UNDERSTANDING CHANGE

The chapter includes:

1. Thoughts on defining success

2. Descriptions of theories of change

3. Descriptions of types of change

4. Examples of outcomes

INTRODUCTION

"It is in changing that things find purpose."

- HERACLITES

A theory of change is a set of beliefs about how change happens.

Answers to what makes peacebuilding successful have been slow in coming. In part, this is due to the intangible dimensions of peacebuilding such as relationships, emotions, communications, identity, values, and culture. Add to this the context-specific idiosyncrasies of each conflict and it is no wonder practitioners often view peacebuilding more as an art and outsiders view it as almost mystical (or just dumb luck). Despite the lack of answers, the practices of the peacebuilding field are considered less a science than those in other fields only because many of us who are practitioners have been less than scientific in our work, studies, learning, and reflection.

This handbook does not offer universal instructions about what to change in building peace. Instead, it offers a number of paradigms to help in our thinking and speaking about design, monitoring, and evaluation of peacebuilding. Behind every peacebuilding initiative there is at least one theory of change. A theory of change is a set of beliefs about how change happens. For example, some believe that culture changes when a critical mass of people takes on new values or morals. Often the theories of change remain implicit, unstated, and unexplored. It is possible to undergo a fairly complete program design process, including goals and objectives, and never examine the underlying assumptions about how change really happens in a given context.

Ideally, practitioners should perform a thorough analysis of the context of a conflict and determine, in consultation with multiple local and international actors, what actions are likely to produce changes in the conflict system. In this context, for instance, will political actors be susceptible to international pressures, economic demand, public opinion, or some other intervention? What drives the decision making by those with the power to make decisions for or against peace?

Too often we are driven in our program choices by our favorite methods – training, dialogue, trauma healing, political negotiation, grassroots mobilization – without considering which of these has the greatest likelihood of leveraging the desired change in the conflict. Program effectiveness is tied to a clear understanding of the ways that change happens in the particular context.

There are no shortcuts and no substitutes for thorough and thoughtful conflict assessment and analysis. The depth and focus of the analysis influences the choice of what to change and what types of change are needed. Designing peacebuilding programs and projects without a complete conflict analysis is irresponsible and potentially dangerous. Before going further, dig up, dust off, update, or complete an assessment using the methodology that best fits your skills, resources, and preferences as well as the conflict on which you are working. Conflict assessments and analysis are not done in a vacuum, however. Be aware of the authors' bias and predisposition – including your own.

An ever-increasing number of conflict analysis tools is available for practitioners to use. Descriptions of many of the more common methodologies can be found in *Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding*, published by Safeworld and partners. The best and most thorough source of information about these methodologies is on the website of the sponsoring organization. A number of the more frequently used models include:

- Do No Harm – Collaborative Development Associates
- FAST methodology – Swiss Peace
- Strategic Conflict Assessment – DFID
- Conflict Analysis Framework – World Bank
- Conflict Assessment Framework – CMM USAID
- Conflict and Policy Assessment Framework – Clingendael
- Conflict Analysis and Response Definition – FEWER

How is success defined?

Like development, peacebuilding strives to make, maintain, or prevent change. This implies some sort of continuum from one point to another. In a dialogue, for example, one party's initial understanding of the dynamics involved in the conflict may be limited to their own positions. As the dialogue continues, they are able to articulate their interests and the others' positions. Further into the process they may be able to express the legitimacy of the others' interests. Here the change sought is one of appreciation of the others' interests. Success is an arbitrary determination of progress and can be set at any point along the continuum in the desired direction of change.

Determining success first requires us to identify what changes are needed, which requires asking, what is the continuum and where are the stakeholders on the continuum? Only after answering these questions can we say how much change needs to take place to be considered a success.

However one chooses to define success, this manual is geared toward looking for success at the level of objectives and outcomes, rather than

There are no shortcuts and no substitutes for thorough and thoughtful conflict assessment and analysis.

Success is an arbitrary determination of progress and can be set at any point along the continuum in the desired direction of change.

goals and impact. Information about outcomes can more easily be obtained, tracked, and readily used by practitioners. Measuring impact usually requires sophisticated data collection and analysis methods from multiple sources over extended periods of time. Invariably these requirements either exceed the capacity of many organizations practicing peacebuilding or they extend beyond the donors' funding period. Such limitations explain the importance of partnering with universities and expert researchers who are willing to track, measure, and document the progress of multiple practitioners over longer periods of time.

Who defines what success is?

