflective, reflexive and willing to challenge the assumptions upon which programming is based.
Ability to adjust program	Adjustments to program design and/or implementation are likely to result from either process. There needs to be a willingness to adapt programming on the part of all relevant stakeholders, including donors. This may be particularly challenging if the program is being implemented by a consortium where different agencies are implementing different parts of the program.
Openness to RPP tools and methods	Some teams and program will have had prior exposure to RPP tools and approaches, some won't. While it is not a pre-requisite that program teams and/or program partners have been exposed to or already know RPP, more time will need to be allocated if teams are new to the methodologies. In any case, the program team will need to be open to using these tools and methods.
Realistic sense of capacity development	Teams and Senior Managers need to have a realistic sense of how much capacity development is possible through a strategy/program reflection exercise or a program quality assessment. For teams and program partners with no prior exposure to RPP tools, the basic concepts can be conveyed through either of those. However, this does not replace a more formal training and/or capacity development process for staff. Evaluability Assessments usually do not include a focus on capacity development.

Having these conditions in place will maximize the benefit of any of the three options in this Guide and facilitate uptake of the findings and follow-up.

4. Program Quality Assessment (PQA) – criteria for assessing peacebuilding program quality

4.1 Overview: Purpose of a Program Quality Assessment

The **purposes** of a PQA are to:

- review and learn about the quality of a program's design,
- strengthen/adapt program design through application of a clear set of professional standards and criteria,
- maximize potential for program to contribute to Peace Writ Large,
- lay the foundation for adaptive programming and action planning with program teams and program partners, and
- support strategic and long-term learning.

A PQA examines how the program is functioning in practice, but only to the extent necessary to understand if and how a program is meeting the given criteria. Particularly, this includes an assessment of the quality of the program strategy, logic and theory of change, and how conducive these are to achieving the envisioned outputs, results, and outcomes of the program. Thus, it examines if it is likely to achieve its goals, as well as achieve a contribution to Peace Writ Large. It does not assess results, outputs, and outcomes in detail.

It is similar to a formative or mid-term evaluation, but differs in that it does not involve a systematic evaluation process nor apply evaluation standards, and has a strong focus on capacity building. PQAs do not substitute an evaluation. However, there might be circumstances (e.g. an extremely dynamic and quickly changing context) under which a PQA might be the appropriate level of rigor, and a formal evaluation might not be possible.

4.2 Key elements of a program quality assessment based on RPP criteria

The PQA involves a review of key **program dimensions** and assessment against RPP-based criteria:

1. Performance of a conflict analysis contributing to program *relevance*;
2. Clear and appropriate program goals;
3. Well-formulated and plausible theory(ies) of change at different levels (macro – meso-micro);
4. Program strategy and logic, including incorporation of an M&E system as part of the program design;[25]
5. Inclusion of conflict-sensitivity in design and implementation.

The following overview tables provide key assessment criteria, and examples of common gaps and weaknesses found in many programs.

Annex 5 will provide a practical PQA tool that teams can use to document the outcomes of program quality assessment of each of these program dimensions.

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[25] Whereas in an Evaluability Assessment the M&E system is much more in the focus in terms of data collection mechanisms.

PQA Table 1: Conflict Analysis based on RPP criteria

	RPP Criteria	Common gaps/weaknesses or cautions concerning analysis
1	The analysis identifies *key driving factors* and *key actors* for conflict/peace.[26]	- Analysis is *too* comprehensive: too many factors with no priorities identified. - Analyzes entire context, but does not focus on conflict determinants; everything is seen as relevant to peacebuilding. - Factors/issues are identified, but not dynamics among them or which are more/less important (priorities). - Analysis is implicit, and thus not shared among team and program partners.
2	The analysis considers what needs to be stopped (and who will resist) and what forces promote peace in this context.	- Analysis focuses on positive factors that might be strengthened, but does not consider countervailing negative forces. - Analysis does not analyze what factors connect people or promote peace in this context.
3	The analysis is updated and tested regularly/periodically.	- Analysis is performed once at beginning of program, but not updated. - Conclusions about drivers and dynamics of conflict are not utilized to strengthen program.
4	Analysis of similar program efforts including any lessons from their results (program efforts include those from the past or ongoing).	- Analysis does not identify results/lessons - The program team has no knowledge of what has been tried before (or resulting effects). - Programs repeat failed approaches. - Programs/projects duplicate efforts of others without added value.
5	The program strategy builds on the analysis: identifies peacebuilding needs or points of leverage for change.	- Program goals and design do not address factors identified. - Analysis does not enable program designers to identify what to do to change conflict dynamic.
6	The scope of the analysis is appropriate (not too broad or narrow); and mitigates bias towards agency's expertise or general beliefs about conflict.	- Analysis is performed to justify favored program approach (methodology, focus, constituency). - Analysis is based on beliefs about how to bring about peace generally (and not contextualized). - Analysis has omitted or excluded significant perspectives. - Analysis exists at one level, but does not consider other levels (e.g., at local level, missing wider dynamics; national/regional analysis without local particularities; national analysis without international/regional dimensions).
7	The analysis process has been conflict sensitive—considered potential harm it might cause	- Team composition exposes team members, partners, or interviewees to danger. - Team composition, behavior perceived as biased. - Analysis process deepens polarization. - Causes of conflict are contested among key parties—analysis process is fraught.

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[26] Key driving factors are elements/dynamics without which the conflict would not exist or would be significantly different. Key actors are people or groups that can significantly influence the conflict dynamics.

PQA Table 2: RPP criteria for program goals

	RPP Criteria	Common gaps/ weaknesses or cautions in goals
1	The goal addresses, directly or indirectly, key drivers of conflict or peace.	▪ The goal is not appropriate for conflict context; other goals may be more appropriate. ▪ The goal(s) addresses symptoms or consequences of conflict but not drivers, or it addresses factors of secondary importance.
2	The goal is stated as a desired change.	▪ Intended or expected changes from the effort are not clear. ▪ Goals are stated as activities, outputs or tasks.
3	The goal is specific and realistic for the time frame—neither too broad (a long-term vision) nor too narrow (at the activity level).	▪ Goals are vague, grandiose and "over claim". ▪ Goals are expressed at a vision level. ▪ Goals stated are processes (rather than the outcome of processes) or a series of activities. ▪ Program team is unable to articulate clear benchmarks, indicators or other signs that would help them know if progress is being made.
4	The goal is stated as a desired change in the socio-political realm. If not, there is an explicit longer-term strategy for effecting socio-political level change, or the program makes linkages to the activities of other agencies in the socio-political realm.	▪ The program/project seeks change at the individual-personal level only (attitudes, skills, etc.), and unrealistically "hopes" or assumes that changes at the socio-political will come about. ▪ The program goal at the individual-personal level is appropriate, but linkages to other programs or strategies for follow-on work to move to the socio-political level do not exist. ▪ The program assumes (without context-based evidence or conflict analysis) that a lot of work at the micro (community) level will somehow "add up" to significant changes at higher levels (Peace Writ Large). ▪ Changes desired are not sustainable, big enough in scale or fast enough in this context.
5	The changes contribute to one of the following building blocks for peace: 1. Political institutions that address key drivers of conflict are created or reformed. 2. Locally driven peace initiative/s address (indirectly or directly) key drivers of conflict/peace. 3. People increasingly resist violence and/or provocations to violence. 4. People gain increased security and/or a sense of security. 5. Inter-group relations improve significantly (e.g., group attitudes, public opinion, social norms, public behavior).	▪ Goals aim at individual attitude, skill or behavioral change only. ▪ Teams and/or partners do not agree on the type of change they are pursuing. ▪ Program goals represent meaningful change, but it is not clear how the change might be sustained.

PQA Table 3: RPP criteria regarding overall theory of change

	RPP Criteria	Common gaps/weaknesses or cautions concerning overall theory of change
1	The Overall Theory of Change is explicit, with clear and understandable conceptualization of pathway to change.	▪ The overall theory(ies) of change is implicit, unstated. ▪ It is unclear how the program, if successful, will affect key drivers of conflict or peace. ▪ Theory of change is based on false assumptions about how change comes about in this context.
2	The Overall Theory of Change provides a plausible explanation of how achieving the goal will affect key drivers of conflict or peace.	▪ Programs seek changes that are reasonable in themselves, but will ultimately fail to achieve sustainable peace (e.g., passing a law will not affect conflict drivers because agreement on principles and enforcement mechanisms are not being worked on).
3	The overall Theory of Change is grounded in an understanding of how change happens in this context	▪ Ways in which change processes are different from context to context are not examined when program ideas or approaches from one context are applied in another.

Insight from practice. None of the programs examined under the CDA facilitated EAs and PQAs had been planned according to RPP criteria. One of the PQAs happened shortly after program design, so some of the RPP tools and approaches were introduced as part of a program re-design that happened during the PQA (question remained whether a Program Reflection Exercise would have been more appropriate for that purpose instead of a PQA). As for the others, some of the RPP elements were aligned with other approaches used, or freshly introduced as part of the Assessment Framework. In cases in which RPP principles are new, additional time and a related budget needs to be built in to familiarize participants with the concepts and/or plan time for related capacity development.

Insight from practice. In one of the CDA facilitated PQAs, the CDA facilitator worked with the program team and partners to turn the program goal, which was stated at the macro-level/long-term vision level, into a more realistic, and achievable goal for a 2-year timeframe. This helped clarify program activities and benchmarks for the program, while adopting the macro-level articulation of the objective as the overall and long-term vision of the initiative (so the team felt they were going in the right direction broadly speaking, but now with a clearer understanding of actual program achievements).

