

Issue 1 • Autumn 2020

# BETTER EVIDENCE PROJECT



*Housing the BEP founding workshop in February, the Carter School's Point of View International Retreat Center will also provide a welcoming atmosphere for future events*

## AN OVERVIEW

The mission of the Better Evidence Project (BEP) is to encourage, facilitate, and conduct research aimed at producing evidence that will guide practitioners and donors in reducing large-scale political violence where it exists or threatens to erupt in the near future.

To support this mission, BEP works towards these objectives:

- Promoting the idea that decisions about **where** and **how** to allocate peacebuilding **resources** should be based on **hard evidence** about what is and is not **effective**.
- Initiating, supporting, and doing research to **develop such evidence**.
- **Disseminating** such evidence and urging its use.
- Collecting, maintaining, and facilitating the **exchange of relevant ideas** and information, determining priority areas for projects, and disseminating useful information and evidence to the peacebuilding community and the public.

### **August 2020**

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Better Evidence Project newsletter! We look forward to keeping you updated with BEP events, news, calls for proposals, and other opportunities for community engagement.

As we develop BEP, we will feature reflections from members of our research, practice, and policy community, located at George Mason University's Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution (formerly, S-CAR)...as well as from around the world. We welcome your feedback and hope that you will send your updates to [bep@gmu.edu](mailto:bep@gmu.edu).

For those beginning a new fall semester, we wish you a successful season of growth!

### **Director's Note**

As I write this inaugural Better Evidence Project (BEP) newsletter to you, George Mason University's fall 2020 semester is just beginning. After the uncertainty that the COVID-19 pandemic has inflicted on our university community as well as to all around the globe, we are opening both this new semester and this exciting new initiative in unusual times.

(cont. next page)



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The start of a new academic semester invites a moment of reflection, to consider where we have been and where we will strive to go. The distinguished participants in our February founding workshop (see page 4) could not have foreseen the global uncertainty soon to unfold. Yet I note that BEP's core normative emphasis has only been underscored by the forced separation of this age of social distancing. Partnerships and togetherness really do make all the difference in achieving goals and building community.

As we navigate these turbulent times, we invite you into our values-based community, where differences of background and professional expertise are welcomed in the larger mission of making peace more attainable, effective, and sustainable. We are excited to use this newsletter to introduce you to our team, to our Advisory board, and to our first grantees. I also want to extend my personal invitation to join our lively peacebuilding hub by emailing [bep@gmu.edu](mailto:bep@gmu.edu) so that we can add you to our mailing list. Through our mailing list and through the suggestions for involvement in this newsletter (page 11), we anticipate your continued participation and your critical role in shaping the output and spirit of our new BEP community. Despite the real challenge of this present moment, we continue to believe that the future is bright with each of you dedicated peacebuilding scholars, practitioners, donors, and policy makers in it.

All the best,

*Kristina Hook*

Kristina Hook, PhD

Executive Director, Better Evidence Project



# BEP SO FAR....

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In February, 2020, the Alliance for Peacebuilding, Milt Lauenstein, and George Mason University partnered to convene an international group of 36 scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and funders to develop a plan to gather and produce better evidence. Experts described various research methodologies for developing useful evidence and examples of research that had produced such evidence.

Participants identified the following two initial priority areas for research.

- Developing a shared set of core key measures describing peacebuilding success/effectiveness: Within the first research area, participants noted the tension between differing opinions on how to develop evidence within the field. They also welcomed recent developments in terms of better mapping of peacebuilding indicators, including the February 3rd launch of the Alliance for Peacebuilding's Eirene Peacebuilding Database™. Participants intend to develop a shared understanding of what kinds of evidence and indicators are useful across the field, and, working from that understanding, develop a shared set of core indicators to measure peacebuilding success. Participants envision an iterative process that generates theoretical consensus among practitioners and academics, with indicators mapped onto that consensus. Useful indicators will be 1) inclusive, 2) adaptable to local contexts, 3) evidence-based, 4) easily communicated, and 5) not overly costly to employ.
- Learning from local peacebuilding successes and developing and communicating a stronger evidence base on the effectiveness of locally-led peacebuilding: The second research priority area focused on the need for better determining the cost, value, and impact of locally-led peacebuilding; as well as, further harnessing the potential for local peacebuilding through cross-fertilizing across contexts and influencing donors, policymakers, and other practitioners. The group noted other related initiatives. The need to bring voices from the Global South was highlighted and emphasized as an important next step in BEP's development. The group further highlighted the need to align Western perspectives with local perspectives on understanding effectiveness, value, cost, etc. of peacebuilding work. An important component of this research initiative was a clear identification of the audience and how it could be used to change the international system, perceptions, and attitudes toward greater support for locally-led peacebuilding. The next steps in realizing this research initiative were identified as applying for funding to establish a working group, ensuring more inclusive participation, and formulating a more specific research agenda.