Ultimately, the definition of success is the responsibility of the people in conflict. Unilaterally, parties will often define success as the total domination of their position. Even though the negotiation may have been conducted by track one or elite groups, the general population eventually accepts or rejects the proposed solutions. For many peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes, a mutually agreed-upon definition of success or goal jointly set by the parties is an important process milestone in and of itself.

In the absence of a consensus among stakeholders about what success would be for a peacebuilding program, donors and NGOs often forge their own definitions. In the best of situations, the discussion about success involves listening to the parties, creating greater opportunities for engagement and participation, and keeping definitions of success broad enough for all stakeholders to easily see how their interests are addressed.

What are we trying to change?

This chapter covers two perspectives on change: theories of change and specific types of changes. Theories of change help planners and evaluators stay aware of the assumptions behind their choices, verify that the activities and objectives are logically aligned, and identify opportunities for integrated programming to spark synergies and leverage greater results. Types of change refer to specific changes expressed in the actual program design and/or evaluation, either as goals, objectives, or indicators. Common examples include changes in behavior, practice, process, status, etc. Both the theory of change and the types of changes sought should be evident in a well-designed program.

Ultimately, the definition of success is the responsibility of the people in conflict.

What are the theories of change for peacebuilding?

For our purposes, we are using the theories of change for peacebuilding that were developed as part of a large, multiparty action-reflection process called Reflecting on the Practice of Peace or RPP. Among RPP's many participants, there was a consensus that all theories of change are important and necessary; however, different theories may yield greater results under different circumstances.

THE INDIVIDUAL CHANGE THEORY: Peace comes through transformative change of a critical mass of individuals, their consiousness, attitudes, behaviors, and skills. [Methods: investment in individual change through training, personal transformation/consciousness-raising workshops or processes; dialogues and encounter groups; trauma healing.]

THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS THEORY: Peace emerges out of a process of breaking down isolation, polarization, division, prejudice and stereotypes between/among groups. Strong relationships are a necessary ingredient for peacebuilding. [Methods: processes of inter-group dialogue; networking; relationship-building processes; joint efforts and practical programs on substantive problems.]

THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE RESOURCES FOR WAR THEORY: Wars require vast amounts of material (weapons, supplies, transport, etc.) and human capital. If we can interrupt the supply of people and goods to the war-making system, it will collapse and peace will break out. [Methods: anti-war campaigns to cut off funds/national budgets; conscientious objection and/or resistance to military service; international arms control; arms (and other) embargoes and boycotts.]

THE REDUCTION OF VIOLENCE THEORY: Peace will result as we reduce the levels of violence perpetrated by combatants or their representatives. [Methods: cease-fires, creation of zones of peace, withdrawal/retreat from direct engagement, introduction of peacekeeping forces/interposition, observation missions, accompaniment efforts, promotion of nonviolent methods for achieving political/social/economic ends.]

THE ROOT CAUSES/JUSTICE THEORY: We can achieve peace by addressing the underlying issues of injustice, oppression/exploitation, threats to identity and security, and people's sense of injury/victimization. [Methods: long-term campaigns for social and structural change, truth and reconciliation; changes in social institutions, laws, regulations, and economic systems.]

THE INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT THEORY: Peace is secured by establishing stable/reliable social institutions that guarantee democracy, equity, justice, and fair allocation of resources. [Methods: new constitutional and governance arrangements/entities; development of human rights, rule of law, anti-corruption; establishment of democratic/equitable economic structures; economic development; democratization.]

THE POLITICAL ELITES THEORY: Peace comes when it is in the interest of political (and other) leaders to take the necessary steps. Peacebuilding efforts must change the political calculus of key leaders and groups. [Methods: raise the costs and reduce the benefits for political elites of continuing war while increasing the incentives for peace; engage active and influential constituencies in favor of peace; withdraw international support/ funding for warring parties.]

THE GRASSROOTS MOBILIZATION THEORY: "When the people lead, the leaders will follow." If we mobilize enough opposition to war, political leaders will have to pay attention. [Methods: mobilize grassroots groups to either oppose war or to advocate for positive action; nonviolent direct action campaigns; use of the media; education/mobilization efforts; organize advocacy groups; dramatic events to raise consciousness.]

THE ECONOMICS THEORY: As a politician once said, "It's the economy, stupid!" People make personal decisions and decision makers make policy decisions based on a system of rewards/ incentives and punishments/sanctions that are essentially economic in nature. If we can change the economies associated with war making, we can bring peace. [Methods: use of government or financial institutions to change supply and demand dynamics; control incentive and reward systems; boycotts.]