PQA Table 4: RPP-based criteria for program strategy and logic

	RPP-Based Criteria	Common gaps/weaknesses in program strategy and logic
1	The activities "add up" to the goal—there is an explicit, rational and plausible link between components of the program (input, output, outcome, impact) that is valid in this context.	▪ Program theory/logic is unclear or not explicit. ▪ Program logic is weak/illogical or based on false assumption about how change comes about. ▪ There are gaps or leaps of logic in the pathway to the goal. ▪ Assumptions about how one change will lead to another (how the program activities will "add up") have not been explored or articulated. ▪ Team members and program partners proceed on very different assumptions about program goals, objectives and change processes. ▪ Programs fail to account for key requirements (e.g., willingness & availability of participants). ▪ Assumptions have not been challenged or thought through.
2	The program makes linkages between activities/changes at the individual/personal level and the socio-political level.	▪ Program activities and changes are exclusively at the individual/personal level (attitudes, skills, relationships), with no strategy to translate these changes to socio-political change (either through follow-up activities or programs, or linkages with other efforts). ▪ Linkages or effects from the individual/personal to the socio-political level based only on "hopes" or assumptions.
3	The program makes linkages between "more people" and "key people".	▪ Program focuses on the "easy to reach" with no strategy for reaching beyond to affect the "hard to reach" or constituencies ignored. ▪ Program has not incorporated strategies for affecting "key people" (if working with "more people") or "more people" (if working with "key people"). ▪ Program works both with "more people" and "key people" and *assumes* linkage that may not occur, i.e. are unrealistic in this context. ▪ Program believes it is working with key people when it is not (e.g., assumes government officials are "key" when they have little influence on the conflict; assumes people key to implementation of the program or to the mission of the agency are "key" to conflict; assumes victims of conflict are key). ▪ Analysis defines entire groups of people (e.g., youth 15-25) as key but does not examine whether it will reach those likely to perpetrate violence.
4	The scale and level of the outputs are reasonable in relation to the intended impacts and the size of the issue in this context.	▪ There is mismatch between scale of goal (e.g., tolerance or reconciliation) and scale and level of output (e.g., number of participants, communities, etc.) ▪ The program is not "big" enough—does not have enough scale to have meaningful influence—and there is no strategy (either within or beyond the program or in conjunction with other efforts) for achieving meaningful scale.

	RPP-Based Criteria	Common gaps/weaknesses in program strategy and logic
5	The program design has accounted for factors that could impede success, including ways social & political systems might resist changes that the program is trying to work towards.	▪ Program has not accounted for how the social and political systems will push back against change efforts. ▪ Program can/does achieve meaningful influence, but it is not clear how changes can/will be sustained—how, why and by whom?
6	The effort relates to other initiatives in the same or related areas of work, in terms of necessary complementarities, linkages or duplication of effort.	▪ Program duplicates other efforts unnecessarily or fails to identify and link to complementary efforts in the same domain.
7	There is an M&E plan or feedback mechanism that will provide timely, accurate and useful information about progress toward desired changes and about assumptions underlying the theory of change.	▪ There is no process in place for monitoring and testing the program logic and ensuring the program is not creating unintended negative effects. ▪ Indicators are unrealistic.

RPP criteria on program strategy combined with other specialized and sector-specific standards

In addition to the application of RPP criteria assess the quality of program strategy, specialized and/or sector-specific standards for the specific type of peacebuilding interventions also need to be considered as part of a PQA - where these exist or can be inferred.

For instance, if the central program methodology involves multi-stakeholder dialogue, there are numerous studies and scholarly articles that posit best practices and norms that can be referenced when assessing a dialogue program. Likewise, programs that focus on electoral violence prevention now can build on various standards and toolboxes. RPP criteria are general to all types of peacebuilding programming and focus on the effectiveness and relevance of the programming more broadly.

PQA Table 5: Inclusion of conflict-sensitivity into program design and implementation

	Do No Harm Criteria	Common gaps/weaknesses in program strategy and logic
1	The program is conflict sensitive—it considers potential unintended negative impacts it might cause.	▪ Program has unintended negative effects. ▪ Program design and/or implementation has not examined common causes of unintended negative effects (the potential negative impacts of choices about program partners, contractors, suppliers, location, distribution of benefits, timing of programming etc.).
2	The initiative is conscious of the impact of its action patterns/resource transfer patterns in five areas: 1. Theft 2. Market Effects 3. Distribution Effects 4. Substitution Effects 5. Legitimization Effects [See **Annex 4**, DNH Action Patterns]	▪ Goods or money intended for distribution of payment is stolen or used by actors in the conflict and/or to support ongoing violence. ▪ Local markets are destroyed, local people are priced out of their own markets. ▪ Uneven distribution of goods and services along conflict lines. ▪ Unintentional weakening of the state's ability to respond and manage conflicts and disaster, and its own development. ▪ Inadvertently legitimizing a government, institution, or leader.
3	The initiative considers unintended negative impacts of the program in its M&E system	▪ M&E systems are not designed to capture the details of how an intervention interacts with the conflict context. ▪ There are few organizational incentives to capture unintended impacts and to act upon those findings.

Insight from practice. Many programs are familiar with risk assessment as part of programming – and many peacebuilding programs assume that they are automatically conflict sensitive. The CDA-led PQAs helped to unpack the distinctions between conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding programming, as they provided a space for conversations about risk management (an entry point for discussions about conflict sensitivity). They also helped clarify the requirements for conflict-sensitive programming and related M&E.

Insight from practice. The CDA-led PQAs and EAs revealed a greater need for capacity development than was initially anticipated. Only a few individuals within those teams and partners had prior exposure to the RPP and DNH approaches and tools, and only a few had in-depth M&E and/or peacebuilding skills. All processes ended up including significant portions of capacity development, which, in some cases, compromised the depth of the actual assessment, as participants were learning the tools at the same time as engaging on the assessments. Some prior training would have been useful, as would have factoring in more time for the assessments given the extensive capacity-development needs.

Key preparation steps for a *Program Quality Assessment* based on RPP criteria

Step 1: Clarify overall purpose of the PQA with the team. Stress the learning aspect, the fact that PQAs are not evaluations. Clarify what will happen with the *results of the process* and how the findings will be used internally, with partners, and possibly with donors. Identify *capacity development needs* on RPP and DNH tools and approaches, as well as M&E of peacebuilding skills as part of the process. Determine how much is realistic to be done in terms of capacity-development as part of the PQA- and what needs to happen separately.

Step 2: Get Senior Management on board with the process and/or to participate (at least in parts of it). Re-confirm availability of budget for the process (staff time, venue, facilitator).

Step 3: Develop TOR for external facilitator and recruit someone with the right skillset – e.g., a mix of M&E, peacebuilding, facilitation, and capacity development skills.

Step 4: Identify *participants* in the PQA: program team, program partners, donors. Partner and donor participation in a PQA is critical, the type of engagement can vary based on context and needs (e.g. workshop with everyone, or workshop with some and bi-lateral interviews and focus groups with others). Clarify *expectations* with the team: an open mind set, active participation, willing to constructively challenge themselves and colleagues, ability to engage with the results and engage in follow-up.

Step 5: PQA Facilitator: Review relevant documents, program monitoring data, and conduct select interviews with program partners and other local stakeholders.

Step 6: Jointly determine with the facilitator whether there are any particular elements of the PQA that should receive a particular focus. Clarify capacity development expectations on RPP and DNH and how they will be addressed through PQA – or a follow-up process. Consult Senior Management on these questions.

Step 7: Logistics: Make sure sufficient time is being set aside for the PQA and that Sr. Management releases staff from other obligations during the exercise. Arrange for a conducive venue – if in the office, ensure people commit to participating (as opposed to being pulled back to their offices to do other work or respond to emails)

Step 8: Conduct PQA through a facilitated workshop with all relevant participants, including additional bi-lateral interviews as needed.

Step 9: Summarize findings from the PQA including a filled-in assessment template (see *Annex 5*), with clear recommendations on how to improve program quality. Develop strategy on how to include into revised program documentation and plan, and how to use as a reference for future exercises of this kind (e.g. updated analysis, reformulated goals or theories of change, RPP Matrix etc.).

Step 10: Develop a follow-up action plan on how to use the findings from the PQAs in an ongoing process of learning, reflection, and program improvement. Determine engagement of partners and donors. Determine future capacity development needs and plans.

5. Evaluability Assessment (EA) – are you ready for an evaluation?

5.1 Overview – Purpose of an Evaluability Assessment

The *purposes* of an evaluability assessment are to:

- determine whether a program can be meaningfully evaluated (is it 'evaluable'?),
- determine the obstacles to an effective and useful evaluation, and how to strengthen the program to increase its evaluability,
- review the coherence and logic of the program,
- clarify data availability (quality and quantity of data available),
- analyze the extent to which program teams and program partners are likely to use the evaluation findings,
- determine capacity and organizational systems' needs in relation to data collection and analysis;
- lay the foundation for adaptive programming and action planning with program teams and partners, with a view towards the impending evaluation,
- inform the design of the impending evaluation, and to
- support strategic and long-term learning.

EAs may be particularly suited for large and complex programs, where it will be helpful to clarify what will be evaluated and how. It allows an external or internal EA facilitator to observe the program in action, engage key stakeholders and to demonstrate the value of evaluative processes and evaluation to key decision-makers and program stakeholders.

Just like PQAs, EAs do not take the place of an evaluation. However, they are useful precursors to evaluations, especially for determining whether an evaluation is worthwhile and feasible, and at what stage of program implementation. Evaluability assessments ask about the plausibility of results in order to assess the plausibility of the theories and assumptions underpinning a program, but do *not* try to evaluate the actual results achieved. An EA also examines whether the program is being implemented as designed, i.e. if the theory and program implementation align and whether the data monitoring systems are appropriate and functioning.

Therefore, an EA should cover the following three elements, as illustrated in the following diagram:[27]

The three elements are best understood as interwoven and interrelated.

The results of an evaluability assessment fall along a spectrum such as the following:[28]
- Fully evaluable;
- Mostly evaluable: can improve;
- Limited evaluability: needs substantial improvement; and
- Not evaluable.

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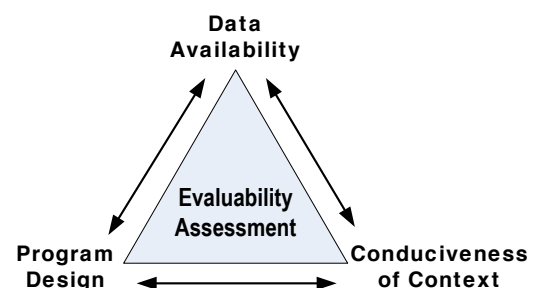
[27] Reimann, Chigas, and Woodrow, *An Alternative to Formal Evaluation of Peacebuilding: Program Quality Assessment*. The three-element approach is similar to that found in (UNIFEM 2009)
[28] See (International Labor Organization 2011)

Clearly, if a program or project was found to be "not evaluable," or not worthy of an evaluation from a peacebuilding perspective (see *Section 5.2*), a full evaluation would not be warranted. If a program has been found to be mostly or fully evaluable, the product of an EA might be a program evaluation proposal or evaluation plan. On the other hand, if the results indicated that the effort had limited evaluability or was mostly evaluable, it might make sense to postpone an evaluation and concentrate instead on strengthening the program in ways the EA process has suggested are needed in order to increase its readiness for evaluation.[29]

Annex 6 provides a check-list for Evaluability Assessments of Peacebuilding Programs based on RPP criteria.