Participants in the workshop identified a need for an institutional hub to initiate, fund, and present on the research in an understandable and convincing way, while complementing existing platforms. This call for a hub gave rise to BEP.



# ONGOING PROJECTS

Thanks to the generosity of Milt Lauenstein and DT Institute, BEP has awarded two research grants in response to the first BEP request for proposals:

## **Challenging all Norms to Achieve Peace: How Indigenous Women Overcome Competitive Victimhood to Address Intercommunal Violence in Northern Kenya**

BEP has awarded \$68,864 to Horn of Africa Women Empowerment Network (HAWENKA) to study how indigenous women navigate barriers to peacebuilding to achieve success, how international peace actors can learn from knowledge among local women in peacebuilding, and what can be done for increasing success in peacebuilding as well as building a framework for sustainable peace at the local level.

The study will conduct interviews, observations, and focus groups with sixty participants in three counties to build a localized model based on indigenous knowledge. Amina Hassan Ahmed will lead the project.



## **Developing and Using Indicator Frameworks for Locally-led Peacebuilding in Central Africa**

BEP has awarded \$73,485 to Harvard University to study ways of measuring the success of peacebuilding efforts. This project will also analyze how assessments of locally led peacebuilding efforts differ from assessments of broader peacebuilding efforts.

Acting at these two levels of analysis the project will: define the concept of peacebuilding effectiveness, analyze the usefulness of indicators currently used to assess peacebuilding effectiveness, apply those indicators at the community level, and finally develop a core of key effectiveness indicators at the national and community levels. Professor Phuong Pham will lead the research.

# OUR TEAM

DR. KRISTINA HOOK  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dr. Kristina Hook is the Executive Director of the Better Evidence Project in the Center for Peacemaking Practice at George Mason University's Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution. She is an anthropologist and scholar-practitioner specializing in large-scale violence against civilians (including genocides and mass atrocities) as well as emerging forms of warfare and violence. She has research, teaching, and professional experience on topics including genocide causality, post-conflict reconstruction, trauma healing, the costs of conflict, civilian protection policies, and evolving security challenges like hybrid warfare and environmental degradation. Dr. Hook has worked in 23 countries including across Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, East Africa, and the Caribbean. She received a joint PhD in peace studies and anthropology from the University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies and Department of Anthropology. She also holds M.A. degrees in anthropology (2017) and in international development (2012) from the University of Notre Dame and the University of Denver's Josef Korbel School of International Studies respectively. She holds a B.A. in anthropology from the University of Florida, where she graduated summa cum laude and as a valedictorian.

A 2018-2019 U.S. Fulbright scholar to Ukraine, Dr. Hook's current project explores the dynamics and legacy of the Soviet-era Holodomor atrocities, including how these events influenced modern interpretations of Ukraine's current armed conflict with Russian-backed separatists. Supported by a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship (NSF-GRFP) and a USAID Research and Innovation Fellowship, Dr. Hook conducted two-and-a-half years of ethnographic fieldwork in Ukraine from 2015-2019. Trained in qualitative and quantitative methods, she analyzed how influential Ukrainian political actors (e.g., politicians, lawyers, civil society representatives, activists, academics, etc.) interacted and interpreted historical legacies of violence to respond to unfolding national crises. She has served as a non-resident fellow at the Marine Corps University's Brute Krulak Center for Innovation and Creativity.

Prior to her time in academia, Kristina Hook served as a policy advisor at the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations and as a political/economic officer in an embassy-based diplomatic posting abroad. She received a U.S. Department of State Meritorious Honor Award for her work on preventing and responding to mass atrocities and was a 2013-2015 U.S. Presidential Management Fellow. She also held leadership roles in two international development non-governmental organizations and was recognized in 2017 with the Society for Applied Anthropology's Human Rights Defender Award.