THE PUBLIC ATTITUDES THEORY: War and violence are partly motivated by prejudice, misperceptions, and intolerance of difference. We can promote peace by using the media (television and radio) to change public attitudes and build greater tolerance in society. [Methods: TV and radio programs that promote tolerance; modeling tolerant behavior; symbolic acts of solidarity/unity; dialogues among groups in conflict—with subsequent publicity.][4]

ADD YOUR OWN: This list is in no way comprehensive. Many initiatives have their own theory of change. What is important is to be able to articulate the thinking about how change happens. It need not fit into any of the above theories.

---

[4] Peter Woodrow, *Strategic Analysis for Peacebuilding Programs* (excerpt from a longer paper in draft).

How do we use theories of change?

a) To reveal and understand assumptions

Two assumptions are inherent in each theory: 1) how change works, and 2) the strategic advantage of the chosen theory over other theories for the context. Change on the level of the political elites assumes that they remain in power to ensure the advancement of the peace process. It also assumes that the change will endure throughout transitions of power (even after they have left power). Reducing the resources for war assumes that, without weapons, people are less likely to use violence, or that the violence used will result in less death and destruction.

Institutional development, for example, is relatively slow and is often discarded in favor of more immediate results focused on the reducing the level of violence. Where the peacebuilding organization has good relationships with all parties in a conflict, it may give priority to those healthy relations rather than working to reduce the resources for war. The assumption is that, given the analysis, skills, processes, and other assets the organization brings to the situation, it can have the greatest influence using one or two particular theories of change.

b) To ensure alignment in all levels of the program design

When setting goals and objectives, consider the theory of change behind your choices. Are there other theories of change that are better suited to the situation on which you are working? How will effectiveness increase if multiple theories are integrated into the design?

The theory(ies) of change should be discernible at all levels of the program design. If the overall goal of the program is institutional development that targets the court system, for example, then activities directed at reducing the resource for war would seem out of place. One of the common threads that aligns activities, objectives, and goals is the theory of change. Discussions of the underlying theories of change can help tighten program logic and identify gaps and unmet needs.

Certain types of program interventions fit neatly within one theory of change. The example below helps to illustrate the variety of interventions that may fit within any given theory of change. This example also illustrates the overlap between theories of change. For instance, security reform also fits under the institutional development theory as well as the reduce resources for war theory.

Examples of Interventions within Two Different Theories of Change

	Theory of Change: Reduce the Resources for War	Theory of Change: Public Attitudes Theory
HUMAN RESOURCES	Peacekeeping Security Reform Demobilization of combatants Social reintegration of ex-combatants Strengthen resistance/protection of groups vulnerable to violence (Skill building of youth) Disobedience (Israeli military refuseniks)	Train journalists Train influential people and other salient referral sources Involve celebrities and cultural icons Media Literacy
MATERIAL RESOURCES	Small Arms and light weapons reduction, control, registration, etc. Disarmament Demilitarized zones (Korea)	Radio and TV programming Social marketing campaigns Cultural, social and sports gatherings Distance learning resources Textbooks and curricula
FINANCIAL RESOURCES	Limit and restrict resources that can be diverted into war resources (Congo's natural resources) Transparency in trade (Blood diamonds in West Africa)	Purchase air time and other communication channels Invest in media plurality

The above examples are neither exhaustive nor restrictive. They are offered simply to inspire program designers to consider the wide range of options available among theories of change. The use of human, financial, and material resources as a means to organize different interventions was borrowed from common practices in facilitating participatory evaluation of community development projects

c) To promote coordination and integrated programming

Giving emphasis or priority to one theory of change does not imply that the others are without merit. More often, the choice represents the capacity or principles of the peacebuilding organization. Peacebuilding requires numerous initiatives at many levels. Integrating different initiatives from multiple organizations that are using several theories of change would seem to offer the best prospects for peace. In this context, integration means the coordination and synthesis of multiple peacebuilding programs, rather than the integration of peacebuilding programs with development or relief programs. More on integration of programming is found in the chapter on Design page 25.

Types of change refer to categories of that can be altered (e.g., changes in knowledge, changes in behavior). Programs often sequence different types of change. For example, a relationship-building initiative might consider knowledge about history to be a prerequisite to changes in stereotyping behavior. The types of change are not totally distinct; some overlap. The intent is not to create definitive academic distinctions, but rather to inspire creative, thorough, and strategic design.

The following table illustrates some of the many examples of specific changes that comprise each of the major types of change.

What are the different types of change?