5.2 Key elements of an evaluability assessment based on RPP criteria:

The EA involves a review of key program dimensions and assessment against the following criteria:

1. Strength of program design;
2. Availability of data and information;
3. Conduciveness of the context.

The below table points out key programming dimensions that determine whether an initiative is 'ready for an evaluation' and 'worthy of an evaluation' – from a peacebuilding perspective.

This can be used in conjunction with *Annex 6*, which provides a 'traffic light' checklist in order to determine the level of evaluability of an intervention.

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[29] Reimann, Chigas and Woodrow, *Evaluability Assessments in Peacebuilding Programming*, 5

EA Table 1: Ready for evaluation AND worthy of evaluation (from a peacebuilding perspective)?

Evaluability Rubrics	Program Dimensions		
	Program Design	*Data Availability*	*Contextual Conduciveness*
Ready for evaluation	Clear definition of intended change based on conflict analysis	Capacity to provide data	Adequate security and access
	Thorough stakeholder identification	Repeatable and durable baseline measures	Availability of stakeholders
	Plausible theories of change	SMART outcome indicators	Sufficient resources
	Goals & objectives fit needs (relevance/appropriateness)	Monitoring system linked to decision-making on course corrections or program steering (adaptive programming)	Conflict sensitivity
			Participant buy-in
Worthy of evaluation (from a peacebuilding perspective)	Important & significant initiative (i.e. effect on PWL – based on conflict analysis- or importance to the field of peacebuilding)	Necessary data is obtainable at reasonable costs	Anticipated utility of findings is worth the associated costs

Based on work Mark Rogers did for CDA in 2014, and (Reimann, Chigas and Woodrow 2012b)

The following tables provide key criteria, and examples of common gaps and weaknesses found in many programs.

EA Table 2: Program Design – Evaluability Assessment (Criteria 1)

	Evaluability criteria for peacebuilding programming	Common gaps / Weaknesses in program strategy and logic
1	***Conflict Analysis*** ▪ Is conducted at the beginning of design and throughout program implementation through the integration of the perspectives of multiple stakeholders ▪ Identifies key drivers of conflict, and the relationships and dynamics between stakeholders and key conflict drivers. ▪ Is well documented, updated throughout program implementation, and accessible to the team ▪ Is used as a foundation for programming decisions (analysis – strategy/program link).	▪ No conflict analysis is conducted as the basis for programming. ▪ Only partial analysis is conducted. ▪ Analysis is not updated. ▪ Other types of analysis mistaken as 'conflict analysis'. ▪ Analysis is too general (context analysis), narrow (e.g. only sector specific), or too comprehensive (e.g. not providing information on local level conflict drivers.) ▪ Analysis is biased and does not include a multitude of perspectives from different parts of society. ▪ Analysis is not documented and/or accessible to all relevant team members and program partners. ▪ Analysis is not linked to strategy.
2	***Program Goals*** ▪ Clearly describe the socio-political change that is expected/desired. ▪ Are formulated in a clear and measurable way, are specific and achievable within the described timeframe	▪ Goals are too broad/general, stated at the macro/vision and not program level. ▪ Goals are unclear. ▪ Goals are too ambitious. ▪ Goals are defined as activities, not as desired change. ▪ Goals are not appropriate for the (conflict) context.
3	***Linkages between activities, program goals, and the overall objective/vision***	▪ No explicit links exist or only implicit links exist connecting activities, program goals and the overall vision/Peace Writ Large. ▪ Only 'hope lines' exist (links between activities and outcomes at various levels that are based on assumptions only).
4	***Theories of change (TOCs)*** ▪ Are explicitly articulated ▪ Are clear and realistic	▪ TOCs are implicit and not articulated. ▪ TOCs are not shared within the team and/or with partners. ▪ TOCS are not realistic for the scope of the program. ▪ TOCs are unclear/fuzzy/don't explain how the broader change will be achieved.

Insight from practice. Many programs focus on the 'low hanging fruit' – they work with partners who want to engage (not the 'hard to reach'), and on programmatic areas familiar to the organization. It is equally important to work on what needs to be 'stopped' – key conflict drivers and dynamics identified in the conflict analysis that nurture the conflict on an ongoing basis – ongoing social exclusion, inter-ethnic tensions, mistrust etc. Hence, it is critical to base program design and theories of change on the outcomes of the conflict analysis to ensure relevance.

EA Table 3: Data Availability – Evaluability Assessment (Criteria 2)

Evaluability criteria for peacebuilding programs	Common evaluability gaps and weaknesses
1 **Theories of change (TOCs)** ▪ Are explicitly articulated ▪ Are clear and realistic	▪ TOCs are implicit and not articulated. ▪ TOCs are not shared within the team and/or partners. ▪ TOCs are not realistic for the scope of the program. ▪ TOCs are unclear/fuzzy/don't explain how the broader change will be achieved. ▪ "Theories of change" in design do not match "theories in use" – an EA serves the purpose of revealing whether there are gaps between what was designed and what is being implemented.
2 **Baselines** ▪ Are completed, based on conflict analysis ▪ Are adapted to the context, e.g. recognizing volatility in conflict contexts	▪ Baselines are not based on findings from conflict analysis. ▪ Baselines are incomplete. ▪ Baseline's not defined in a way that would allow for monitoring of changes in the broader conflict context.
3 **Program Monitoring System** ▪ Is established with clear responsibilities within and across program teams ▪ Is set up to inform changes in programming and support flexible programming ▪ Measures broader changes in conflict context ▪ Monitors unintended impacts of the program.	▪ Monitoring Systems are considered only a function of program management and donor accountability– not as a key element of adaptive and flexible programming in conflict contexts. ▪ Insights from monitoring do not inform decision-making and program changes. ▪ Aggregated analysis of monitoring data flawed or non-existent. Trends analysis not communicated to key decision-makers in timely and actionable way. ▪ Monitoring system only monitors direct program results, and not larger impacts on conflict context. ▪ Monitoring system does not measure unintended (negative) impacts (conflict sensitivity).
4 **Indicators** ▪ Are clear, realistic and measurable ▪ Are qualitative and quantitative ▪ Meets SMART[30] criteria, especially at the outcome level ▪ Express the broader change in the conflict context that the program intends to achieve ▪ Are set up to measure conflict sensitivity considerations	▪ Indicators are not designed based on SMART criteria (especially at the outcome level). ▪ Indicators are unrealistic, un-measurable or unclear. ▪ No indicators exist. ▪ Only quantitative indicators. ▪ Are not designed to capture the broader change on the conflict context. ▪ Do not take into account measurement of unintended (negative) impacts (conflict sensitivity).
5 **Access to stakeholders** ▪ For program data verification ▪ For ongoing feed-back from program participants and partners	▪ No access to program partners and other local stakeholders. ▪ Only access to the 'easy to reach'. ▪ No mechanisms in place to creatively manage remote implementation scenarios.

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[30] SMART= specific, measurable, achievable/attainable, result-oriented, and time-bound. For more background on SMART indicators see http://dmeforpeace.org/sites/default/files/3.9%20Indicators.pdf

Evaluability criteria for peacebuilding programs	Common evaluability gaps and weaknesses
▪ To assess broader changes in the conflict context and possible unintended (negative) impacts ▪ To jointly agree on program changes and adaption	▪ No ongoing feed-back mechanisms in place with partners and stakeholders.

EA Table 4: Conduciveness of the context – Evaluability Assessment (Criteria 3)

Evaluability criteria for peacebuilding programs	Common evaluability gaps and weaknesses
1 General conditions are favorable (weather, security, availability of stakeholders, current political events etc.)	▪ Limited access b/c of weather or security risks. ▪ Current political climate and/or events impede access. ▪ Restricted access to program partners and/or local stakeholders
2 Financial resources available to conduct evaluation, including logistics	▪ Evaluation planned as an 'afterthought' and not as a key element of the program, leading to limited resources being available. ▪ Limited financial resources impact the range of stakeholders being consulted (e.g. in remote locations).
3 Available staff capacities to participate in, shape, and follow-up on an evaluation	▪ Limited staff awareness about key elements needed to make peacebuilding programs evaluable (conflict analysis, DNH principles, basis criteria of strategy design and program logic, theories of change etc.). ▪ No capacity to follow-up on implementation of evaluation findings.
4 Commitment/Internally driven process	▪ Both EAs and evaluations often donor-driven, or driven by Sr. Management without buy-in from staff. ▪ Partners not involved. ▪ Understanding of what an EA or evaluation is, and how the findings will be used vary and impact the success of the EA or evaluation.
5 Evaluation process designed in a conflict-sensitive manner	▪ Conflict-sensitive/DNH principles are not applied to the design of the EA or the evaluation process, e.g. in relation to timing, who is involved/selection of interviewees, location of EA and/or evaluation etc.

Key preparation steps for an *Evaluability Assessment* for peacebuilding programs

Step 1: Clarify overall purpose of the EA with the program team and management. Clarify what will happen with the **results of the process** and how the findings will be used internally, with partners, and possibly with donors. Identify **capacity development needs** on RPP and DNH tools, on M&E of peacebuilding, and approaches as part of the process. Determine how much capacity development can be done as part of the EA – and what needs to be achieved in a separate process.

> More resources on *ethical and conflict-sensitivity questions in relation to formal evaluations*:
>
> → dmeforpeace.org/evaluation under "What are ethical and conflict-sensitivity issues in evaluation, and how do I manage them?"

Step 2: Clarify the type of evaluation that the EA precedes.

Step 3: Get Senior Management on board with the process and/or to participate (at least in parts of it). Re-confirm availability of budget for the process (staff time, venue, facilitator).

Step 3: Develop TOR for external facilitator and recruit someone with the right skillset – i.e., mix of M&E, peacebuilding, facilitation, and capacity development skills.

Step 4: Identify **participants** in the EA: team, partners, donors. Program partners and local partners need to be engaged with a certain level of independence. Engage program staff and partners in articulating EA questions to build ownership and capacity. Clarify **expectations** with the team: an open mindset, active participation, willing to constructively challenge themselves and colleagues, ability to engage with the results and engage in follow-up.