# OUR TEAM

DR. SUSAN H. ALLEN  
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR



Susan H. Allen directs the Center for Peacemaking Practice at George Mason University's Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution. She is a scholar-practitioner of conflict resolution. Her main focus is on reflective practice and research that emerges from practice contexts. She has substantial expertise in intermediary roles and coordination amongst intermediaries, evaluation of conflict resolution initiatives, and theories of change, indicators of change, and evaluation in conflict resolution practice. She has engaged long-term in conflict resolution in the South Caucasus, as well as contributing to a variety of conflict resolution initiatives in Eastern Europe, Eurasia, the Caribbean, South America, and Africa.

Susan Allen joined the Carter School core faculty in 2005 after two years teaching International Peace and Conflict Resolution as Assistant Professor at the School of International Service at American University. This was a return to the Carter School.

Dr. Allen's Ph.D. (2000) and M.S. (1995) degrees are from the Carter School. Between graduate school and joining the faculty at the Carter School, she co-founded and directed the Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT) and served as Senior Program Associate for the Conflict Resolution Program at the Carter Center in Atlanta, GA.

Susan Allen's current research centers on learning from decades of practice. Her work has been supported by the US Institute of Peace (Peace Scholar award, Grant program), the One Foundation, USAID, the UK Conflict Pool, the US State Department, and the William and Flora I. Hewlett Foundation, Compton Foundation, Catalyst Fund (with ACT), and US State Dept (with ACT).

Susan Allen serves on the Editorial Committee of the Journal Peacebuilding and on the Editorial Boards of Conflict Resolution Quarterly, the African Peace and Conflict Journal, and Caucasus Edition. She is on the Board of Directors of the Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT). She previously served on the Board of Directors of the Alliance for Peacebuilding, including as Chair of the Board in 2005.

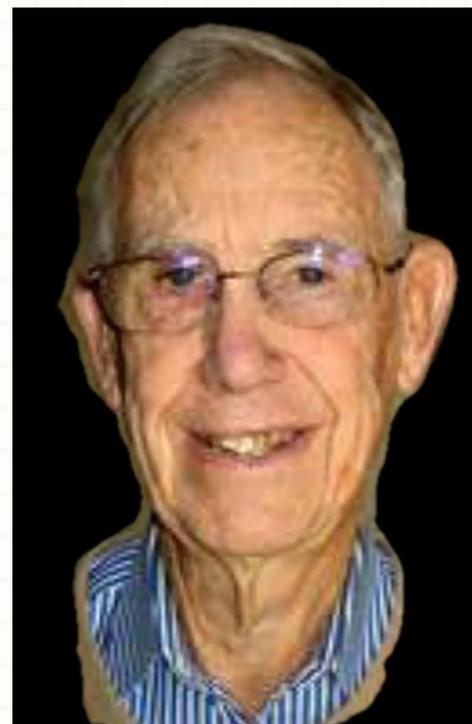


# OUR TEAM

### MILT LAUENSTEIN ADVISORY BOARD

Milt Lauenstein (MBA University of Chicago, BS ChE Purdue U) was involved in business management from 1948 until 2001 as an executive and management consultant. He served as a director of a dozen for-profit corporations and half a dozen not-for-profits, having been Chairman or CEO of several of them. He served as a Senior Lecturer on Business Policy at the University of Chicago and as Executive-in-Residence at Northeastern University. Under President Johnson, he was a member of the US Department of Commerce Technical Advisory Board.

He is the author of the book "What's Your Game Plan?" about business strategy, published by Dow-Jones Irwin. With Dr. Elliot Short, he co-authored the book, "Peace and Conflict since 1991", being published by Peter Lang. He has written several published articles on peacebuilding and posts frequently on peacebuilding on LinkedIn.



Since 2001, he has been active in peacebuilding. He funded a successful campaign by local citizens of Guinea-Bissau to prevent a national election campaign from triggering a return to civil war in 2005. Based on that experience, he founded the Purdue Peace Project, which successfully assisted local citizens to prevent violence in several other countries in West Africa. He has funded a number of research projects, reports on which may be found on the website [warandpeacebuilding.org](http://warandpeacebuilding.org). More recently, he co-founded Impact:Peace with the Kroc Institute of Peace and Justice at the University of San Diego. With George Mason University, he is launching the Better Evidence Project.