Well-done conflict assessments and analyses are instrumental in identifying the types of change needed in a given context. While the theories of change refer to the broad strategies behind different approaches to peacebuilding, almost all peacebuilding programs implicitly target specific changes in people, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures and/or societies. These more-specific changes help in articulating goals and objectives and in developing indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

Examples of Types of Change[5]

Type of change	Examples of specific changes
Relationship	From adversaries to partners in problem solving From suspicion to solidarity From different ethnicities to a common nationality Former neighbors reconciled
Status	Soldier to veteran From rebel leader to parliamentarian From entrepreneur to criminal
Behavior	From violent behavior to assertiveness From disrespecting women to respecting women From ignoring youth to taking their interests into consideration
Circumstance	From politically marginalized to able to vote From displaced hurricane victim to community member
Functioning	Increasing transparency From authoritarian to consultative policy development Increasing cost efficiency

[5] Modified from *Outcome Examples*, Michael Quinn Patton, *Utilization-Focused Evaluation*, 3rrd Edition, Sage, 1997.

Type of change	Examples of specific changes
Attitude	Greater tolerance of different perspectives From fear of others to trust in others From apathy and fatalism to hope and self-determination From a narrow focus on the neighborhood to a broad focus on inter-communal interests
Knowledge	Understands interdependence of groups Understands how globalization affects local livelihoods Understands rights and how justice systems should work Knows how political resources are allocated
Skills	From power-based to interest-based negotiations Moving discussions from mutually exclusive interests to framing issues in mutually acceptable language Able to introduce items onto the agenda in local governance
Maintenance	Continue to celebrate cultural heritage Maintain existing social cohesion Continue to practice traditional dispute resolution processes
Prevention	Peaceful transfer of power Increase awareness of military accountability to civilian ministries Prevent exodus of trained and educated professionals
Process	From shuttle diplomacy to face-to-face negotiation From hate-mongering to balanced reporting From divisive methods to methods that bring people together From concentrations of authority over others to equitable engagement with others
Structural	Creation of a Ministry of Peace New office of Alternative Dispute Resolution established in Ministry of Justice
Add your own	

How do we use types of change?

For example, consider a program aimed at reducing the flow of small arms and light weapons across Kashmir's borders. The theory of change is "withdraw the resources for war." The assessment indicates that customs officials along the borders turn a blind eye to illicit arms flows. One of the objectives of the project is to support customs officers to more stringently apply customs regulations relating to arms shipments – a change in behavior. Project planners anticipate seeing an increase in seizures of contraband arms.

These more-specific cha-nges help in articulating goals and objectives and in developing indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

North and South Korea offer another example of how to use types of change. In this case consider a program aimed at increasing the level of international collaboration around issues of mutual interest such as energy, fishing, or trade with Asian neighbors. The theory of change is the Health Relationship/Connections Theory. The specific change, however, focuses on changes in the way international relations function, from antagonistic mud-slinging to negotiated processes that advance mutual interests. The type of change is functioning. Project managers hope to see an increase in the number of bi-lateral memoranda of understanding.

How do theories of change and types of change come together?

In order to develop programming options, program designers take into account the conflict assessment, their explicit theories of change, and the specific types of change desired. The attached table provides an example of each type of change for each theory of change. It is easiest to read the table by starting at the top and reading down along each theory of change (down the column) completely before moving to the next column.

For example, consider the unrest in France in the autumn of 2005. If the assessment indicated that the conflict was primarily driven by exclusion and discrimination and the theory of change was Healthy Relationship, what type of change might be strategic? The table offers only a few examples of literally thousands of possibilities. The intent is not to provide you with the definitive answers, but to stimulate your thinking and your consideration of a vast array of possibilities. The wide range of alternatives is part of the reason peacebuilding initiatives are so difficult to design and to evaluate.

Examples of Potential Outcomes within each Peacebuilding Theory of Change

Type of Change	Reduce Resources For War	Work with Elites	Mobilize Grassroots	Healthy Relationships	Address Root Causes	Reduce Violence	Individual Change	Institutional Change
Change in Circumstance	Fewer small arms and light weapons enter country	Increased opportunity for popular participation in local governance	Oppressed groups able to voice interests in media	Segregation barriers removed	All groups able to put issues on public policy agenda	Increase security to allow greater mobility	Able to circulate in previously restricted areas	Reduced allocation of national budget to the military and defense
Change in Status	Illegal arms importers recognized as criminals	From inherited status to merit-based status	Oppressed groups shift from objects to subjects of change	Relations built on interests rather than status	Elimination of the criteria for exclusion	Increase opportunities to become a part of a non-violent social group	Able to access previously restricted services	Civilian truth & reconciliation commissioners serve in Ministry of Justice
Change in Behavior	Customs officials seize illegal arms imports	Elites allow greater participation of subordinates	Increase in non-compliance with oppressive controls	Increase in joint social activities	Increase focus on the issues and less criticism of individuals	Increase use of third party neutrals to resolve potentially violent disputes	Will comply with laws and regulations	Promotions based on merit
Change in Functioning	Improvement in regulations affecting small arms and light weapons	Increase in transparency	Agenda-setting open to all	Routinely exchange information	Increased independence of the judiciary	Increasing employment of youth vulnerable to violence	Able to act as a neighbor rather than an opponent	Political appointments no longer the exclusive domein of the executives
Change in Structure	Customs bureau separated from taxation bureau	Admissions to higher education no longer exclusively for elites	Free primary education for all	Equitable, affordable access to health care	Separation of judiciary and executive branches	Reduce structural violence stemming from food insecurity	Understand dynamics of structural violence	Truth & reconciliation commission able to grant amnesty

