ENVISIONING SUCCESS: BUILDING BLOCKS FOR STRATEGIC AND COMPREHENSIVE PEACEBUILDING IMPACT EVALUATION

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Abstract

Linking peacebuilding and development is an emerging area of specialisation. Changes in the political, social, and economic contexts, the intangible dimensions of attitudinal and relational change, and the need to take a long-term perspective in order to capture the effects of programming all pose substantial challenges to peacebuilding programming for development agencies. This article provides a series of guiding questions for evaluation which can also be used in the planning and monitoring stages of a peacebuilding or conflict-sensitive development programming.[1] Drawing upon the work of scholars and practitioners working in the fields of development and peacebuilding, the article presents a process to generate strategic building blocks for a comprehensive approach to evaluating peacebuilding programming.

The Challenges of Evaluating Peacebuilding

In recent years the international community has devoted significant attention and resources to 'peacebuilding' in post-settlement societies. United Nations agencies, the World Bank, national and international non-governmental organisations, and donor agencies now use the language of peacebuilding to describe their work. Peacebuilding covers a wide and amorphous set of activities at different stages of conflict, leading some to wonder what it actually is. To complicate matters, the literature on peacebuilding offers differing interpretations of the concept. The variation usually centres on the stage at which peacebuilding occurs and the range of actions it comprises. A sampling of three definitions by Evans (1993:9), Lederach (1997:20) and Boutros-Ghali (1992:11) illustrates these distinctions. Evans' and Lederach's definitions include efforts before and after an outbreak of conflict, whereas Boutros-Ghali's definition focuses on actions following the outbreak of violent conflict, emphasising the post-accord nature of peacebuilding. One definition refers to peacebuilding as strategy (Evans), another as action (Boutros-Ghali), and the third as processes, approaches, and stages (Lederach); the latter being the most comprehensive in scope.

We define peacebuilding broadly in this article to refer to actions taken to prevent violent conflict from erupting and efforts taken to end violent conflict and subsequently to transform relationships, interactions, and structures after the violence subsides.[2] Peacebuilding activities can be undertaken on many 'tracks' (Diamond & McDonald 1996) and in many sectors, whether by development agencies, community-based organisations, the media, business or political leaders. The goal is to create, support, or enhance healthy and sustainable interactions, relationships, and structures that are tolerant, respectful,

and constructively respond to the root causes and symptoms of conflict over the long-term – in other words, to create and support a just peace. As such, peacebuilding can be a separate area of activity as well as an approach to activities that is integrated into more traditional sector-based development programming. We use the term 'peacebuilding' throughout this article to include both types.

Once peacebuilding is defined, there remain significant challenges for evaluating the impact of peacebuilding activities on the broader social and political conflict context. Three elements in particular pose obstacles: first, the inherent long-term nature of any effort to build peace in a society means it is difficult to assess in the short-term; second, the intangible dimensions of relationships and attitudes are difficult to measure and monitor in a real world context;[3] and third, the vast political, economic and social contexts within which conflict occurs make it difficult to isolate the impact of peacebuilding – many variables could be equally responsible for building a more peaceful society. Despite these obstacles, evaluating the impact of peacebuilding efforts is essential both in ensuring that these efforts do not exacerbate the conflict, and to identify what works and may be built upon or replicated.

This article has a two-fold purpose. The first is to lay out a participatory and flexible process for planning and evaluating peacebuilding activities. The second is to address the missing micro-macro linkage in peacebuilding evaluation by moving from a micro-level focus on actors and capacity to the development of networks and institutions as vehicles for macro-level systemic transformation. To do this, we divide the article into three sections. First, we review existing theories and frameworks of peacebuilding evaluation, and discuss methods, impact, and change processes. Second, we outline an initial visual map of a planning, monitoring, and evaluation process. Third, we propose two frames for focusing and shaping peacebuilding evaluation: a strategic analysis frame, and a comprehensive vision frame. Together the map and frames lay the foundation for identifying factors and benchmarks with which to evaluate peacebuilding efforts.

Evaluating the Impact of Peacebuilding: Methods, Impact, and Change Processes

Most development agencies emerged to respond to post-World War II reconstruction needs. Relief and development work occurred in conflict contexts, yet the conflict-related dimensions of programming remained largely unexplored. Attention shifted to the importance of participatory development processes to head off conflicts within programming in the 1980s, but little attention was paid to the influence of development programming on the larger conflict context. This changed with the pioneering work of Mary Anderson's 'Do no harm/Local Capacities for Peace Project' (LCPP) in the 1990s (Anderson 1999), as well as the work of other scholars who examined the impact of development programmes on violent conflict (Uvin 1998). Development and donor agencies

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also became more aware that eliminating structural injustice and inequality and addressing the causes of poverty were important dimensions of development work for long-term, sustainable peace and livelihoods.[4] In essence, development actors recognised a shared goal with actors aiming to build peace: the importance of transforming unjust structures and systems.[5] Major relief and development agencies in the United States, Canada, and

Europe now include peacebuilding or 'conflict sensitive' practices with consistency and frequency. In 2000, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) made peacebuilding an agency-wide strategic objective. European and Canadian agencies were at the forefront of creating and implementing conflict sensitive approaches (Bush 1998; OECD 2001; Resource Pack 2004), and early debates about peacebuilding evaluation were sponsored by European and Canadian agencies, and appeared their websites in the late 1990s. These institutional changes solidified efforts already occurring in the field.

