

“Reflecting on Peace Practices”

While the “Do No Harm” approach is, first of all, a planning tool for relief and development projects, “Reflecting on Peace Practice” was born out of the limitations of that tool. A number of organisations had found it insufficient to restrict themselves to doing “no harm” while the causes of conflict remained unaddressed. Accordingly, they wanted to know how to effectively move into direct peace-building. Accordingly, we have two different approaches with distinctly different objectives.

“Do No Harm” is concerned with working in conflict. This approach offers a planning methodology for development or humanitarian aid projects in situations of tension or violent conflict. Its goals are to prevent negative side effects of project activities on the local context of conflict and to promote aspects that could bring people together and contribute to peaceful coexistence alongside its main activities. To this end, the Dividers and Connectors analysis is carried out:

- How can we reduce the forces that divide the population through our project activities?
- How can we strengthen the forces that bring people together through our project activities?

In contrast, “Reflecting on Peace Practices” aims to work on conflict. This approach offers a methodology for planning peace projects and developing intervention strategies. Its explicit objective is to address the causes of conflict and contribute to sustainable peace.

The RPP Matrix is a four-cell matrix that permits analysis of programme strategies in several dimensions, by looking at the different approaches of peace work, who is being engaged and what type of change is being sought. As shown below, RPP found that all activities are based essentially on one of two approaches related to who needs to be engaged for peace.

- ❖ **More People Approaches** aim to engage increasing numbers of people in actions to promote peace. Practitioners who take this approach believe that peace can be built if many people become active in the process, i.e. if “the people” are broadly involved. This may involve mobilisation of larger constituencies or expanding the numbers of people committed to peace.
- ❖ **Key People Approaches** focus on involving particular people, or groups of people, critical to the continuation or resolution of conflict, due to their power and influence. “Key people” strategies assume that, without the involvement of these individuals / groups, progress cannot be made toward resolving the conflict. Who is “key” depends on the context: they may be political leaders, warlords, or others necessary to a peace agreement. They may be people with broad constituencies. Or they may be key because they are involved in war making (e.g. unemployed young men).

RPP also found that all programmes work for two basic kinds of change: the individual / personal change and/or socio-political change.

- ❖ Programmes that work at the **individual / personal level** seek to change the attitudes, values, skills, perceptions or circumstances of individuals, based on the underlying assumption that peace is possible only if the hearts, minds and behaviour of individuals are changed. Most dialogue and training programmes operate at this level, working with groups of individuals to affect their skills, attitudes, perceptions, ideas and relationships with other individuals.
- ❖ Programmes that concentrate at the **socio-political level** are based on the belief that peace requires changes in socio-political structures and processes, often supporting the creation or reform of institutions that address grievances that fuel conflict, or promoting non-violent modes for handling conflict. Change at this level includes alterations in government policies, legislation, economic structures, ceasefire agreements, constitutions, etc. But it also incorporates changes in social norms, group behaviour, and inter-group relationships.

We now have two “columns” showing the two basic programming approaches in terms of who to engage and two “rows” showing the two levels of change promoted. When these rows and columns are combined, we produce a four-cell matrix.

Where is the entry point for your programme?

We found that all of the activities included in the range of RPP case studies and consultations could be located on this four-cell matrix. Some programmes engage in activities in more than one cell, or work in the boundaries between cells. Many programmes start in one quadrant, but eventually move to or have impact in others. However, many effective programmes operate within only one cell.

RPP found that work that stays within any one quadrant of the matrix is not enough to build momentum for significant change. Any individual programme aiming to contribute to peace will have more impact if its effects transfer to other quadrants of the matrix. **Two associated lessons** emerged from the case studies and discussion concerning two kinds of linkages that were found to be particularly important for programmes to have impact on “Peace Writ Large”.

- ❖ First, RPP found that programming that focuses on change at the individual / personal level, but that never links or translates into action at the socio-political level has no discernible effect on peace. Peace-Building efforts that focus on building relationships and trust across conflict lines, increasing tolerance, and increasing hope that peace is possible, often produce dramatic transformations in attitudes, perceptions and trust. But evidence shows that impacts for the broader peace are more significant if these personal transformations are translated into actions at the socio-political level.
- ❖ RPP has also found that at the socio-political level approaches that concentrate on More People but do nothing to link to or affect Key People, as well as strategies that focus on Key People but do not include or affect More People, do not “add up” to effective peace work. Activities to engage More People must link, strategically, to activities to engage Key People, and Key People activities must link strategically to activities to engage More People, if they are to be effective in moving toward “Peace Writ Large”.

The arrows in the figure below reflect the findings about the importance of transferring impact among the quadrants. Wherever an organization’s particular project is located on this Matrix (in terms of work targets and levels), it needs to plan mechanisms for transferring project effects or extending efforts into other quadrants. Who else needs to be affected, at what level, in order to produce significant change?

Is there a strategy to move from one cell to another?

These insights do not suggest that a single agency must necessarily conduct programmes in all quadrants of the Matrix simultaneously. An agency’s programme may evolve, over time, to move from one quadrant to another. Most programmes do not and cannot do everything at once. In many cases, programmes can remain in one cell and develop opportunities for cooperation and/or coordination of efforts with other agencies working in different areas in order to magnify impact. How these connections are best made will, of course, vary from context to context.

Inherent in practitioners’ decisions about what to do in a particular situation are assumptions about how to bring about peace and theories about how to bring about change. These underlying assumptions are often implicit, and rarely discussed. RPP is finding that effective programmes clarify these **Theories of Change** and continually test them against the realities of the conflict.

