THE COPE REPORT

"Lessons from the Field"—

A Thematic Analysis of Discussions on the Intersections of Peacebuilding Theory and Practice

A Report on the 2012 Colloquium on Peacebuilding Effectiveness (COPE) Summit

PURDUE
LIBERAL ARTS

PURDUE PEACE PROJECT

PSFG
Peace and Security Funders Group

THE COPE REPORT

On September 11 and 12, 2012, the Purdue Peace Project (PPP) and the Peace & Security Funders Group (PSFG) co-sponsored the Colloquium on Peacebuilding Effectiveness (COPE) in Washington D. C. Leaders from experienced organizations around the world gathered in order to discuss the current state of the peacebuilding field. The organizations represented practitioner, policymaker, and funder perspectives. Participants discussed (a) the nature of peacebuilding work; (b) how its effectiveness is, and should be, defined; and (c) principles that should be considered when doing and funding peacebuilding work. This report summarizes those discussions.

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GOALS OF THE COPE SUMMIT

Originally, COPE had three goals: (1) to identify activities that are the most effective at building peace; (2) to identify those that are most cost-effective; and (3) to explore what COPE participants could do collectively to encourage resources be used in productive and cost-effective ways. The two -day session was audio-recorded and two note takers captured the discussion. Their notes were integrated and a thematic analysis was conducted in order to arrive at the themes presented in this report. As the report will reveal, rather than identifying specific activities that are most effective and cost-effective, participants came to agreement on what effectiveness means in the peacebuilding field and noted steps members of this growing field might take in order to continue to develop the field in productive ways.

WHAT IS PEACEBUILDING?

Before discussing the goals above, participants initially deliberated on what "peacebuilding" means. They did so to make sure all participants were operating with a common understanding of peacebuilding during the summit, while at the same time recognizing that various definitions of peacebuilding exist. For the purposes of the summit, they agreed that peacebuilding involves preventing or reducing organized violence, and that organized violence may be political, economic, and/or social.

Participants concurred that peacebuilding work is both short-term and long-term in nature. Relatedly, the work that peacebuilding organizations engage in may not only demonstrate short-term impact, but it may also contribute to sustaining peace over time and creating meaningful change. One way of doing the latter is to incorporate strategies for building local citizens' capacity so that they may learn to prevent or resolve violence on their own. That way, interventions from outside organizations may be less likely to be needed in the future. Importantly, participants also underscored that the peacebuilding field is not only about having impact on the ground, cultivating resilience among local communities. In this context, resilience refers to "the ability of groups to absorb the impacts of extreme…" situations…"and employ adaptive capacities which enable them to effectively recover" (definition adapted from Mercy Corps, 2012, p. 10; see this report for a discussion of resilience in a specific context).

These features of peacebuilding work influenced participants' discussions during the rest of the summit.

EFFECTIVENESS: HOW IT IS DETERMINED AND HOW IT SHOULD BE GAUGED

COPE participants brought to the table a great deal of expertise and experience in doing peacebuilding work. This section captures principles that they deem important, although not necessary conditions, for peacebuilding work to be effective. To be sure, the principles conveyed below are not all new principles. That this group of peacebuilding professionals came to agreement on these principles is why we articulate them here.

♦ *Effectiveness can be assessed in the short-run and the long-run.*

The Fund for Global Human Rights requests that those who receive funding identify 5 or 6 indicators of whether their projects are going in the direction they want them to go. Those receiving funds have to report on those indicators every six months in order to gauge effectiveness over time.

♦ *Effectiveness is dependent on cultivating relationships.*

Devoting time and energy to cultivating relationships with relevant actors working in the same context can be helpful for peacebuilding efforts to be effective, meaningful, and credible. Peace Direct, for example, worked with the CRC (a Congolese NGO) to create radio clubs. Citizens would gather for a two-hour radio program once per week and volunteer for various community-building tasks.

Moreover, building relationships with local governments is often important. When Pact was working in the South Sudan, for instance, they were able to train police to identify people with mental illnesses so that these individuals would be given the help they needed. In addition, Mercy Corps worked with the government of Ethiopia and members of the pastoralist communities affected to stage drought interventions. The communities where these interventions were conducted were statistically significantly more likely to avoid the effects of drought than those which did not receive the interventions.