Step 5: EA Facilitator: Review relevant documents, program M&E system, available program data.

Step 6: Jointly determine with the facilitator whether there are any elements of the EA that should receive a particular focus. Clarify capacity development expectations on RPP and DNH and how they will be addressed through EA – or a follow-up process. Consult Senior Management on these questions.

Step 7: Logistics: Make sure sufficient time is being set aside for the EA and that Sr. Management releases staff from other obligations during the exercise. Arrange for a conducive venue – if in the office, ensure people commit to participating (as opposed to being pulled back to their offices to do other work or respond to emails).

Step 8: Conduct EA through a two-step process: i) individual interviews conducted independently (e.g., as would be done for an evaluation), and (ii) facilitated workshop with all relevant participants, including team, partners and donors to review the three key areas of an EA (program design, data availability, and conduciveness of context).

Step 9: Summarize findings from EA including a filled-in EA check-list (see *Annex 6*)

Step 10: Develop strategy and implementation plan on how to use findings from EA: Is the program ready for a formal evaluation? For what type of evaluation and when? If not, which program elements need to be strengthened for the program to become ready? Determine engagement of partners and donors. Determine future capacity development needs and plans.

Insight from practice. Clarifying the purpose of the assessment process and how the results will be used is critical. Often, program teams and program partners are hesitant to discuss difficulties in program strategy and implementation – and there is significant fear within teams about making mistakes. This is a challenge especially in organizations that do not have an explicit culture of learning or adaptive practice – or other types of staff incentives that are contrary to a learning culture. There might be fear of negative repercussions, or negative reactions from donors if challenges are discussed openly. Ensuring that teams (including local partners) understand that the focus of these assessments is on learning and not on accountability is critical. Senior Management buy-in to communicate the process of how findings will be used, including related follow-up processes with both program staff and program partners, is critical in this regard. All of these options require strong support from the team and local partners, and should not be conducted if there is major uncertainty about the purpose and/or nature of the exercise.

6. Strategy and Program Reflection Exercise

6.1 Overview – Purpose of a Strategy/Program Reflection Exercise

Compared to a Program Quality Assessment or Evaluability Assessment, a Strategy or Program Reflection Exercise is often a more informal and internal process that can be conducted at pretty much any moment of program design and implementation.

The purposes of a Strategy and Program Reflection Exercise are to:

- improve specific elements of program strategy, design, and implementation,
- maximize potential for program to contribute to Peace Writ Large, and to
- contribute to a common understanding within the team, and possibly program partners, about key elements of effective and relevant peacebuilding programming.

6.2 Key steps of the Strategy and Program Reflection Exercise based on RPP criteria

Reflection Exercise Steps	Possible implications of this step during Strategy and/or Program Design	Possible implications of this step during Implementation
Step 1: Review conflict analysis	Do more analysis if conclusion is that conflict analysis is not good enough. Possibly adapt program design if context has changed recently.	Update conflict analysis and possibly modify strategy and activities if context has changed.
Step 2: Review program goal	Possibly modify program goal (and related activities).	Review and possibly modify goal-activity alignment (is the program making progress towards the goal?). Possible goal re-designed (e.g. in changing context)?
Step 3: Identify program activities, intended changes, and theories of change	Joint articulation of key components of the program (activities, theories of change). Validate assumptions and joint approach.	Take stock of possible differences between design and implementation: are there differences and why, does the team have the same understanding?
Step 4: Plot the program goal, activities, and changes onto the RPP matrix	Design program strategy using the RPP matrix.	Review program strategy and possibly update it using the RPP matrix.
Step 5: Assess the program's theories of change	Develop realistic theories of change; reveal underlying assumptions within the team and with partners.	Review & possibly modify theories of change
Step 6: Explore program logic	Define and test design logic.	Review and possibly adapt program logic.
Step 7: Assess conflict-sensitive design and/or implementation of the engagement	Design conflict sensitivity mechanisms for the engagement.	Review whether existing conflict sensitivity mechanisms are working and appropriate, or whether adaption is required.
Step 8: Reflect & recommend changes in program design and/or implementation	Agree on design changes and related responsibilities, involving team, partners, and donors.	Agree on changes required and related responsibilities, involving team, partners, and donors.

Not every program needs to examine all these steps. Determine whether all steps need to be performed, or which ones should be selected. The below section illustrates key questions that program teams and partners can use to reflect on each of the above steps.

<u>Reflection Exercise – Step 1: Review the conflict analysis</u>

Program design and periodic review should be based on an up-to-date conflict analysis. This step is aimed at ensuring the "relevance" of the program—that is, whether it is working on the right issue with the right people at the right time using an appropriate methodology.

- Is the available analysis current (within a few months)? Has the situation changed significantly since previous analyses? Is the available analysis in fact a general 'context' analysis rather than a conflict analysis?

- Does the analysis identify the key driving factors of conflict (both issues and people)? [*As a reminder: Key driving factors are factors without which the conflict would not exist or would be significantly different. Key actors are people or groups that can significantly influence the conflict dynamics*.]

- Does the analysis explore or depict the relationships among factors and/or among factors and actors?

- Does the analysis identify actual or potential factors for peace? What are the forces in the situation that can be built upon to promote movement towards peace? What connects people across conflict lines? Who exercises leadership for peace and how?

- What needs to change? Who or what needs to change to transform a negative and destructive dynamic into a more constructive one? Does the analysis identify what must absolutely be stopped or reduced before peace efforts have a chance to make an impact?

- Does the analysis consider past and ongoing efforts at peace, and what can or must be learned from their perceived effectiveness—or lack thereof?

- Does the analysis suggest possible points of leverage to create change in conflict dynamics? Given the nature of your organization, what do you see as points of leverage, and why? To effect change, will your efforts alone be sufficient, or do they need to be supported and complemented by other efforts? If so, by whom?

- If the program is already being implemented: Has an updated conflict analysis been performed? Does the basic approach or program focus need to change as a result?

> ***Whose Analysis?*** A joint process of conflict analysis and related reflection with the team and program partners helps to establish a common understanding about the key drivers of conflict – and where there might be differences within the team and with partners on what the specific conflict dynamics are, and how that difference in understanding might impact program design and implementation. Often, differences in vision about the larger change a program intends to achieve (working towards Peace Writ Large) is based on a lack of systematic, and shared analysis – even though people often assume 'they are on the same page', when they actually have a different understanding of 'the problem'. Agreeing on the unit of analysis is equally important: do team and partners need a broad macro-level view of national conflict dynamics or is the analysis of a sub-region more important? Would a systemic conflict analysis help to re-assess and re-confirm leverage points for change and programmatic entry points?

Reflection Exercise – Step 2: Review the program goal

Program goals should be articulated as intended changes at an appropriate level of ambition!

- Is the program goal, as stated, 'robust'? Is it change-oriented, realistic, time conscious?

- Is the program goal too general (at the long-term vision level) or too ambitious (over-claiming)? Or is the program goal too specific—that is, is it more like an activity?

- How does the program goal relate to the dynamics of conflict and peace as analyzed? If there is no apparent link to the key drivers of conflict and peace, the program may be worthwhile, but will not have a peacebuilding impact.

- If the program goal envisions change at the local level or of a non-critical component of the conflict and peace dynamics (peace writ little), how might it create linkages to wider peace at the societal level (Peace Writ Large) in the particular context?

- If the program goal is stated as 'a contribution to [an element of peace]', is it clear how it will make such a contribution and how to observe or measure it?

- Does the program goal seek changes at the socio-political level? Peace efforts that focus only on change at the individual-personal level and do not link those efforts to change at the socio-political level will have no discernible impact on peace.

- How does the program goal relate to any of the RPP Building Blocks for Peace ('Criteria of Effectiveness')?

- If a program is already being implemented: Is the program making reasonable progress towards the goal? What kind of feedback (monitoring data) indicates such progress? Is the goal still appropriate—or has the situation changed significantly, requiring redesign?

> ***The Moving Goal Post.*** Often there are different views within a program team (including international staff, local staff, partners, local stakeholders) on what the program goal is– and how best to achieve it. A deliberate process of joint reflection and goal articulation helps to put different understandings on the table and to develop consensus on a realistic and achievable goal within the available scope of work. Input and guidance from those with an in-depth understanding of the local context is critical.

Reflection Exercise - Step 3: Identify the program activities, intended changes and theories of change

This step uses the RPP program planning chart showing activities, expected changes, theory of change, and other assumptions (see *Annex 3*).

- In the top row of the chart, enter the goal/objective of the program/project and the associated overall theory of change at this level.

- Identify five or six key activities in this project/program? Enter them in the first column of the program planning chart.

- In the other columns, identify the actual or expected change from each individual activity, as well as the theory of change and other assumptions associated with the activity.

Reflection Exercise - Step 4: Use the RPP Matrix to assess program strategy: Plot the program goal, activities, and changes onto the RPP matrix (see *Annexes 2.1* and *2.2*)

- Start with locating the goal on the RPP matrix. Is it at the Individual/Personal level of change, or the Socio-Political level? Is it more in the realm of 'More People' or 'Key People'?

- Plot the program activities and their intended changes onto the matrix. Use different visual identifications for 'activities' and 'changes'. (Note: for a program already being implemented,

completed activities and actual results can be plotted, as well as further planned activities and expected results.)

Reflection Exercise - Step 5: Analyze the program's theories of change

Analyzing the program theory of change will help to see how the conflict analysis is connected to the program goal, and ultimately, to Peace Writ Large. It will also help the team, partners, and donors see whether the initiative is on its way to contributing to Peace Writ Large beyond the life of program, and whether there are any assumptions made that would need to be addressed in the program strategy.

- Are the theories of change appropriate and realistic in the context? Will change come about in the ways envisioned as a result of the planned activities?

- How would successful achievement of the program goal make a significant contribution to the realization of Peace Writ Large? What is the theory of change at this level?

- If the program is already being implemented: Have the activities completed so far resulted in the expected changes? Are there any unexpected positive or negative outcomes? Are the theories of change proving viable in the context—or is rethinking indicated?