The increasing popularity of peacebuilding activities has given rise to a corresponding need for evaluation to determine whether funds and efforts are actually contributing to change. A series of works have been published that explore various approaches to evaluating peacebuilding. INCORE embarked upon a programme to document the 'state of the field'

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in terms of the various approaches to evaluating conflict resolution programming (Church and Shouldice 2002). The second phase of the programme focused on the gaps and challenges surfaced in the first report (Church and Shouldice 2003). More recent efforts propose a 'learning approach' and emphasise ongoing improvement rather than final impact; this shift moves from an emphasis on the judgmental elements of evaluation to an approach that strives to improve current practice through reflection on and learning from mistakes and successes (NPI-Africa 2001). An interesting congruence in the INCORE and NPI resources is the use of 'theories of change' for assessing impact of peacebuilding practice.[6]

Other documents have also explored the 'field of play' in peacebuilding evaluation, in larger or more streamlined formats. Gaigals and Leonhardt (2001) documented the various approaches and methods of conflict impact assessment. Galama and van Tongeren (2002) identified best practices in peacebuilding and outlined and reviewed many tools and approaches, such as LCPP, Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA), and conflict sensitivity. A set of papers sponsored by the Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management debated the strengths and weaknesses of PCIA and other evaluation approaches, including a discussion of who should give the main input for establishing evaluation criteria (Bush 2001; Hoffman 2001; Leonhardt 2001; Ross 2001b). These papers have now been combined into a new handbook (Austin *et al* 2004); and a newer online dialogue series complements the handbook by exploring new trends of 'third generation' PCIA, such as the 'Aid for Peace' approach (Paffenholz 2005). The latter suggests a broader understanding of PCIA that goes beyond 'tools' (Barbolet *et al* 2005) and represents a collaborative effort on the part of multiple organisations to provide a resource for improving the outcomes of projects and programmes in conflicted environments (Resource Pack 2004).

Despite these advances, there is little consensus on how to assess peacebuilding impact, exactly which or whose 'impacts' to assess, and how to determine the peace or conflict impacts. The 'do no harm' admonishment (Anderson 1999) highlighted dangers of doing development work without regard for its potential to foment violence. Peacebuilding programmes need not only to do no harm but also to work constructively towards long-term peace. Several central foci emerge from a review of peacebuilding evaluation literature and point to persistent problems as well as areas of growing consensus. One focus is on implementing an evaluation methodology that grows out of a broader ontological and epistemological orientation towards social change processes. A second focus is on the change itself, or programming 'impact'. A third area is the methodology used, which is integrally

related to the previous two points and can be participatory or goal-driven. We briefly review these three foci below, starting with methodology, in order to lay the foundation for the planning, monitoring and evaluation approach developed in this article.

Methodology and Measures

To date, the central method for gathering lessons learned and evaluation information in peacebuilding has been case study analysis. Two of the reviews of peacebuilding evaluations provide summaries of outcomes and lessons from case studies and other available literature. These reviews identify sets of evaluation criteria (efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, relevance, etc.) for ALNAP, the Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (Spencer 1998), and the Swedish government (Nyberg Sørenson *et al* 2000). More recently, the 'Reflections on Peace Practice' (RPP) project gathered evaluation information from case studies and regional practitioner forums to determine inductively what contributes to success or failure. The RPP project report suggested categories of evidence that supported positive (e.g. increases people's security) and negative (e.g. worsens divisions between groups) impacts on *peace writ large*, and produced criteria for effective practice that are now being field-tested (Anderson & Olson 2003).[8] It is one of the few resources that documents lessons across cases, although Smith (2004) analyses the peacebuilding experience of four European donor governments (Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom).

Across the case studies and summaries of the 'state of the art', general consensus exists that quantitative measurements, standard for more traditional relief and development activities, are inadequate for peacebuilding. As a Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) summary report on peacebuilding lessons learned states: 'To argue that peacebuilding can be measured quantitatively is to misunderstand both the nature of armed conflict as a political, social and cultural phenomenon, and the nature of conflict resolution as an effort to intervene in that complex reality' (SIPU International AB *et al* 2000). Peacebuilding researchers and practitioners as well as some governmental and non-governmental agencies echo this sentiment (Lederach 1997; Rothman 1997b; Bush 1998; Ross and Rothman 1999a).

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However, there is no consensus on qualitative monitoring and evaluation methodologies or content and the concept of 'impact' remains contested.