EFFECTIVENESS: HOW IT IS DETERMINED AND HOW IT SHOULD BE GAUGED

♦ *Multiple parties often play a role in whether peacebuilding is effective.*

International and national peacebuilding and violence prevention organizations play their part in influencing whether peacebuilding efforts are effective, as do local communities. Indeed, without the buy in and involvement of local communities, there is little chance of arriving at an agreement or change. It is important for local communities to live up to the terms of negotiated peace agreements between conflicted parties for peacebuilding work to be effective. For example, the previously mentioned effort by Peace Direct and a Congolese NGO, Centre Résolution Conflits (CRC), was successful because community members from diverse walks of life constituted Task Forces and were dedicated to actively contributing to conflict prevention efforts. Rather than just agree to terms, the groups in the Congo actively performed what was outlined within those terms (see Gillhespy & Hayman, 2011). Other relevant actors, including governments, must follow-through on commitments as well. That multiple actors from various sectors are involved contributes to the complex nature of peacebuilding and speaks to why peacebuilding should be understood as a complex enterprise.

♦ *Engagement with difficult actors in conflict settings is sometimes a necessary condition for effectiveness.*

Engagement with challenging actors may need to be part of an effective strategy. Conciliation Resources, for example, was able to engage with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda to draft legislation for the safe return of 28,000 abductees that included a small stipend for each of the abductees. Their willingness to engage with the LRA was, in part, what made it possible for amnesty to occur for these 28,000 people.

EFFECTIVENESS: HOW IT IS DETERMINED AND HOW IT SHOULD BE GAUGED

♦ *Peacebuilding should be inclusive and create space for dialogue with and among local communities.*

International Alert-Liberia, for example, worked with an umbrella organization of youth groups in Liberia during the 2011 Presidential elections to facilitate discussions between different youth groups determined to be important (see International Alert's Case Study Series for more detail). Together, the youth documented a code of conduct to help guide other youth throughout the electoral process. International Alert-Liberia and the youth groups helped to create a climate of transparency so that information about what was done and funds used were discussed openly and honestly. The youth themselves also created the media items that were distributed. As a result of this involvement and level of ownership they became more heavily invested in the political process. Indeed, International Alert-Liberia provided safe spaces for these youth groups to come together.

The United States Institute of Peace recommends that in order to improve prospects for peacebuilding and effectiveness, peace-building professionals should ensure that effective dialogue space is open for actors and support local organizations to be the best version of what they already are. Rather than trying to take over for local organizations, peacebuilding organizations should work with them. This example and others like it also drive home the importance of peacebuilding organizations fostering a sense of being there with a community. This philosophy is central to the work of Peace Direct, for instance, which advocates that peacebuilding is a process, not a project, and that they are there for and with the community for the long haul.

EFFECTIVENESS: HOW IT IS DETERMINED AND HOW IT SHOULD BE GAUGED

COPE participants also underscored two points related to effectiveness that could be developed more in future programming and evaluations:

♦ *Peacebuilding practitioners should measure the cost-effectiveness of their work and seek to document practices that are cost-effective.*

To assess cost-effectiveness, peacebuilding organizations should decide on the unit of return to be utilized (i.e., how many disputes were resolved). Cost should not only be measured in terms of monetary expenditures, but also human effort and collateral damage from (well-intentioned) peacebuilding efforts.

♦ *If peacebuilding efforts are to be successful now and in the future, members of the field should make a concerted effort to discover, and also to openly discuss, what has <u>not</u> worked.*

Currently, the focus tends to be on reporting and disseminating reports on successful efforts at violence prevention and peace-building. To move forward, however, the field also should focus on pinpointing why particular strategies did not work. These lessons have consequence for future efforts and evaluations. Yet those in the peacebuilding field can be reluctant to disclose reasons why efforts failed due to fear that doing so will negatively affect funding.

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Caption describing picture or graphic.

Mailing Address Line 1

Mailing Address Line 2

Mailing Address Line 3

Mailing Address Line 4

Mailing Address Line 5

BACK PAGE STORY HEADLINE

This story can fit 175-225 words.

If your newsletter is folded and mailed, this story will appear on the back. So, it's a good idea to make it easy to read at a glance.

A question and answer session is a good way to quickly capture the attention of readers. You can either compile questions that you've received since the last edition or you can summarize some generic questions that are frequently asked about your organization.

A listing of names and titles of managers in your organization is a good way to give your newsletter a personal touch. If your organization is small, you may want to list the names of all employees.

If you have any prices of standard products or services, you can include a listing of those here. You may want to refer your readers to any other forms of communication that you've created for your organization.

You can also use this space to remind readers to mark their calendars for a regular event, such as a breakfast meeting for vendors every third Tuesday of the month, or a biannual charity auction.

If space is available, this is a good place to insert a clip art image or some other graphic.