> ***Activity Disharmony.*** Staff and program partners often work toward an agreed-upon goal in surprisingly different ways. This compromises program quality and causes friction within a team, and possibly confusion with partners and with donors. Often, the underlying reason is a different understanding of theories of change. Articulating the different assumptions team members, partners, other local stakeholders, and donors make on how to achieve the envisaged change helps teams and all partners involved move in a similar direction.
>
> ***The Business as Usual Trap.*** Many programs are excellent at implementing certain strategies. But often the work has taken on a "cookie cutter" pattern, whereby different problems are all tackled via similar strategies and activities (e.g. dialogue efforts as a 'recipe' for everything), rather than being addressed by tailored interventions specific to the 'problem' or the context-specific conflict driver. Reviewing the underlying analysis and related key drivers of conflict, as well as using the RPP Matrix to reveal assumptions, linkages (and the lack thereof) in program logic helps to reveal how the program can be made more relevant to the conflict context. Inclusion of local partners in this process is critical.

Reflection Exercise - Step 6: Explore the program logic

This section uses the RPP program planning chart, and the RPP Matrix together (*Annexes 3* and *4*). In addition to reviewing the theory of change associated with individual activities in the previous step, it is important to make sure that the overall program will add up to the intended goal.

- Examine the logic between the activities and the goal. Would achievement of the activities lead to the goal? Is anything missing?

- Are there unexamined assumptions underlying the links between the different activities, such as willingness, availability, external events etc.?

- What kinds of obstacles might the project encounter in its implementation? Who/what might get in the way?

- Are "hope lines" revealed on the Matrix or in the logic presented in the Four-Column Chart? ("Hope lines" are leaps in logic or gaps between activities and desired results—depicted on the Matrix by dotted lines.) How might hope lines be converted to desired changes?

- ***If the program is already being implemented:*** Is the program on track to achieve its goal/objective? Have new gaps in program logic or other obstacles appeared during

implementation, requiring adjustments in the future planned activities or a new approach?

Reflection Exercise - Step 7: Assessing conflict-sensitive design and/or implementation of the initiative. Is the initiative aware of the actual or potential unintended negative impacts it might cause?

- Has the program design examined common causes of unintended negative effects, such as e.g. the choice of program partners, contractors, suppliers, location of the engagement, distribution of benefits, timing of the programming?

- Does the initiative consider conflict-sensitivity considerations (mainly possible unintended negative impacts) in its M&E system?

- Do staff and partners have skills in conflict-sensitive program implementation and/or been trained in Do No Harm approaches?

> *The peacebuilding and conflict-sensitivity confusion*. Often, there is an assumption that all peacebuilding programming that focuses on addressing key drivers of conflict directly is automatically conflict sensitive. This is not the case. In any type of programming, be it development, humanitarian, or peacebuilding, the details of an intervention matter from a conflict sensitivity perspective. The actions and behaviors within programs, as well as programs themselves can have significant unintended negative consequences and impacts on the conflict context. It's important to consider critical program details such as choice of partners, location, timing, or choices within procurement and human resources.

Reflection Exercise - Step 8: Reflect and recommend changes in program design and/or implementation

The fundamental purpose of this reflection exercise is to strengthen program design or to encourage changes in direction or implementation.

- What insights have you gained regarding this program? What challenges have been raised?

- Based on the previous steps and associated reflections, how might this program or its continuation be strengthened or its concepts further elaborated?

- Does this program need to link more actively with other agencies, with other efforts? Which ones and why?

- Reflect on other dimensions of this program, considering the context and what you know about the peace efforts of other actors/agencies:

- Is this program 'big' enough, does it have enough 'scale' to be able to have some meaningful influence? Why?

- Is this program moving at the right pace, not too fast and not too slow? Why?

- If this program achieves meaningful influence and impact, can this be sustained? Why and by whom?

- If you are proposing changes to the program design or implementation process, are you confident that the redesigned program will indeed be stronger or more effective? Why?

- Will it be necessary to seek approval for program design changes from others in the organization or from a primary donor? What will be the best strategy for gaining donor approval for changes?

- Finally, assess this Reflection Exercise itself from a process perspective. What was helpful or not so helpful? What suggestions would you make for improving the process?

Key preparation steps for a *Strategy/Program Reflection Exercise* based on RPP criteria

Step 1: Clarify overall ***purpose*** of the reflection exercise with the team. Stress the ***learning*** aspect of a strategy/program reflection exercise – they are not assessments or evaluations. Clarify what will happen with the ***results of the process*** and how the findings will be used internally, with partners, and possibly with donors. Identify ***capacity development needs*** on RPP and DNH tools and approaches, as well as M&E in peacebuilding tools, as part of the process. Determine how much capacity development can be done as part of the Strategy/Program Reflection exercise.

Step 2: Get ***Senior Management*** on board with the process and/or to participate (at least in parts of it). Re-confirm available ***budget*** – costs for staff time, venue (possibly).

Step 3: Nominate ***facilitator*** and clarify his/her role & TOR (in most cases an internal facilitator, but can be external). Clarify information needs of the facilitator before the Reflection Exercise (documents, bi-lateral conversations etc.)

Step 4: Identify ***participants*** in the Strategy/Program Reflection exercise: team, partners, donors. Program reflection exercises might be best conducted with the team internally if there are significant gaps in understanding of the overall program within the team, different theories of change etc. Inclusion of local partners and stakeholders, on the other hand, is critical for a nuanced understanding of the context, overall advice on feasibility of the program, and development of a joint vision between program staff and program partners. It needs to be determined in a context-specific way what level of donor engagement is desired – e.g., participation of donors in parts of the process after the team has had an opportunity to discuss internally and with their local partners. Clarify ***expectations*** with the team: an open mindset, active participation, willing to challenge themselves and colleagues constructively, able to engage with the results and engage in follow-up.

Step 5: Reflection Exercise Facilitator and program team: ***Review relevant program documentation***.

Step 6: Determine (jointly between facilitator, team and partners) which elements of the program might require specific attention during the Strategy/Program Reflection Exercise. ***Clarify capacity development expectations*** on RPP and DNH and how they will be addressed through the strategy/program reflection process – or a follow-up process. Consult Sr. Management on this question.

Step 7: Arrange for conducive ***logistics:*** Make sure sufficient time is being set aside for the exercise and that Sr. Management releases staff from other obligations during the exercise. Arrange for a conducive venue – if in the office, ensure people commit to participating (as opposed to being pulled back to their offices to do other work or respond to emails)

Step 8: Conduct Reflection Exercise through a facilitated workshop with all relevant participants, including additional bi-lateral interviews as needed.

Step 9: Summarize findings from the Reflection Exercise in a short, action-oriented format. Capture key outcomes from the workshop to feed into revised program documentation and as a reference for future exercises of this kind (e.g. updated analysis, reformulated goals or theories of change, RPP Matrix etc.).

Step 10: Develop a follow-up action plan on how to use the findings from the Reflection Exercise. In an ongoing process of learning, reflection, and program improvement. Determine engagement of partners and donors. Determine future capacity development needs and plans.

> More information on *preparation steps for formal evaluation, by means of comparison*:
>
> → dmeforpeace.org/evaluation-planning

7. Adaptive Peacebuilding Programming through Effective Feedback Loops

Across the international aid sector, there is a growing interest in evaluative thinking and feedback loops. There is also an increasing commitment to engage frontline staff, local partners, community members and program participants as "users" of data, information and lessons. As reflective practitioners, if we truly strive for rapid feedback and learning cycles, we need skills to be able to think in critical ways about what we do, and observe and learn in the course of designing and implementing programs and initiatives. Listening broadly and intentionally, and soliciting local analysis and feedback are all critical requirements for organizations supporting local peacebuilding efforts. An effective feedback process goes beyond collecting participant satisfaction data using pre-determined questions. Well-designed and context-appropriate feedback processes provide an opportunity to regularly engage key program constituents in evaluative conversations about the assumptions that underpin interventions, to question the validity of these assumptions and programmatic choices and to offer suggestions for program quality improvement during implementation and evaluation phases.

CDA's research on **effective feedback loops** and factors that enable **feedback utilization**[31] has produced case studies and evidence-based practical guidance to assist donors and operational agencies in the humanitarian and development fields. CDA has identified several problems that apply equally to the peacebuilding field:

- There are frequently missed opportunities for engaging local people, not only through listening to their perspectives, but also by engaging them in analysis of feedback and identification of program changes.

- Staff and local partners often need enhanced individual skills in active listening, appreciative inquiry, and data analysis.

- Skills and processes are not enough; institutional structures, decision making that incorporates feedback, management support and incentives are necessary.

- Increased use of technology can support sustained and real-time feedback loops, often as one element of an M&E system. But technology does not address literacy levels, culturally appropriate monitoring/ feedback processes, language, and who is engaged and who is left out (by gender, age, elites vs. marginal/vulnerable status, etc.)

In 2016-2017, CDA is collaborating with peacebuilding organizations to document effective practices with feedback and how it supports adaptive programming through improved monitoring and evaluation practice.

Feedback mechanisms can serve as a powerful means to support evaluative processes such as Evaluability and Program Quality Assessments. For peacebuilding programs, feedback loops broadly serve two main purposes: **program quality improvement** and **participatory context monitoring**.

Program quality improvement: Solicited and unsolicited feedback can be gathered to inform real-time program improvements and adaptation. To this end, feedback is sought on the quality and appropriateness of program interventions, staff performance and program results. Feedback is gathered as part of routine monitoring processes or by establishing additional, accessible and confidential feedback

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[31] "Effectively Utilizing Feedback," CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, http://cdacollaborative.org/cdaproject/effectively-utilizing-feedback/.

channels. Such practices have become commonplace in many humanitarian operations, particularly the use of complaints response and grievance mechanisms.[32] Challenges remain in active conflict areas where restricted access and security concerns prohibit regular communication channels.

In addition to feedback on program quality, local views can be sought on broader, strategic areas to inform strategy review for programs, sectors or country specific policies. Both program-level and strategy-level feedback loops require an intentional and purposeful approach to feedback collection, acknowledgement, analysis and making sense of data, opinions and perceptions. Program Quality Assessments can benefit from this additional data collection method. PQA facilitators can examine accumulated feedback gathered on program quality and use formal and informal feedback channels to gather additional perceptions from a wider range of stakeholders, to include informed observers.

Participatory context monitoring. Organizations seeking to identify unintended and unanticipated effects of their programs need to establish feedback channels and practices that reach beyond their target program participants. This is particularly true when over-reliance on indicator-based methodologies can result in oversight of dynamic changes in the context and a program's effects on the local context. Well-functioning feedback mechanisms can capture and respond to real-time information about unintended impacts of programs on inter-group and intra-group relations and avoid doing harm.