Categorising Peacebuilding Impact

One way of conceptualising peacebuilding-inspired change is to examine the degree and type of impact a programme has on a particular conflict or peaceful environment. Impact is understood in peacebuilding evaluation in a number of ways, ranging from the level of impact (micro/personal experiences of localised change to macro/structural and procedural change), to the location of change (internal project related versus external societal criteria). As we see, these are often too context-specific or too general to generate consistent insights and lessons about peacebuilding impact.

On a micro level, individual voices and personal stories of lived experiences can become a baseline for assessing change in a community or society. For example, individual stories provide the grounding for a CRS evaluation of the integration of peacebuilding into

emergency relief efforts in West Timor (Visser 2004). Another resource proposes the use of oral histories as an effective qualitative measure of impact for community development (Slim & Thomson 1995) – a methodology ideally suited for peacebuilding interventions as it captures the nuance and quality of individualised or localised change. In referring to specific outcomes, the ALNAP report mentioned above suggests most 'Track II' impacts were small-scale, local and mixed, and mentions the difficulty in identifying impacts and the importance of a long-term approach that is sensitive to the different stages and types of peacebuilding (Spencer 1998:25).[9]

Early PCIA work focused on the macro level. Kenneth Bush (1998) developed 'Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment' (PCIA) to focus assessment and evaluation on the impact of programming on peace and conflict structures and processes. He suggested five broad areas of impact: institutional capacity; military and human security; political structures and processes; economic structures and processes; and social reconstruction and empowerment. However, Bush also tried to bring in the 'micro' and emphasised that the central location for change is the 'lived experience of those in conflict zones' (Bush 1998:12).

Additional research and work identifies further areas for macro-level peacebuilding impact. Mark Hoffman (2001:13) identifies the United Nations Staff College training programme's six sectors for early warning and prevention: human rights and personal security; governance and political processes; societal and communal stability; socio-economic; military; and external. Manuela Leonhardt (1999) names four thematic areas in an International Alert study: governance, economics, socio-cultural factors and security. Indicators developed for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) focus on political, legal, security and civil society structures (Laprise 1998).

Understanding impact can be further clarified by utilising Rothman and Ross's distinction (Ross and Rothman 1999b; Rothman 1999; Ross 2001a) between the success of a project according to its *internal* standards and ability to impact *external* realities (Bush 2004). This is particularly important as larger political, economic and social agendas, structures and processes are commonly cited limits to peacebuilding impact (Bush 1998, 2004; Spencer 1998; Nyberg Sørenson *et al* 2000; Anderson & Olsen 2003). An initiative may be successful according to internal criteria, which tend to focus on process and micro-level criteria, but may have negligible impact on the external conflict environment. This link between local efforts and change in the larger conflict context is often absent from peacebuilding evaluations. Leonhardt (2001:8) raises crucial questions for PCIA methodologies about the relationship between individual projects and the wider context, the appropriate levels of evaluation and the micro-macro linkages. Hoffman (2001) and Ross (2001a) also note this problem of linkage, while Kelman (1995) points out that the field of conflict resolution has always struggled with the problem of transferring local efforts to change in the larger conflict context.

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Donors in particular have exerted considerable pressure to establish a consistent set of impact indicators, quantitative or qualitative, to help identify successful projects (Leonhardt 2001). Donors and implementing agencies are often more comfortable with quantitative indicators, which are well used in development and usually more easy to collect and understand (Laprise 1998). While some contend it is necessary to establish a bank of

indicators to make evaluation tools practical, useable and consistent (Hoffman 2001; Ross 2001b), others argue that it is important to let indicators emerge from the local context and not be biased by predetermined suggestions (Bush 2001). This debate is closely linked to the ways peacebuilders understand their work and the world (epistemology and ontology), which we discuss below.

Linking the Research Process to Social Change in Peacebuilding

Central to debates on indicators, methodological choice and identifying areas of impact is the understanding that peacebuilding practitioners have of change. The peacebuilding literature refers to change processes in two ways. In one perspective, successfully transforming conflicts is both the goal as well as an integral part of the evaluation process itself. From this perspective, peacebuilding programmes and activities need to embody healthy, participatory change processes internally, and this extends to how peacebuilders conduct assessment, monitoring and evaluation. In the second perspective, change is intimately linked to and an extension of visioning and theory. Comprehensive visioning and an understanding of how actions will produce changes provide guideposts for determining success. These perspectives are not mutually exclusive, and both contain an underlying assumption that peacebuilding and development practitioners can affect changes that will bring about a more just and peaceful world. The frames we present below draw upon the insights of both approaches to change and relate them to when and how evaluation needs to be done. Vision for change can provide a present focus as well as dreams for the future; participatory processes for change require ongoing implementation.

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From the first perspective, participatory processes are essential for evaluation and successful peacebuilding activities. Procedurally, participatory action research is suited to peacebuilding because it:

> … is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory world view which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities (Reason & Bradbury 2001:1).