He served in the Navy from 1943 to 1946, finally being appointed Executive Officer of a small ship, PCE 886. He is married with four children, seven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. He attended several art schools in the US and Europe and continues to paint as an avocation. He is a Quaker.



# OUR TEAM

ALPASLAN ÖZERDEM  
CHAIR OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

Alpaslan Özerdem is the Dean of the School for Conflict Analysis & Resolution and professor of peace and conflict studies. Prior to his appointment as Dean in August 2019, Dr Özerdem was Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research at Coventry University in the UK.

Dr Özerdem specializes in conflict resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. With over 20 year field research experience in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, El Salvador, Kosovo, Lebanon, Liberia, Nigeria, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan and Turkey, Dr Özerdem has undertaken numerous research projects that were funded by the UK's Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC) (faith-based conflict prevention); British Academy (youth and peacebuilding); US Institute of Peace (reintegration of ex-combatants); and various European Union funding schemes (conflict transformation and leadership).

Dr Özerdem has published extensively (14 books and numerous journal articles, book chapters and op-eds) and amongst other, is author of *Post-war Recovery: Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration* (2008); co-author of *Managing Emergencies and Crises* (2011); co-editor of *Child Soldiers: From Recruitment to Reintegration* (2011); co-author

of *Peace in Turkey 2023: The Question of Human Security and Conflict Transformation* (2013); co-editor of *Human Security in Turkey*(2013); co-author of *Youth in Conflict and Peacebuilding: Mobilization, Reintegration and Reconciliation* (2015); co-editor of *Local Ownership in International Peacebuilding* (2015); co-author of *Peacebuilding: An Introduction* (2015); co-editor of *Conflict Transformation and the Palestinians: The Dynamics of Peace and Justice under Occupation* (2016); co-editor of *Routledge Handbook of Turkish Politics* (2019), and co-editor of *Comparing Peace Processes* (2019).

Dr Özerdem has also taken an active role in the initiation and management of several advisory and applied research projects for a wide range of national and international organizations such as the United Nations and international NGOs. He also runs tailor-made and in-country professional training programs for a wide range of audiences from humanitarian aid practitioners to civil servants and policy makers. Dr Özerdem is a frequent speaker and workshop leader for events organized by the private sector, higher education institutions, international organizations and governmental authorities. He is a member of the Anna Lindh Foundation Scientific Committee, and received his Professor Extraordinary in Politics title by Stellenbosch University in 2017 and visiting professorship to the Jiangsu University and Coventry University in 2019.



# OUR TEAM

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR ADVISORY  
BOARD MEMBERS

Susan Allen

Betty Bigombe

Emmanuel Habuka Bombande

Milt Lauenstein

Alpaslan Özerdem

Adeline Sibanda

Arne Strand

Beza Tesfaye

Leslie Wingender

Ex officio: Kristina Hook



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## INTRODUCING BEP POST-DOCTORAL RESEARCHER, DR. MARGARITA TADEVOSYAN

BEP welcomes the arrival of Dr. Margarita Tadevosyan as a post-doctoral researcher at the Center for Peacemaking Practice in the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution. Dr. Tadevosyan is studying local perspectives of effectiveness of conflict prevention and will soon publish her first report on the BEP website. She summarizes her work, saying;

"The development of systemic understanding of local conflict prevention efforts, including ways that conflict prevention, violence reduction and peacebuilding are being conceptualized on the local level in different communities of the Global South, will help to educate donors and promote supporting locally-led initiatives in relevant conflict contexts. This systemic understanding will also help to generate knowledge and evidence that will better inform the practices of Western interveners and support the prevention and reduction of violent conflict across the globe."



# GET INVOLVED

## CONNECT WITH BEP

- Please e-mail BEP at [bep@gmu.edu](mailto:bep@gmu.edu) to join our **mailing list**, **connect with others in the BEP community**, and **get updates on BEP activities**.
- Stay tuned for **additional research calls for proposals** posted on our website: <https://carterschool.gmu.edu/research-impact/programs-and-projects/better-evidence-project>

## DONATE

- BEP needs **your** support to grow our impact!  
To contribute, follow this link. <https://advancement.gmu.edu/21BEP>