Programmes are often less effective than they could be, because their Theories of Change and programme theories are implicit (unspoken / unexpressed or not open), incomplete or not well-thought out, untested and at times inappropriate for the conflict in which they are working.

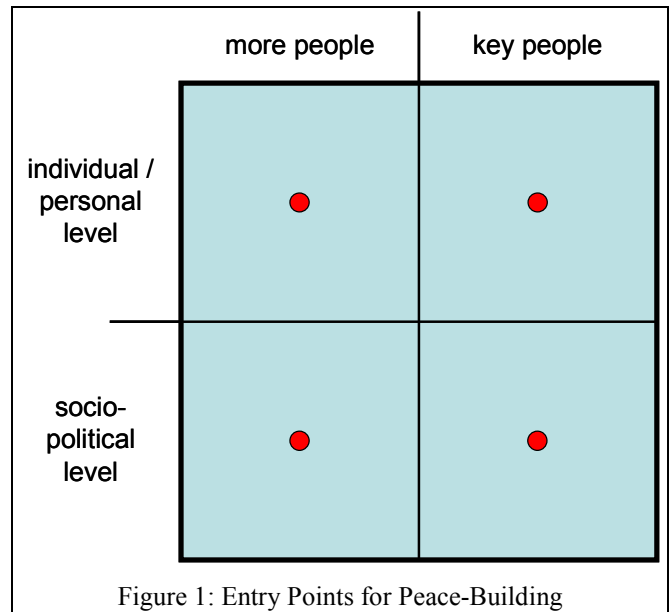


Figure 1: Entry Points for Peace-Building

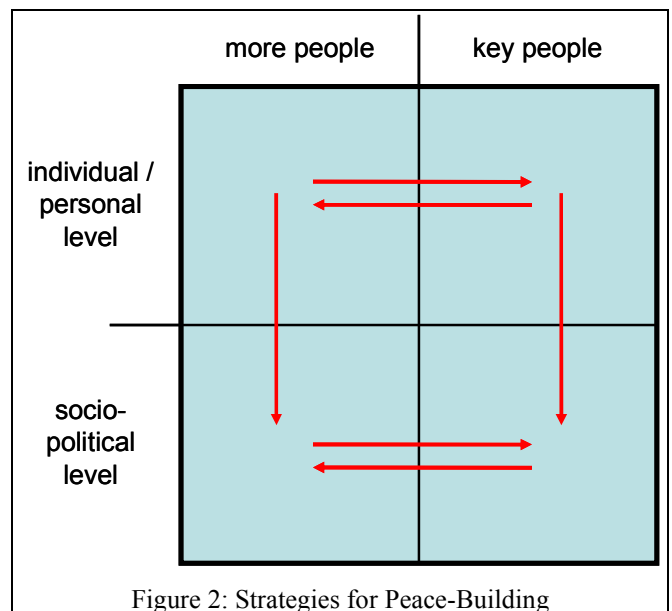


Figure 2: Strategies for Peace-Building

RPP has found that effective programmes formulate peace-building goals as statements of desired changes in the socio-political realm (even if the activities are not at that level). Programmes that formulate goals in this way are more likely to connect their activities to the desired changes, make effective linkages between individual / personal and socio-political level change and connect their programmes to the conflict analysis.

RPP has also found that effective peace-building strategies consider the links between conflict analysis and “Peace Writ Large”, programme goals, and programme activities and have an explicit Theory of Change and programme theory / theories.

Therefore, we can state that **effective peace-building programmes:**

- ❖ Identify driving forces of conflict and key actors and a vision for “Peace Writ Large” that addresses them.
- ❖ Articulate programme goals that reflect change at the socio-political level, either institutional change or collective attitude, behavioural or relational change, and ask whether their theory of how the goals will contribute to “Peace Writ Large” is appropriate in the particular conflict context.
- ❖ Define a series of activities and ask, at each stage, what difference these activities will make, and how the changes from these activities will result in the socio-political goal. Often activities begin at the individual / personal level, but good programmes have an articulated strategy and tested assumptions about how they will move from the individual / personal level to the socio-political, and how they will link More and Key People strategies.

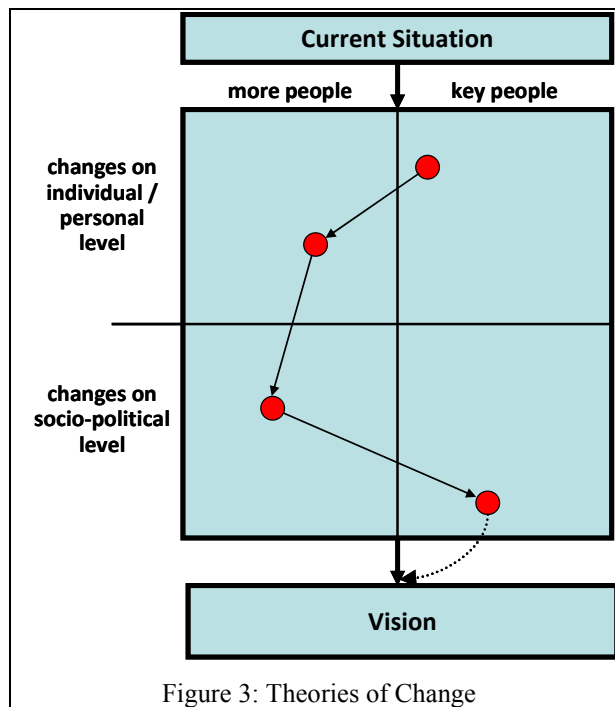


Figure 3: Theories of Change