It is suggested that participation brings empowerment, sustainability, ownership, accountability and group cohesion, and ensures contextual relevance to peacebuilding assessment, monitoring and evaluation (Bock 1998; Bush 1998; Rothman 1998; Spencer 1998; Nyberg Sørenson *et al* 2000; Raynard 2000; Ross 2001a). [10] In the process, the values inherent in peacebuilding activities, goals, and evaluation become transparent and a topic for discussion and mutual agreement among various stakeholders, which include donors, implementing agencies, and partners (Bush 1998; Hoffman 2001; Fast *et al* 2002; Paffenholz 2004). Suggestions for good process appear in a number of places, focusing on process alone or within participatory assessment, building on Participatory Rural Assessment techniques (Lederach 1997; Rothman 1998; NPI 1999; Bush 2001; Kraybill 2001) and on PRA methodology (Chambers 1994). Leonhardt (2001:7) suggests that 'Peacebuilding frameworks… should be able to make a clear distinction between short-term, mid-term

and long-term impact, allowing for a set of indicators that is evolving with the intervention, and pay particular attention to the dynamics of the process itself.'

The second perspective on change processes emphasises vision and theories of change. John Paul Lederach (1997:133) incorporates Carol Weiss' 1995 application of theory-based evaluation, which emphasises the need to identify theories of change and base evaluation on them because they suggest what will work, what to focus on, and why. Action theory involves a similar approach, where 'collaborative inquiry involves explicit shared reflection about the collective dream and mission' (Reason 1992:276). Visioning is also a central feature of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which scholars and practitioners have recently brought into peacebuilding evaluation (Sampson *et al* 2003). The AI '4-D' cycle focuses on: discovery and appreciation of the best of what is; dreaming and envisioning impact of what might be; designing and co-constructing what should be; and delivery and sustaining to empower, learn and adjust/improvise (Cooperrider & Srivastva 1987; CRS & GEM 2001).

Through the methodological haze of change, impact and peacebuilding evaluation – whether as stand-alone activities or dimensions integrated with other sectors of development work – a number of important themes and assumptions emerge. First, peacebuilding is a process of social, political and economic change that local, national, regional or international actors can initiate. Second, change occurs within large, already dynamic social, political and economic systems, and the challenge is to identify how peacebuilding activities impact those systems. Third, it is important to utilise a good participatory process in peacebuilding assessment, monitoring and evaluation. Fourth, visions and theories of social change can richly inform the focus of peacebuilding activities as well as their evaluation. Fifth, peacebuilding impact can be internal and external, or intentional or unintentional to particular activities. Sixth, those living in the conflict situation experience and can therefore best articulate actual impact.

Mapping a Peacebuilding Evaluation Process

To deal with the complexity of conflict and the need for peacebuilding processes to be rooted locally and evaluated within their own contexts, as well as engage with larger change processes, a simple visual map of an envisaged process can be used (Figure 1). This map links a participatory process that takes conflict transformation as both a goal and an inherent part of evaluation, with a visioning process to identify guideposts for change. Good process, which is participatory and flexible, plays a fundamental role in peacebuilding activities and needs to inform assessment, monitoring and evaluation processes. Thus, designing a programme and its evaluation begins by articulating a process to be used – one that informs the methods of work and ensures, to the greatest degree possible, participation as well as empowerment.[11]

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Building on Lederach (1997), two important steps in the design process are suggested that need to occur virtually simultaneously. These steps are the focus of the remainder of this article. *Comprehensive visioning* identifies future goals and helps identify what needs to change in the process (a macro perspective of change), while s*trategic analysis* refocuses on the micro-level efforts and activities (initiated at the local level but bridge into larger macro, systemic and institutional levels) to maximise impact on the larger context.

Figure 1. Peacebuilding Monitoring and Evaluation Process Map
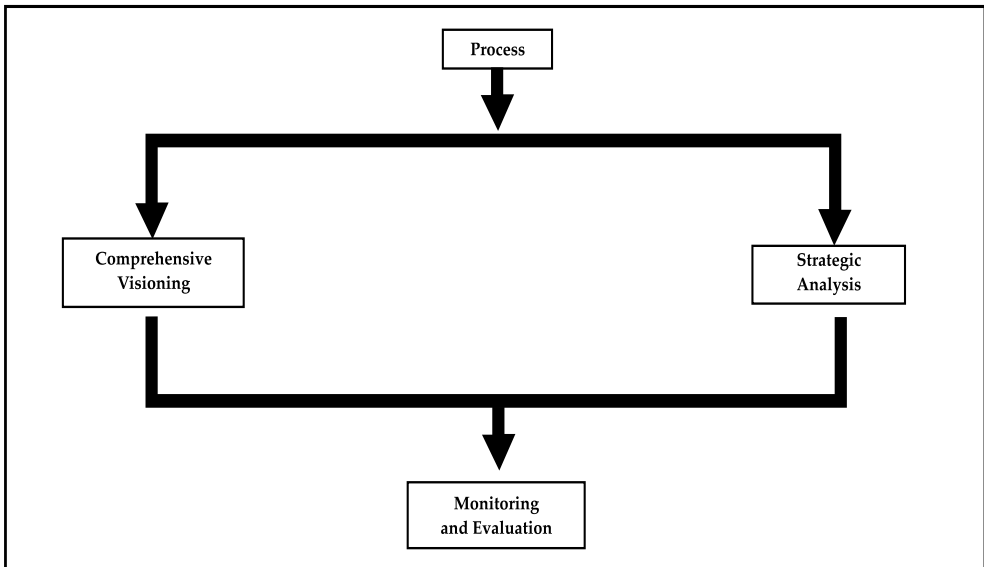
The monitoring and evaluation process emerges from these steps, with its focus and content shaped by both steps. All are firmly rooted in a participatory process. This process contrasts with a traditional donor approach to evaluation in the project management cycle which typically moves from design to implementation and to evaluation with very little emphasis on process (Hoffman, 2001:3). It posits that the evaluation process itself should be informed by good process, strategic planning and pre-visioning work, *and* that these are all elements that influence the full range of the planning, monitoring, and evaluation project cycle. We focus here on evaluation because it tends to be the least process-oriented part of the project life cycle.