A functioning feedback loop goes beyond feedback collection and analysis. It requires a response and/or corrective action, in other words -- the closing of the loop.[33] Ultimately, for feedback loops to be effective, the feedback needs to be utilized in decision-making and evaluative processes.

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[32] See (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2011)
[33] See (Bonino, Jean and Knox-Clarke 2014) and (Bonino, Jean and Knox-Clarke 2014b)

8. Summary Overview of Options covered in this Guide

The Guide provides a select menu of three options for reviewing and strengthening of peacebuilding interventions, namely:

1. Program Quality Assessments;
2. Evaluability Assessments;
3. Strategy and Program Reflection Exercises.

The table on the next two pages provides an overview of the objectives, characteristics, purposes and benefits of each option.

Comparison of characteristics of the Strategy and Program Reflection Exercise, PQA, and EA vis-à-vis Evaluation

	Strategy and Program Reflection Exercise	Program Quality Assessment (PQA)	Evaluability Assessment (EA)	Evaluation (not covered in this Guide)
Purpose(s)	▪ Improve specific elements of program strategy or design ▪ Maximize potential for program to contribute to Peace Writ Large ▪ Contribute to a common understanding within the team (and possibly with partners) about key elements of effective and relevant peacebuilding programming.	▪ Learn about quality of program design ▪ Adapt/improve program design and implementation through application of a clear set of professional standards and criteria ▪ Maximize potential for program to contribute to Peace Writ Large.	▪ Assess whether a program is ready for a formal evaluation ▪ Identify areas for improvement in (specifically) data collection, program logic, and support evaluation planning.	▪ Identify and assess worth of results/outcomes of program ▪ Learn about quality and value of program, including areas and options for improvement (if formative evaluation) ▪ Fulfill obligations of accountability (to donors, to participants, communities, or organizations, etc.)
Timing	▪ During program/design phase ▪ At key moments during implementation.	▪ Mid-term ▪ Limited use at the beginning of program, but can be used to validate theories of change and program strategy with teams and program partners ▪ Possibly useful at end of a project to draw lessons for future engagement.	▪ Before a formal evaluation - ideally once it is known what type of evaluation will be conducted ▪ Mid-term review stage to identify areas for improvement before conducting an evaluation.	▪ At end of project or program (summative) or ▪ Mid-term (formative, developmental) or ▪ Throughout (developmental)
Assessment Criteria	▪ Not an 'assessment' ▪ RPP and Do No Harm concepts and tools related to impacts on Peace Writ Large and conflict-sensitive design & implementation.	▪ Quality and use of conflict analysis in programming ▪ Articulation of program goals ▪ Theory/ies of change ▪ Program strategy & logic ▪ Strength of M&E system – relevance from a peacebuilding perspective ▪ Application of conflict sensitivity.	▪ Quality of program design ▪ Conduciveness of context ▪ Data availability.	▪ OECD DAC evaluation criteria (impact, relevance, sustainability, efficiency, and effectiveness) ▪ Contextually-relevant standards of achievement set by program/project
Data Needs	▪ Relies on knowledge and experience of participants ▪ General understanding of the overall (conflict) context is important.	▪ Relies on program's monitoring data, document review and some interviews with program team and partners. ▪ Publicly available relevant data (e.g., violence statistics, or external conflict analyses).	▪ Reviews the availability of data, including baselines (based on conflict analysis) ▪ Reviews strength of M&E systems, relevance of collected data, access to stakeholders to collect data. ▪ Checklists and simple presence/absence tests. ▪ Testing, small scale sampling without regard to generalizability	▪ Standards for data collection/methodology are followed ▪ Triangulation of evidence sought. ▪ Mixed methods where feasible.

	Strategy and Program Reflection Exercise	Program Quality Assessment (PQA)	Evaluability Assessment (EA)	Evaluation (not covered in this Guide)
Who conducts	▪ In most cases internal facilitator ▪ External facilitator recommended if no internal facilitation skills available.	▪ In most cases, external facilitator with substantive knowledge of program area, program assessment experience, and facilitation skills. ▪ If internal facilitator (e.g. team member of program partner) is chosen (self-assessment), person needs a certain level of independence in addition to the right skill set.	▪ Ideally external facilitator in close coordination with program teams and Senior management. ▪ Internal facilitation possible.	▪ External evaluator with evaluation expertise and credentials and understanding of the program area. ▪ Self-evaluation using same skills, standards and techniques as other evaluations also possible depending on purpose. ▪ Blended external/internal evaluators; Program team; Senior management; Program participants; Subject matter experts; Program partners; Donors; Host government stakeholders; Spoilers; Other stakeholders.
Who Participates in the process	Program team; Senior Management; Possibly program partners; Possibly an external facilitator; Donor(s).	Facilitator (external or internal); Program team; Senior Management; Program Partners; Donor(s).	Program team; External or internal facilitator; Senior Management; Program Partners, Donor(s).	Program team; Senior Management; Program Partners; Donor(s); Blended external/internal evaluators; Senior management; Subject matter experts; Host government stake holders; Other stakeholders.
Level of Capacity building	Knowledge about basic RPP and DNH concepts required, and often built into process to some extent	Capacity building is an integral element—those implementing findings of quality assessments are supported on how to apply the assessment's findings. Critical to determine how much capacity dev. is needed by the team and program partners as part of PQA. Some capacity building on approaches and tools for M&E of peacebuilding might also be required.	Capacity building and knowledge transfer on RPP and DNH approaches not a required element, but are often necessary to apply the assessment criteria in a process with the team and program partners. Some capacity building on approaches and tools for M&E of peacebuilding might also be required.	▪ Capacity building is not an element in most cases. ▪ Learning is an important component of evaluations, ideally contributing to the capacities of staff. In many cases, there is not sufficient time built into evaluations to fulfil this purpose. ▪ Capacity building component more pronounced in internal evaluations.
Resources required	Limited: resources to cover staff time, venue and partner participation, and, where there is external facilitator, fees for his/her services.	Medium: resources to cover staff time + interviews, facilitator, venue	Medium as these are usually short duration: resources to cover staff time, and facilitator, resources for facilitation.	▪ Medium to High: resources for evaluator/evaluation team to design and implement rigorous data collection and analysis process. ▪ High for large external evaluation. ▪ Medium for blended team ▪ Limited - medium for self-evaluation depending on the evaluation questions and data collection methodology.
Benefit of this modality versus others	More informal process that can be conducted more frequently, is less expensive when external facilitation is omitted.	Strengthens the capacity of teams and program partners to improve program quality on an ongoing basis.	If findings are used and addressed, EA has the potential to significantly improve a future evaluation.	Independent evaluation and external assessment; credibility vis-a-vis donors

9. Recommendations for practice

Even though decisions to conduct RPP infused Strategy/Program Reflection Exercises, Program Quality and/or Evaluability Assessment can be taken ad-hoc, it is generally advisable to plan for such processes as part of an agreement of program management steps as part of the overall planning and programming cycle. The following recommendations are focused on designing processes for the options dealt with in this resource:

RECOMMENDATION 1: Be clear about the purpose and timing of the RPP-infused Strategy/Program Reflection Exercise, EA or PQA as well as how the process fits into a larger plan for program improvement, including staff and partner capacity development.

Before any engagement is planned, the right process needs to be determined and expectations within the team and with program partners needs to be clear (see *Table 3*).

Some teams might be ready or have a clear need for assessing their programs against clear peacebuilding program quality criteria (PQA), others might benefit from a more informal Strategy/Program Reflection Exercise, while others need to get ready for an evaluation and benefit most from an EA. Whatever the final choice is, teams need to be comfortable with the requirements and conditions for each option as outlined in this resource.

One key consideration is how ready teams and program partners are to jump into any of these options right away without prior exposure to RPP and DNH tools. Some teams might be able to do this and pick up on some of the tools as they go through a Reflection Exercise, PQA or EA. Other teams might be best advised to conduct some training, also jointly with local partners, or at least exposure before any of the modalities are chosen. It is also critical to reflect on how each of the modalities will work, based on the tools used during program design – e.g. if no conflict analysis was done, what are the options for e.g. a PQA? If different types of program strategy tools were used, how do they align with the RPP-infused processes?

RECOMMENDATION 2: Evaluative processes need to be integrated into organizational policies and processes, such as the planning and programming cycles, and adequate financial resources need to be allocated.

Evaluative processes need to become part of regular organizational routine. For this to happen, organizations need senior management decisions and adequate priority setting. They need to identify existing institutional capacities for the facilitation of evaluative processes and reach out for external support when necessary. Documenting the lessons and iterative program adaptation steps are useful from an institutional learning and memory perspective and can be a rich source of data for external evaluations when these take place.

Integrating evaluative processes from the beginning is also critical from a ***financial perspective***: if any of the outlined options in this resource came in only as an 'afterthought' when budgets had already been allocated and spent, possibilities for any of these options become much more limited. Clear ***allocation of a dedicated budget*** (staff time, costs for external facilitator, meeting venue, logistics and travel within country etc.) is a requirement.

The below figure (CDA, 2016) demonstrates one scenario for sequencing the different evaluative options: this is one way a program could integrate each of the options into its program reflection, learning and improvement cycle.

Conflict Analysis
(in the begining and throughout the programming cycle)

Phase: Evaluation
Is formal evaluation required & appropriate?

Phase: Program Design
Include evaluative thinking from the begining; Possible strategy/program reflection exercise early on

Evaluability Assessment

Phase: Program Implementation
Strategy/Program Reflection Exercise (PQA)

Phase: Mid-term Review
Strategy/Program Reflection Exercise (PQA)

RECOMMENDATION 3: Senior management buy-in, partner and donor engagement are critical.

It is critical to get *Senior Management* and **donor buy-in** to support the integration of evaluative tools into peacebuilding programs. Any evaluative process is of limited value if perceived only as a technical exercise driven by the implementation team. Follow-up to any of the evaluative processes needs to be ensured and must be supported by *Senior Management*, including difficult decisions about course correction and strategy review. Some *donors* are already leading on the promotion of evaluative approaches, but there is a need for more work with others. This could include close engagement between donors regarding relevant evaluative approaches, as well as closer engagement of donors regarding the integration of OECD/DAC criteria into policies and program guidance.