Examples of Potential Outcomes within each Peacebuilding Theory of Change

Type of Change	Reduce Resources for War	Work with Elites	Mobilize Grassroots	Healthy Relationships	Address Root Causes	Reduce Violence	Individual Change	Institutional Change
Change in Attitude	Status is accorded to people with wisdom rather than weapons	Increase elite's appreciation of accountability	Authorities increasingly validate grievances	Reduction in fear of the other	Recognition that the past and the present are different	Belief that respect is derived from appreciation rather than fear	Recognition of own responsibility in the matter	Security forces perceive civilians as people needing their protection
Change in Skills	Registration and tracking of small arms and light weapons improved	Improved communications with constituents	Improved advocacy skills	Improve management of rumors	Increased use of non-judgmental language	Able to satisfy own interests through negotiation	Increase in depth of analysis of the conflict	Collaborative, community policing
No Change; Maintain Status Quo	Limits on arms manufacturers will be preserved	Decentralization will not be rescinded	Lead activists continue to be able to travel freely	Continue to respect cultural differences	Continue to keep the issues alive in the media	Contain violence to current areas	Persist in advancing own interests	Continue to engage civil society
Prevention	Confiscated weapons will be destroyed and not re-enter the market	Will not make decisions in isolation or without consultation	Intimidation by authorities increasingly less effective	Will avoid using stereotypes	Prevent a new cycle of violence from erupting	Prevent additional incidents from escalating into violence	Ensure there are no repercussions	Bureaucrats will not misuse resources
Change in Relationship	Collusion in illicit behaviors to legal and transparent relationship	Elites more accessible to those they claim to represent	Increase in intra-group unity	From suspicion to trust	Change in relations between principle, such as opposition party leaders	Police/community relations shift from control-based to service-based	Individual relationships based on dignity and respect	Introduction of citizen consultative processes in key ministries

2 Understanding Change

There is very little research to guide us in terms of knowing which theories of change and which types of change are likely to be the most effective in identity conflicts, for example. To complicate matters, the issue is not so much about determining which theory or type is the best, but rather when to use each of the many options. Quality monitoring and evaluation can contribute significantly to our understanding of what works and how change happens.

Peacebuilding is about change. As peace builders, we need to be observant enough to see change when it happens, aware enough to understand how change happens, innovative enough to create change, and strategic enough to create change where it can make a difference. Monitoring and evaluation have much to contribute in strengthening our capacity to work with change.

Advanced Concept

Developing Adaptive Change Processes

Programs that focus on one theory or type of change are important; however, they are rarely sufficient to independently foster sustainable societal change. Ultimately, peacebuilding aims to develop change processes that can evolve to meet the challenges of new conflicts, ensuring the continuation of peace writ large. In this manual, we refer to it as the adaptability of change (see Evaluation Objectives) meaning the ongoing dynamic ability to meet new needs, interests, and conflicts in a changing environment. John Paul Lederach frames the challenge as follows:

> *I should like to posit for the reader that the real world is one of constantly shifting environments and constant adaptation to these shifts. This is particularly true in the setting of deep-rooted conflict and violence. The most realistic, as in the most realpolitik, thing we could do in peacebuilding would be to create processes with peripheral vision, capable of maintaining purpose while constantly adapting to the difficult and shifting sands and tides they must face to survive. The least realistic thing we could do would be to devise rigid processes of politics and social change that are incapable of adaptation. (Lederach, 2005)*

*These adaptive change processes offer the greatest hope of not having to create and recreate new programs with every new conflict. For more information on working with change processes, read Lederach's **The Moral Imagination.***

Further Reading

John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace, Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, USIP, 1997.

John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*, Oxford University Press, 2005.

Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, Little Brown and Company, 2000.