Using Comprehensive Visioning and Strategic Analysis Frames for Evaluating Peacebuilding Impact

Comprehensive visioning and strategic analysis frames help to identify factors and benchmarks for evaluating peacebuilding programming and its impacts on the larger context. They make use of a participatory process that is both a means to, and part of, the eventual goal, and that is contextualised to build upon existing peacebuilding actors and capacity. The comprehensive visioning frame guides decision-making about peacebuilding programming according to an overall societal vision of what a peaceful society might look like. The strategic analysis frame, on the other hand, allows peacebuilders to analyse the actors and capacity present in a society, while looking at the specifics of programming. These frames are applicable to actors who engage in work explicitly to build peace in a conflicted environment (such as conflict resolution organisations or conflict-sensitive programming in development agencies), as well as to actors who work to eliminate poverty or injustice, without an overt focus on peacebuilding (such as development or human rights organisations). We turn first to a discussion of the link between micro processes and macro change, which is a necessary component of impacting the larger conflict context, and then discuss the two frames in turn.

Making the Micro-macro Link

Envisioning a changed society allows us to be imaginative at a macro level, while thinking strategically about where our efforts will have the most impact focuses our efforts at a micro level. Together these two frameworks guide our decisions and link our efforts. The goal is to move from *actors* and *capacity* in peacebuilding in the short term to *networks* and *infrastructure* for peacebuilding in the long term in order to initiate and sustain change, and link local, micro projects to macro structural change. We focus on networks and infrastructure because they are reflective and indicative of institutionalised change processes, essential elements of grounded and sustainable peacebuilding. As discussed further below, focusing upon actors and capacity involves encouraging and solidifying culturally appropriate and locally based efforts at peacebuilding. Creating networks and infrastructure involves linking the efforts of local peacebuilders across levels of social leadership, and across conflict schisms. Essentially this process solidifies the fruits of their labours via an established network and infrastructure for peace.

> **The goal of the comprehensive visioning and strategic analysis frames is to facilitate movement from *actors* and *capacities* in the short term to *networks* and *infrastructures* in the long term, in order to initiate and sustain change, and link local, micro projects to macro structural change.**

Two metaphors help to elucidate how local actions are related to macro change: thinking of infrastructure in terms of building a house and of networking actors in terms of a spider's web. In building a house, common sense directs us to build on a firm foundation, preferably one that already exists. If a house is built on a weak or shifting foundation, cracks may appear, the house will develop structural weaknesses, and is likely eventually to crumble. Using an existing foundation diminishes the amount of research the builder would need to do to determine an ideal location and minimises the labour needed to lay a new foundation. In much the same way, drawing upon existing capacity to create a peacebuilding infrastructure means we diminish the work and resources needed to mount a completely new process, and it becomes easier to contextualise and sustain peacebuilding work.

Similarly, in visualising a web, we imagine thin strands woven together to produce a strong collection of interlocking threads that enable the spider to catch bigger prey. Putting aside the idea of killing prey, this metaphor points to the necessity of connecting individual actors in peacebuilding to extend and expand their efforts vertically (across levels of society) and horizontally, across identity lines (Lederach 2005; Schirch 2004). In this way, we look to amplify local peacebuilding capacity so it becomes infrastructure for social change, and expand and extend local actors to become networks. The assumptions about change here coincide with the RPP insights that Anderson and Olson (2003) capture: we need to move from personal change to socio-political change, and involve 'more' as well as 'key' actors. Capacity can refer to implementing capacity (i.e. the ability to implement projects) as well as an actor's reach across horizontal and vertical segments of society. For example, an organisation may have members from different ethnic groups, and a radio station has programming with a following among different classes or status groups. In this way, the organisation has horizontal links and the radio station has vertical links. These complement each other, and thus transform capacity to infrastructure while simultaneously solidifying and supporting existing abilities and programming, much like a house that is built on a firm foundation.

Transforming actors working for peace as individuals, groups, organisations or institutions into networks implies linking actors and their activities in order to expand their individual

efforts and extend their efforts to additional actors and participants, much as a spider web links various strands to create a stronger and more effective trap. Both essentially institutionalise a transfer of capacity and exemplify how we can link the micro level to wider macro-level change processes and impact.

Constructing the Comprehensive Visioning Frame

This frame emphasises the utility of having a broad social vision to guide peacebuilding programming. As Elise Boulding (1991) recommends, we must engage in 'imaging the future'. A comprehensive vision of a peaceful society provides direction and guidance in making decisions about peacebuilding programming, especially when combined with the strategic analysis frame presented below. It identifies goals to work towards and what needs to change in order to achieve these goals. As such it provides a benchmark by which to track the success of peacebuilding efforts.

Goals are utilised in two ways in peacebuilding evaluation literature. Rothman and Ross emphasise that goals change over the life of the project (Ross & Rothman 1999b, 1999). They use the goals identified at the beginning of the programme as a baseline. On the other hand, those who favour the second perspective identified above use goals and vision to help determine where impact will be or how to achieve it (e.g. Lederach and AI practitioners). While this proposed process falls into the latter camp, we recognise the need to account for goal change and dynamism in the process. This can be accomplished through check-in points throughout the life of a project, perhaps yearly, to rethink goals, progress and process.

The central piece of this frame is a participatory visioning process for a society or a community, drawing upon AI methodology and techniques. AI, as outlined above, builds upon action research and encourages groups to identify the best of what has been and envision what might be (Cooperrider & Srivastva 1987). For example, staff members of a peacebuilding organisation, together with representatives of various elements of civil society and official actors, might engage in a dialogue about a vision for the future (an eventual context in which just peace has been achieved) and how to reach that vision based upon strengths that already exist in the society. Reaching this vision would necessarily involve existing actors and capacity as well as infrastructure and networks identified using the Strategic Analysis framework, as explained in the following section.

A comprehensive visioning exercise might ask the following questions (drawn in part from Booy and Sena 2000):

- What do we value most about our society?
- What do we want our children to learn about our society and pass on to future generations?
- What peace traditions do we value most?
- What are the high points of our society's history?
- What does a peaceful society look like for us?
- What do we want our society to look like in five years, 10 years, 20 years or 50 years?
- What have we done well to help create peace?
- How can we build upon and amplify the traditions we value and the high points we identified in order to nurture and create the society we envision for the future?

33

These questions force us to reflect on the past and project positive elements of that past into a more hopeful future. Discussions about what has worked in the past can engender ideas about how to use existing capacity and actors in order to realise this vision and help us figure out how to implement the vision. The strategic analysis framework complements the comprehensive visioning framework in that it identifies the local actors and capacity, and the networks and infrastructure necessary to achieve the vision.

Constructing the Strategic Analysis Frame

The strategic analysis frame allows us to analyse the development, peace, and other actors present in a society and to examine their capacity for engaging in peacebuilding activities. This capacity can then be tied to networking and infrastructure to achieve long-term, widespread social change. This type of analysis should be internally and externally focused, meaning those organisations engaged in peacebuilding and attempting to use this framework should first analyse their own capacity as peacebuilders before identifying other actors and capacities in a society. Ideally, infrastructure and networks build on existing capacity and engage existing peacebuilding actors. In this way, the framework is *contextualised* within a society and grounded in its traditions and social structures.

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The first step in the strategic analysis frame is to engage in self-reflection. To do this, peacebuilding actors (individuals or organisations) must ask questions about their own ability to implement peacebuilding programmes (do we have the experience or expertise, the resources, and the required staff people?) as well as ask questions about their vertical and horizontal linkages within the society – with whom do we work; how are they linked to other actors in society; do these connections exclude us from working with some groups; how will our work with these groups lead to larger-scale change? This step forces actors to look at their strengths and weaknesses (mostly internal to the organisation) and the opportunities and threats (mostly external to the organisation) they face in doing peacebuilding work, an exercise known as a SWOT analysis.[12]

The second step is to analyse peacebuilding capacity among the actors in a society. The above section on the micro-macro link explains the rationale for the frames proposed. This section fleshes out what this means and how we work at making the links. The context must first be examined – specifically, who is working for peace in a society and what they do in the present context. With regard to capacity, who has existing capacity in peacebuilding and what mechanisms, organisations, or institutions exist that channel conflict in peaceful directions in the immediate situation? After answering these questions, we need to imagine what to do to establish a long-term or sustainable network and infrastructure for peacebuilding, and how it will support a social change process. This is similar to what Lederach (2003) terms a 'platform for change', and is informed by comprehensive visioning. Table 1 summarises this frame in a matrix, with numerals corresponding to the different boxes, and is elaborated in greater detail below. We propose looking at actors, networks, capacity and infrastructure for short-term action as well as what we hope to build in the long term.

Before examining these boxes in detail, it is useful to note that for programme assessment, the short-term analysis provides the basis for the context analysis and baseline information

Table 1: Strategic Analysis Frame for Peacebuilding

	ACTORS/NETWORKS		CAPACITY/INFRASTRUCTURE	
	Who	**What**	**Who**	**What**
Short-Term/ Immediate	I	II	III	IV
Long-Term/ Sustainable	V	VI	VII	VIII

for monitoring and evaluation. The long-term analysis provides the basis for developing indicators for success. These indicators may be qualitative or quantitative and will need to be revisited as the goals and context change.

In thinking about who are the existing peacebuilding actors (Box I), it helps to identify those individuals, organisations, and groups working for peace in the society, and to determine whether there are existing linkages between these actors (e.g. joint programming, common goals, geographic proximity, similar memberships or participants). Are these actors are linked horizontally across conflict lines, or vertically across social class or leadership levels? Those that are already linked are well placed to form larger networks and leverage their impact on the peace and conflict context.

Moving to Box II, we examine what existing peacebuilding actors do and the issues on which they work that divide or connect people. They might work to encourage relationships between groups of people within the parameters of their programmes or within their own community, by bringing people together to talk about particular issues of interest to multiple communities (such as their children's education). Or they might raise a dialogue to increase knowledge about the 'other' (guest speakers on the basic tenets of different religions, for instance). An organisation might work to reduce the economic disparities in a community by involving the poor in projects that also draw upon local businesspeople, or by bringing the assets of different communities together (e.g. organising rotating craft markets in communities that normally do not interact because of conflict lines). A significant question arises about who are the natural connectors (Anderson 1999), especially in relation to issues and geographic locations.

The boxes concerning capacity and infrastructure ask similar questions about who and what. In identifying who has existing capacity in peacebuilding (Box III), the focus is on who is already working for peace and social change, and who is capable of initiating or leading change. Some of these might have articulated a vision of or for change, perhaps by identifying key injustices in a society and strategies to eliminate these injustices. Equally important is to think about who is missing from the process. The climate for peace activities is another area to analyse. For example, are peacebuilders visible in society and able to operate publicly, or does the political climate force them to work underground or out of the spotlight? This question is particularly important because in some societies work for peace may be viewed as political dissent not tolerated by those with power.

Identifying what capacity exists in a country (Box IV) requires us to examine what mechanisms or institutions are already present for dealing with flashpoints that ignite conflict (e.g. symbols, language, geographic locations, issues or myths) as well as issues that fuel ongoing discord. For example, Ayodhya in India is a geographic flashpoint for

conflict between Muslims and Hindus. Are attitudes, behaviour or emotions changing between groups in society that point to the possibility of (renewed) violence? Are there some capacities or activities that are most relevant and useful in de-escalating conflict? To determine existing capacity, we need to ask if any local organisations have been working to promote dialogue between groups, or what are some issues that might connect these groups instead of further dividing them. As noted above, the process of identifying existing actors and their capacity should be participatory and in itself can become a way of linking actors for peace.

Transforming actors and capacity into networks and infrastructure is a strategy to make the micro-macro linkage explicit and to achieve change the overall context. A long-term strategic analysis requires us to think in terms of what networks and infrastructure for peacebuilding would look like. This points us in a direction of thinking about what we hope to support or help create regarding networks and infrastructure for peacebuilding. For example, if we successfully create networks for peacebuilding in the long term, we might have established global linkages – horizontal and vertical – to support change processes and deal with internal conflicts (Box V). In terms of their capacity (Box VI), we might have achieved complementarity of peacebuilding actors and issues and the transformation of peacebuilding actors to peacebuilding networks.

> **Transforming actors and capacity into networks and infrastructure is a strategy to make the micro-macro linkage explicit and to achieve change the overall context.**

Similarly, in creating an infrastructure for peacebuilding over the long term, a large coalition, institution or association of peacebuilding organisations might exist, with coordinated activities and established mechanisms for accountability to donors and participants. This grouping would likely have a good, preferably institutionalised process to deal with internal conflict that would inevitably arise. Previous flashpoints would have lost their potency, in part because of the transformation of capacity to infrastructure for peace (Box VII). Additional signs of what this infrastructure might look like include the complementarity of peacebuilding programmes and the establishment of peacebuilding institutions with the capacity and resources exist to implement programming (Box VIII).

To summarise, Table 1, presented above, is a matrix to identify issues and actors that can guide us in asking and answering questions that will articulate dimensions of change focused particularly on the micro-macro link. In filling out this matrix, the *who* category address questions about who we work with, while the *what* category deals with the issues we focus upon to maximise impact. The short-term/ immediate row presents what exists now and provides guidance for identifying whom we can work with and what kinds of programming are appropriate. The long-term/sustainable row captures what we hope to create through peacebuilding programming. Combining the vision of what we hope to accomplish with an analysis of what individual peacebuilding actors do best *and* an analysis of already existing actors and capacity allows us to think not only about where to focus peacebuilding efforts but also where and how we will have sustained impact. We can use this information in developing more precise and responsive programming assessment, monitoring and evaluation systems and content. Appropriate measures can be generated in direct response to the actors, networks, capacity and infrastructure identified at the present (the baseline) and for the long-term future.

Applying Strategic and Comprehensive Frameworks to Peacebuilding Programming

Peacebuilding and traditional development work share a common goal of changing unjust structures and systems. Over the past two decades, development work has moved from problem-focused interventions to more comprehensive, appreciative asset-based livelihoods strategies, such as that embodied in the British Department for International Development (DFID) sustainable livelihoods model. These models highlight the importance of being people-centred and holistic and of transforming structures and processes in order to achieve long-term sustainability. Peacebuilding brings additional tools and clarity to this holistic and people-centred structural change in development work. Although the obstacles to evaluating peacebuilding, both as an explicit focus of activity and as an element of development programming, are numerous and significant, thinking strategically and comprehensively about what we want to accomplish and how we might achieve it presents us with a way to overcome these challenges. Approaching peacebuilding and development programming from a 'theory of change' perspective makes our process and assumptions explicit and transparent, moves us from a short-term project to a long-term programme cycle, and helps to bridge and leverage the micro to macro levels for impact.

This article identified two different perspectives on peacebuilding evaluation, both of which emphasise participatory processes – one in which transforming conflict is both a goal and an inherent part of evaluation, and the other in which the goals (identified through a visioning process) provide the guideposts for change. These perspectives are linked in a process map (Figure 1) which structures the evaluation process so that 'process' comes first. Within this process a comprehensive vision for society is explored and a strategic analysis that examines existing capacity and networks is conducted. Micro peacebuilding activities are linked to macro change processes by focusing on the goal of transforming existing actors and capacity into sustainable networks and infrastructure for peacebuilding. A strategic and comprehensive analysis can generate programming ideas and focus as well as indicators for evaluating impact. The frames we present in this article are an initial draft for how peacebuilding planning, monitoring, and evaluation should occur, ideas that now need to be put into practice.

> **Approaching peacebuilding and development programming from a 'theory of change' perspective makes our process and assumptions explicit and transparent, moves us from a short-term project to a long-term programme cycle, and helps to bridge and leverage the micro to macro levels for constructive impact.**

A participatory process inevitably takes more work and is likely more frustrating. We believe the benefits outweigh the constraints. It is important to incorporate periodic participatory monitoring events to determine if the process remains participatory, and to discuss, re-evaluate, and conceivably revise the comprehensive vision, or to update existing actors and capacity as part of a strategic analysis. In the end, peacebuilding requires that we not only implement good ideas for 'impact', but that we implement them in ways that respectfully encourage ownership, cooperation, and accountability within each particular context. People are at the heart of peacebuilding, from action to evaluation.

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Endnotes

[1] The authors presented an earlier version of this article at the March 2002 International Studies Convention in New Orleans. It builds on the evaluation section of *Peacebuilding: A Caritas Training Manual* (Neufeldt *et al* 2002). The authors thank the editors of the *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* and anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on this version.

[2] This definition is similar to the one Catholic Relief Services uses in its peacebuilding work.

[3] This is despite experimental research on these topics (Carnevale & Pruitt 1992; Fiske 1998; Pruitt 1995, 1998).

[4] The sustainable livelihoods framework of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) is one more recent example of this type of approach. It is available at www.livelihoods.org/ info/ info_guidancesheets.html. Catholic Relief Services has developed an integral human development framework that builds upon the DFID model and enhances the component dealing with political assets and structural engagement.

[5] Duffield (2001) offers a forceful and well-argued critique of the linkage between development, security and peacebuilding.

[6] A collaborative initiative of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies and Catholic Relief Services is developing an evaluation approach that uses a 'theory of change' model at its core.

[7] The Planning and Assessment approach has now been renamed the 'Aid for Peace' approach.

[8] The RPP is currently in an implementation test phase. For example, CRS and CDA have developed a learning alliance in Europe to improve the impact of CRS programmes utilising the RPP criteria.

[9] A team from SIDA used the ALNAP criteria and identified the following possible areas for impact: the ability to provide space, language and channels for communication; reforms in the security and legal sectors; development of local peace constituencies; and enhanced democracy (Nyberg Sørenson *et al* 2000). However, a second SIDA summary report conceded the ALNAP criteria had no mechanism to judge the degree of impact (SIPU International AB *et al* 2000).

[10] For a review of the evidence supporting the notion that participation generates greater commitment, see Marc Howard Ross (2001a). For a variety of methodologies related to empowerment evaluation that enhance collaboration and conflict resolution, see Ashton (1997).

[11] We do not focus on how to design a good process in this article, because it is already well developed in the PRA and peacebuilding literature identified above.

[12] Cook (1987) supports a similar process in applying a corporate economy perspective to a non-profit planning process. Three concepts guide this process: programme attractiveness (e.g. congruence with the mission and existing skills); competitive position (i.e. funding base and implementing ability); and alternative coverage (i.e. other organisations doing similar activities). Interestingly, this planning process obliges an organisation to make difficult but necessary decisions to focus its work in the areas it is best placed to have an impact. In some cases, the matrix suggests an organisation should either 'build strength and get out' (in situations of high programme attractiveness but weak competitive position and low alternate coverage) or divest entirely (high attractiveness but high coverage and weak position).

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