Insight from practice. A strong program management team committed to the reflection and/or assessment process, as well as buy-in from Sr. Management, and donors proved critical during the CDA-led, RPP/DNH infused PQAs and EAs. Partners were involved throughout the process, and the benefits of the process as well as follow-up engagement were clarified from the beginning. In both PQAs and one of the EAs, the assessment was only the beginning of a longer process of program quality enhancement, and the findings and results from the PQAs and EAs were used as initial benchmarks for ongoing program quality improvement.

In three of the EAs and PQAs, donors either participated in the assessments, or were informed about the outcomes. It was clearly an advantage to get the donor on board and increase mutual understanding, joint learning, and support for future programming decisions.

As highlighted throughout the Guide, **Partner** involvement is critical in all three processes, most pronounced for PQAs and EAs. The level of detail (how many, what types of partners) need to be determined individually.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Determine the right amount of data collection and analysis for both EA and PQA.

A key question in both EA and PQA processes is how much data (in addition to program reports and information, baselines and other data collected by the program itself) needs to be collected for the EA/PQA assessments.

For newer programs, data collection is less applicable; instead, the focus is on reviewing program design and M&E systems. For programs that undertake an EA or PQA later in the program cycle, the question arises regarding what type of data the facilitator/evaluator should collect – or focus more on the question of what type of data is available without collecting any of it directly. Data collection should be targeted and limited, as none of these processes are actual evaluations and, especially in the case of the EA, should not become one.

Data collection could be useful in several areas:

- **Conflict analysis:** This can become tricky, especially in cases in which a conflict analysis had not been done or updated. It might be necessary to conduct at least a validation exercise with local partners on the key conflict drivers in order to determine the peacebuilding relevance of the program.

- Understanding **theory of change:** In many cases, theories of change are not explicitly articulated. Some additional data collection might be needed to articulate the theory of change during the EA and/or PQA.

- **Conflicting reports or beliefs about facts related to the program:** Where there are conflicting accounts of facts related to the program (e.g., program activities, outputs, outcomes, theories, etc.), data collection may be needed for validation and clarification.

> *Insight from practice.* The CDA-facilitated EAs and PQAs included a mix between facilitated multi-stakeholder workshops (with program teams, partners, and donors) and individual interviews. While group reflection brings out additional elements, and is key to the re-design of program elements, as well as for capacity-development purposes, individual interviews are critical from a data collection perspective. Decisions will have to be made for each case specifically. Independence of the PQA or EA facilitator is critical when collecting data, as is triangulation of information independent of the amount of data collection chosen.

Sharing of information and data: A big shortfall for peacebuilding evaluation and gathering data for feedback mechanisms in fragile and conflict affected states is that **data and evaluation findings are not shared within and across different organizations** working towards similar goals. Sharing information and data, particularly regarding conflict analysis, has the potential to decrease costs for all organizations involved, increase quality of analyses due to the wide range of data included, as well as provide the foundation for joint planning and implementation.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Facilitators need to be highly competent in both peacebuilding practice and evaluative methods. It is important to choose the right facilitator / facilitation team.

The facilitators of such evaluative processes wear many "hats." Facilitating a Strategy/Program Reflection Exercise, PQA or EA requires a great amount of **adaptability** on the part of the facilitators, who need to respond flexibly to arising needs throughout the respective processes, while at the same time staying true to the PQA/EA benchmarks.

Facilitators of such processes need **multiple skills** to be effective (independent of whether they are external or internal): skills in facilitation, coaching, training, peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity expertise, and a strong M&E background. In addition, for the specific CDA processes, knowledge and fluency in the application of RPP and DNH tools was critical. Given the sensitive contexts in which peacebuilding happens, facilitators also need to be well informed about the context and self-aware.

Are there particular benefits to internal versus external facilitation? 'Outsiders' are often appreciated as they come with a fresh and unbiased perspective, and often bring additional and more in-depth knowledge on RPP and DNH, evaluative thinking, M&E skills, and/or facilitation skills. At the same time, engaging external facilitators obviously has budget implications. Considering local facilitators, e.g. from within the network of local stakeholders of an organization is another good possibility. Consequently, building regular self-evaluative components into programs is potentially a good alternative – facilitated by outsiders only when needed.

> *Insight from practice*. In the two EAs facilitated by CDA, an international facilitator worked in a team approach with a local facilitator. While this arrangement is invaluable from the perspective of building on and working with a high level of local context knowledge and sharing facilitation, the set-up needs to be carefully planned, including the following questions: profile of the local facilitator, language skills, perceptions of the local facilitator with different partner groups based on his/her background, role within the team, division of labor between international and local facilitator. In any case, both local and international facilitators need to collectively combine the skill sets outlined in this chapter.

> More resources on *data collection and data analysis in peacebuilding evaluation*:
>
> → dmeforpeace.org/evaluation, under, "How do I collect and analyze data?"

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11. Annexes: Tools and Hand-outs

Annex 1: Five Building Blocks towards Peace

From analysis of the cases and practitioner reflection on their own experiences, the RPP process identified five intermediate Building Blocks that can support progress towards Peace Writ Large. These can be used to assess, across a broad range of contexts and programming approaches, whether a program is making a meaningful contribution to Peace Writ Large. The Building Blocks can be used in program planning to ensure that specific program goals are linked to the larger and long-term goal of "Peace Writ Large." They can be used during program implementation to reflect on effectiveness and Guide mid-course changes, and as a basis for evaluation after the program has been completed.
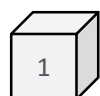
1 — *The effort results in the creation or reform of political institutions to handle grievances in situations where such grievances do, genuinely, drive the conflict.* A significant contribution to peace is the development or support for institutions or mechanisms that address the specific inequalities, injustices and other grievances that cause and fuel a conflict. This approach underlines the importance of moving beyond impacts at the individual or personal (attitudinal, material or emotional) level to the socio-political level. This idea must be applied in conjunction with a context analysis identifying what the conflict is NOT about and what needs to be stopped. To reform or build institutions that are unrelated to the actual drivers of a specific conflict would be less effective.

2 — *The effort contributes to a momentum for peace by causing participants and communities to develop their own peace initiatives in relation to critical elements of context analysis.* Such analysis, and resulting programs, should address what needs to be *stopped*, how to reinforce areas where people interact in positive ways, and the regional and international dimensions of the conflict. This approach stresses the importance of "ownership" and sustainability of action and efforts to bring about peace, as well as creating momentum for peace, involving more people.

3 — *The effort prompts people increasingly to resist violence and provocations to violence.* One way of addressing and including Key People who promote and continue tensions (e.g., warlords, spoilers) is to help More People develop the ability to resist the manipulation and provocations of these negative key people. In most circumstances, one important aspect of Peace Writ Large is a significant and sustained reduction in violence. This Building Block is a stepping stone to that long-term goal.

4 — *The effort results in an increase in people's security and in their sense of security.* This approach reflects positive changes, both at the socio-political level (in people's public lives) and at the individual/personal level, as people gain a sense of security, an important element of PWL. Security and people's perceptions of it contain many different aspects, which must be identified and attained based on the local context.

5 — *The effort results in meaningful improvement in inter-group relations*, reflected in, for example, changes in group attitudes, public opinion, social norms, or public behaviors. Improved relationships between conflicting groups constitute an important Building Block for peace—often a preliminary step towards other initiatives. It entails transforming polarized (and polarizing) attitudes, behaviors and interactions to more tolerant and cooperative ones, as part of addressing underlying grievances and building the willingness and ability to resolve conflicts and sustain peace.

These Building Blocks can best be thought of as *intermediate-level benchmarks of success* applicable to the broad range of peace work being done.

Annex 2.1: RPP Matrix

	More People	Key People
Individual / Personal Level		
Socio-Political Level		

Annex 2.2: RPP Matrix 'Plus'

Current Situation:
Conflict Analysis
Key Driving Factors of Conflict and "Key People" or Actor Analysis

	More People	Key People
Individual / Personal Level — Healing/recovery, Perceptions, Attitudes, Skills		Program activities
Behavior, Individual Relationships	Program activities	Program Theory: How do the activities lead to the goal?
Socio-Political Level — Group behavior / relationships, Public opinion, Social norms		
Institutional change		Socio-political goal
Structural change		

What is the gap between the current situation and the desired future? -> "peace needs" and/or strategic space.

What needs to change and how?

Theory of Change: How does the goal contribute to Peace Writ Large?

Vision: **A desired future Societal change/Peace Writ Large**

55

Annex 3: RPP Program Planning Chart

Identification of Activities, Changes and Theories of Change and Assumptions

Program Goal (determine timeframe!):   Program Goal – Theory of Change:

If we do xxx [*activities*]
Then we achieve yyy [*the type of change you expect from the activity/ies*]
Because zzz [*Rationale for why this change will be achieved: why does 'then' happen?*]

Proposed Program Activity	Expected Changes, due to the Activity/ies	What assumptions do you make?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Annex 4: Do No Harm Action Patterns (Resource Transfer Patterns)

The Impacts of an organization's ACTIONS

How an organization transfers resources into a context matters. The ways these transfers have impacts in five spheres, and these impacts can be positive or negative. If an organization is strategic, understands the context and makes context-appropriate programming choices, they can have positive impacts in these five spheres. But, organizations can also, through lack of attention, or program planning not linked to context analysis, have negative impacts in these five spheres.

	Incomplete analysis and/or inappropriate programming	Strategic and context-appropriate programming
1. Theft/Prevention	Goods or money intended for distribution or payment may be stolen, and used by fighters or used to pay for ongoing fighting.	Theft can be prevented, money, time, and resources are saved and used to benefit communities.
2. Market Effects	Adverse impacts on prices of goods and services. Pricing local people out of their own markets, Goods that are available locally brought in from outside and given away for free can drop prices if local goods and force farmers and sellers out of their jobs.	Balancing and stabilizing markets. Ensuring people can continue to afford local goods and services.
3. Distribution Effects	Uneven distribution along conflict lines can exacerbate tensions/divisions, unfairly benefit one side of a conflict over another.	Understanding local definitions of fair distribution can help to determine beneficiary selection without exacerbating tensions. Fair does not always equal "even" distribution.
4. Substitution Effects	Freeing up government resources to continue fighting. Weakening the state's ability to respond and manage disasters,, conflicts and its own development.	Strategic, short-term, negotiated substitution. Involve government in program design so they understand and are held accountable for their role in the program (incl. transfer of responsibilities and timeframes)
5. Legitimization Effects	Inadvertently legitimizing a government, institution or leader by involving them in the aid process.	Strategically legitimizing a government, leader or institution with an eye to changing or improving local perceptions of their ability to manage development or disaster response. Must understand WHY and HOW they will be legitimized.

Annex 5: Tool for Peacebuilding Quality Assessment[34]

The following tool is an illustrative framework for organizing and documenting a peacebuilding program quality assessment.

In the left column are quality criteria for a program design, based on the key findings, concepts and tools of RPP. The framework provides a series of questions divided into several broad categories: conflict analysis, program goals/outcomes, program strategy and logic, and unintended impact.

The second column asks for a rating of the program design, ranging from 1 to 3:

1. Program design meets none of criteria;
2. Program design meets some of criteria, but there are significant gaps and weaknesses in several categories;
3. Program design meets criteria, with no significant gaps, although there may be room for improvement.

The third column asks for evidence on the basis of which the assessment team or assessor has arrived at the rating. It should reflect strengths and opportunities—that is, where a program may fulfill quality criteria but might be strengthened further, as well as gaps and challenges—those aspects of a program that do not meet the criteria or criteria of effective peacebuilding programs.

The fourth column provides for recommendations for improving the quality of the program design. This can include what an agency can do to sustain or improve the program design, what it should keep in mind or monitor while implementing the program, and suggestions on things that can be done to improve the quality of the peacebuilding program. Here the question of capacity building for responsible staff might also arise.

This framework tool may best be understood as a framework for an RPP-inspired learning process for peacebuilding organizations. It is not to be understood as comprehensive and exhaustive, but as preliminary reflection and food for thought.

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[34] Based on Reimann, *An Alternative to Formal Evaluation of Peacebuilding: Program Quality Assessment,* with adaption

1. *Conflict Analysis*

Criteria/Questions based on RPP	Rating	Evidence	Recommendations / Ways to Improve
Does the analysis identify **key driving factors** and **key actors**?			
Does the analysis consider what needs to be stopped and what forces promote peace?			
Is the analysis updated and tested?			
Has the analysis identified and examined past or ongoing similar efforts and any lessons from their results?			
Does the analysis identify peacebuilding needs or points of leverage?			
Is the scope of the analysis is appropriate (not too broad or narrow, mitigates bias towards agency's expertise or general beliefs about conflict)?			
Was the analysis process conflict-sensitive?			

2. *Program Goals*

Criteria/Questions based on RPP	Rating	Evidence	Recommendations / Ways to Improve
Does the goal address, directly or indirectly, key drivers of conflict or peace?			
Is the goal stated as a desired change?			
Is the goal specific and realistic for the time frame—neither too broad (long-term vision) nor too narrow (activities or outputs)?			
Is the goal stated as a desired change at the socio-political level, or is achieving it part of a longer-term strategy for effecting change at the socio-political level? Does the program make linkages to efforts of other agencies at the socio-political level?			
Do the changes contribute to one or more of the following intermediate building blocks of peace: 1. Creation or reform of political institutions that address KDF? 2. Locally-driven peace initiatives addressing KDF? 3. Increasing resistance to violence or provocations to violence? 4. Increased security or sense of security? 5. Meaningful improvement in inter-group relations?			

3. *Overall Theory of Change*

Criteria/Questions based on RPP	Rating	Evidence	Recommendations / Ways to Improve
Is the Overall Theory of Change explicit, with clear and understandable conceptualization of pathway to change?			
Does the Overall Theory of Change provide a plausible explanation of how achieving the program goal will affect key drivers of conflict or peace?			
Is the Overall Theory of Change grounded in an understanding of how change happens in the particular conflict and context in which the program is being implemented?			

4. Program Strategy and Logic

Criteria/Questions based on RPP	Rating	Evidence	Recommendations / Ways to Improve
Do activities "add up" to the goal? Are there explicit, rational and plausible links between components of the program that are valid in the context?			
Does the program make linkages between activities and changes at the individual-personal level and at the socio-political level?			
Does the program make linkages between "more people" and "key people"?			
Are the scale and level of the outputs reasonable in relation to the intended impacts and the size of the issue in this context?			
Has the design accounted for factors that could impede success (including ways social and political systems might resist changes)?			
Does the effort relate to or link with other initiatives in the same or related areas?			
Will the M&E plan or feedback mechanism provide timely, accurate and useful information about progress toward desired changes and about assumptions underlying theory of change?			

5. Conflict-Sensitivity / Do No Harm

Criteria/Questions based on DNH	Rating	Evidence	Recommendations / Ways to Improve
Is the program conflict-sensitive? Does it consider potential unintended negative impacts it might cause?			
Is the initiative conscious of the impact of its action patterns/resource transfers in the following areas: 1. Theft; 2. Market Effects; 3. Distribution Effects; 4. Substitution Effects; 5. Legitimization Effects.			
Does the initiative consider unintended (negative) impacts of the program in its M&E system?			

Annex 6: Checklist for Evaluability Assessment of Peacebuilding Programs[35]

The following continuums provide a framework for assessing the evaluability of a peacebuilding program and illustrate what makes a peacebuilding program or project less or more evaluable. RPP tools and findings have been integrated into the questions regarding program design.

The **red column** on the left indicates low evaluability while the **green column** on the right highlights high evaluability. The dotted lines between the red, yellow and green columns indicate that the division is not clear-cut or fixed.

The team or the evaluability assessor can tick the respective boxes to indicate where the program stands in terms of evaluability. If most of the ticked boxes are in the left, red column, a program is not ready for evaluation, and the checklist indicates where changes in the program design would need to be made. The evaluability assessor could also recommend where to change and improve the program design and hence make the program more evaluable. The field staff and program designers in the field could likewise use the checklist as a monitoring tool that helps them to work on the aspects of low evaluability.

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[35] This check-list is based on (Reimann, Chigas, and Woodrow 2012b) and has been adapted by CDA

Program Design (includes RPP tools and findings)

Low evaluability in peacebuilding ← ————————————— → **High evaluability in peacebuilding**

Low evaluability		Middle		High evaluability	
No conflict analysis at all	☐	Partial analysis	☐	"Good conflict analysis" prioritizing KDF, stakeholders	☐
Implicit analysis/Informal analysis	☐	Not updated	☐		
No documented analysis	☐	Context analysis	☐		
		Analysis not updated	☐		
		Not linked to strategy	☐		
		Biased and narrow	☐		
		Too comprehensive	☐		
Unclear goals and objective	☐	Goals and objective too general and broad	☐	Well-defined and robust goals and objectives	☐
Goals defined as activities	☐	Goals and objective too ambitious	☐	Goals are formulated as desired changes at the socio-political level	☐
No links between activities, goals and overall objective	☐	Indirect und unclear links between activities, goals and objective	☐	Explicit links between activities, goals and objective of PWL	☐
		"Hope lines" (links between activities and outcomes at various levels that are based on weak assumptions)	☐		
Implicit ToC	☐	Implicit and realistic ToC	☐	Explicit ToC	☐
Unclear ToC	☐	Explicit but inappropriate ToC (i.e. ToC contradict/s knowledge of peace-building practice or is not suited to the context.)	☐	Clear and realistic ToC	☐

Data Availability

Low evaluability in peacebuilding	← High evaluability in peacebuilding →	
Implicit ToC ☐	Implicit and realistic ToC ☐	Explicit ToC ☐
Unclear ToC ☐	Explicit but inappropriate ToC (i.e. ToC contradict/s knowledge of peace-building practice or is not suited to the context.) ☐	Clear and realistic ToC ☐
No baseline ☐	Condensed baseline with data-gathering is focused on a few key indicators for selected goals ☐	Complete baseline, based on conflict analysis ☐
	No baseline but a more comprehensive monitoring at the beginning ☐	
No monitoring system ☐	Monitoring system in place but not used ☐	Monitoring system in place to gather and systematize all necessary information ☐
	Insights from monitoring are not translated into program changes ☐	Monitoring system used to inform program changes ☐
		Monitoring system monitors impacts on conflict context as well as unintended (negative) impacts ☐
No indicators ☐	Indicators exist, but unrealistic, un-measurable or unclear ☐	Indicators are SMART ☐
		Indicators are designed to capture changes in conflict context and possible unintended (negative) impacts ☐
No access to stakeholders ☐	Difficult and limited access to stakeholders ☐	Access to stakeholders ☐
		Ongoing feed-back process with partners in place ☐

Conduciveness of the Context

Low evaluability in peacebuilding ⟵ ⟶ **High evaluability in peacebuilding**

(Low / Red)		(Medium / Yellow)		(High / Green)	
Conditions (weather, security, availability…) not favorable	☐	Some conditions questionable, but generally workable	☐	No apparent impediments to access or security	☐
No financial resources available to conduct evaluation	☐	Financial resources available but limited	☐	Full financial resources available	☐
No internal commitment/Internally driven process	☐	Internally driven but only by the heads of agencies	☐	Commitment Available - Internally driven and locally owned process	☐
No ownership of process	☐	Not donor-driven process but no local ownership of process	☐	Internal capacities available to engage and follow-up	☐
Donor-driven process	☐				
Do No Harm principles not applied to the evaluation process	☐	DNH principles only partially applied	☐	DNH applied: Timing, location of evaluation and selection of interview partners are conflict-sensitive	☐
		DNH principles applied once but not updated	☐		

Annex 7: CDA Collaborative Learning Process Methodology and Steps

Identify an important question, based on listening to the dilemmas and struggles of our colleagues in multiple fields

Frame the question and identify information needs in initial consultations

Conduct literature review and develop case studies based on field experiences

Revise findings after further intensive case analysis and feedback

Publish issue papers with preliminary findings and review them through consultations

Identify emerging themes and patterns through consultations and develop new case studies

Support organizational systems change through policies, procedures and review of program designs
Increase skills & learning through training
Support learning and program adaptation through monitoring & evaluation tools and processes
Accompany partners to use CDA lessons
Inform partner strategies and programs through analysis, assessment and field-based research
Disseminate lessons and guidance to practitioners & policy-makers

Refine and validate findings through feedback workshops among practitioners

Consolidate lessons and publish as practical guidance and tools

Provide practitioners with evidence-based findings and accompany them in individual learning and organizational change: