

THE COPE REPORT

Report of the 2012 Colloquium on Peacebuilding Effectiveness Summit

The COPE Summit was co-sponsored by the Purdue Peace Project (PPP) and the
Peace and Security Funders Group (PSFG)



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On September 11 and 12, 2012, the Purdue Peace Project (PPP) and the Peace and Security Funders Group (PSFG) co-sponsored the Colloquium on Peacebuilding Effectiveness (COPE) in Washington D. C. Leaders from experienced organizations around the world gathered in order to discuss the current state of the peacebuilding field. The organizations represented practitioner, policy-maker, and funder perspectives. Participants discussed (1) the nature of peacebuilding work; (2) how its effectiveness is, and should be, defined; and (3) principles that should be considered when doing and funding peacebuilding work. This report summarizes those discussions.

***Author's Note:** PPP and PSFG wish to thank all COPE participants for their participation in the summit and their contributions to this report. In addition, we wish to thank the summit's two keynote speakers, Jerry White of the U.S. Department of State and Regan E. Ralph of The Fund for Global Human Rights.*



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COPE GOALS & PARTICIPANTS

PARTICIPANTS

On September 11 and 12, 2012, the Purdue Peace Project (PPP) and the Peace and Security Funders Group (PSFG) co-sponsored the Colloquium on Peacebuilding Effectiveness (COPE) in Washington D. C. Jessica Berns (PPP) and Katherine Magraw (PSFG) served as co-coordinators; Milt Lauenstein funded the summit. COPE participants were invited to participate in the summit based on their expertise and experience in the field. They included (in alphabetical order):

- ◆ Jessica Berns, Purdue Peace Project
- ◆ Andy Blum, United States Institute of Peace
- ◆ Andy Carl, Conciliation Resources
- ◆ Steve Del Rosso, Carnegie Corporation of New York
- ◆ William Durch, The Stimson Center
- ◆ Melanie Greenberg, Alliance for Peacebuilding
- ◆ Carolyn Hayman, Peace Direct
- ◆ Milt Lauenstein, Purdue Peace Project
- ◆ Katherine Magraw, Peace and Security Funders Group
- ◆ Sharon Morris, Mercy Corps
- ◆ Jackson W. Speare II, International Alert – Liberia
- ◆ Mauro Tadiwe, Pact

Dr. Stacey Connaughton, Rosaline B. Obeng-Ofori, and Dorothy Snyder also attended the summit, representing the Purdue Peace Project.

GOALS OF THE COPE SUMMIT

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

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WHAT IS PEACEBUILDING?

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

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

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

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EFFECTIVENESS

EFFECTIVENESS: PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

- ◆ *Effectiveness is dependent on cultivating relationships.*

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

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

EFFECTIVENESS: PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

- ◆ *Engagement with controversial and/or objectionable actors in conflict settings is sometimes a necessary condition for effectiveness.*

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

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EFFECTIVENESS: PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

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EFFECTIVENESS

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

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

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

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

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

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NEW TAKE AWAYS

“NEW TAKE AWAYS”: DISPATCHES FROM THE FRONT LINE

Based on their experience and expertise, participants came to agreement on five principles that could be taken into account for more effective peacebuilding practice:

- ◆ *The impact of peacebuilding organizations is both intentional and unintentional; both should be embraced and included in assessments and reports.*

At the heart of this point is a question: what is the intent of peacebuilding work? Is peacebuilding work meant to be transformative (changing the status quo/existing institutions) or does it seek to build on the status quo in meaningful ways? Participants discussed a tension between local participatory work and international humanitarian interests/international norms. One participant noted that sometimes U.S. policy and the way in which the U.S. government operates can stand in the way of good practice. Another noted that sometimes local, traditional, justice is what is most comfortable (and what reinforces status quo and existing power dynamics) and that that may be at odds with international norms for justice.

- ◇ Recommendation for Practitioners: Peacebuilding practitioners should actively listen to local communities while also being aware of international norms and the potential tension that may exist between the two (local and international).
- ◇ Recommendation for Practitioners: Although working with local communities in genuine ways is critical to peacebuilding work, peacebuilding practitioners should take care not to romanticize local knowledge. It may be that local knowledge itself requires transformation for peace to reign.

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Peacebuilding work is ripe with dynamism. Theories of change necessarily evolve over time. Peacebuilding work can also feature what one participant called “happy accidents.” These unintentional processes and outcomes of peacebuilding need to be systematically analyzed, not ignored. That which is not planned (unintentional practices and outcomes) can yield great learning. For example, Mercy Corps has had a number of programs that were put in place not with peacebuilding in mind but wound up preventing violence.

- ◆ *Measurement and evaluation can be integrated into all peacebuilding initiatives, and can capture the short-term and long-term nature of peacebuilding work.*

The impact of Peacebuilding work can and should be measured (Kawano-Chiu, 2011). In addition to short-term solutions for problems, sustained engagement is a critical component of peacebuilding work. Relatedly, measuring impact can also be done over longer periods of time as well as shorter ones. When an initiative is launched, there should be consideration and provision for it to endure long enough to be effective.

Participants mentioned how long-term measurement (see the World Development Report for an example of a report which uses a long-term and evidence-based perspective) is needed more in the peacebuilding field in order to ensure effective measures of success in areas where programs are being implemented. Long-term measurement shows how changes are implemented and actually used (or not) over time. This kind of measurement can help to ensure that recommendations given are actually effective in the long-term. Relatedly, the field needs to determine ways in which to measure effectiveness over time.

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- ◇ Recommendation for Practitioners: Because evaluation is continuous, do a formative evaluation rather than a summative evaluation.
- ◇ Recommendation for Practitioners: Create a Measurement & Evaluation support group which consists of actors with expertise in these areas; this group could be called upon when those doing peacebuilding and violence prevention work have questions about measurement and evaluation. A similar suggestion was made during the Peacebuilding Evaluation Project meetings (see Blum, 2011).
- ◇ Recommendation for Practitioners: Peacebuilding efforts not only should be measured and evaluated but results of these efforts should be disseminated widely (see Blum & Kawano-Chiu, 2012, for an example).
- ◇ Recommendation for Practitioners: Create a repository of evaluations for sharing and disseminating knowledge about effectiveness and impact (for an example see the Learning Portal for Design, Monitoring, & Evaluation for Peacebuilding, a project of Search for Common Ground in partnership with the Peacebuilding & Development Institute at American University’s School of International Service; <http://dmeforpeace.org/>)

◆ *Multiple methods for assessing impact must be embraced.*

Providing evidence to support claims that peacebuilding efforts are effective and successful is critical. Evidence is at the heart of peacebuilding evaluation, as evaluation is “an evidence-based process designed to create accountability for and learning from

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peacebuilding programs” (Blum, 2011, p. 2). Indeed, some funding organizations such as Carnegie and others prefer to support evidence-driven projects. Given the centrality of evidence in evaluation processes, members of the peacebuilding field have committed themselves to reflecting on and critically assessing how evidence is gathered and used in the field (see Blum, 2011; Kawano-Chiu, 2011). Evidence to validate claims helps enhance peacebuilding organizations’ credibility among external stakeholders as well as those within the field, and evidence can be used to help peacebuilding organizations’ efforts improve.

Those involved in peacebuilding practice should be open to a range of evidence. A cursory examination of the field reveals the diversity of evidence types gathered as well as the diversity of approaches to gathering evidence (i.e., case studies, trials, narratives, controlled experiments; focus group and one-on-one interviews).

As a whole, qualitative data and analyses tend to be utilized more often than quantitative ones in peacebuilding work. Yet the latter can contribute greatly to evaluating effectiveness. Examples of quantitative data that could be collected include: the number of disputes resolved, increases in number of disputes resolved over time, increases in freedom of movement, increases in cooperation between former adversaries, and decreases in violent incidents.

Although methods of measurement and evaluation have been contested in the field and although qualitative methods often dominate, both approaches can add value. In some cases even, a

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combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods can ensure that the most comprehensive measures of effectiveness are being used. For example, Mercy Corps conducted an intervention in Iraq that utilized quantitative methods (surveys) to show the number of disputes resolved actually matched the qualitative data from focus groups in Iraq which had suggested that violence had been reduced.

- ◇ Recommendation for Practitioners and Funders: Multiple methods for research (both quantitative and qualitative) can be utilized in order to measure outcomes.
- ◇ Recommendation for Practitioners and Funders: Effort should be made to educate members of the peacebuilding community on how to use a variety of evidence types.
- ◆ *Integration with other fields and with other organizations is important for maximizing effectiveness.*

Since its inception in the mid-20th century, the peacebuilding field has worked across various sectors and has focused on issues of process and structure. Yet much work remains specifically with regard to efforts to integrate with other fields and organizations. According to the Alliance for Peacebuilding (2012): “In order to reach its full potential, the field must move from Peacebuilding 1.0 – the existing dynamic yet disconnected series of peacebuilding activities across a broad range of sectors – to Peacebuilding 2.0 – a more unified field that harnesses the collective energy of all peacebuilding interventions and creates joint impact that leads to more stable, resilient societies” (p. 5).

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At issue here is that substantively/conceptually issues are integrated, but various organizations and sectors methods of organizing and addressing issues may be different. Indeed, visions may be aligned, but tactics and strategies could be quite distinct. There may even be different values underpinning a certain set of issues (e.g., peace vs. rights) which in turn affect how well different organizations and sectors are able to work together. These sorts of things can lead to incompatibility. However, the problems of peacebuilding and development are interlinked. For example, one participant spoke about the need for a version of peacebuilding that relies heavily on creating intersections between various actors who can potentially be involved in the peacebuilding process.

Peacebuilding institutions need to embrace a larger community of practice. As the Alliance for Peacebuilding’s Peacebuilding 2.0 Report states: “The peacebuilding field must identify itself as a far more expansive community of practice, recognizing that peacebuilding takes place within a broad range of sectors. To be truly effective, the field must coordinate its efforts across these sectors” (Alliance for Peacebuilding, 2012, p. 6). Indeed, when multiple actors from multiple perspectives working on multiple issues have been funded, the efforts were very successful. For example, when the Fund for Global Human Rights worked together with many different organizations in Mexico to build a dam in a community it led to a lasting peace that not only impacted the community but the country as a whole.

- ◇ Recommendation for Funders: Encourage greater awareness of the linkages among peacebuilding, development, and related fields.

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Coordination among various peacebuilding organizations (both national and international) can help to ensure that all areas are covered. Before doing so, however, peacebuilding professionals should make sure that a common understanding of what constitutes “peacebuilding” exists.

This also means that ways to measure collaborative impact (impact achieved through the confluence of various initiatives; coordinated initiatives) should be developed.

- ◇ Recommendation for Practitioners and Funders: Those working in the peacebuilding field should consider collaborations with a broad array of organizations when appropriate.
- ◇ Recommendation for Funders: Proposals that seek to measure collaborative impact should be encouraged.
- ◆ *The peacebuilding community can and should create a new way for thinking about war: It can be prevented and overcome.*

Peacebuilding efforts are seemingly at odds with a dominant narrative: that is, that war is inevitable. Peacebuilding organizations, thus, can play a communications and advocacy role in communicating what they do and why it is valuable.

- ◇ Recommendation for Practitioners: Communicate a positive narrative about peacebuilding work and disseminate it widely.

When crafting that message, peacebuilding organizations should not forget the core purpose of their work. Has the work reduced incidents of organized political violence? How can that be shown? These questions should be on peacebuilding professionals’ minds.

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ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDERS

During the summit, COPE participants made specific recommendations about how changes in the way funding is done could contribute to increased effectiveness on the ground. These recommendations are summarized as follows:

- ◇ Quick grants should be allowed for areas that are facing imminent violence.
- ◇ If aid is sent directly to local organizations, it should be done in a manner that does not hinder its use. For example, forms need to be easy to understand and language barriers need to be overcome.
- ◇ Much can be gleaned from what did not work in practice; thus, funders should be open to hearing about what has not worked as well as what has. Funding philosophies would need to be adapted in order to allow for the possibility that much can be learned from failures.

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CONCLUSIONS

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COPE participants suggested two future steps that they, as well as members of the field and funding organizations, should take. First, organizational, structural, relational and/or other barriers that would prevent anything mentioned in this report from happening (i.e., how request for proposals are written) should be addressed. Reports from the Peacebuilding Evaluation Project, a collaboration between the United States Institute of Peace and the Alliance for Peacebuilding, articulate some of these multi-level challenges (Blum, 2011; Kowano-Chiu, 2011). Second, specific models for doing the above mentioned strategies well (i.e., effective ways to integrate peacebuilding and development work) should be chronicled and disseminated.

Originally, COPE had three goals: (1) to identify activities that are the most effective at building peace; (2) to pinpoint those that are most cost-effective; and (3) to explore what COPE participants could do collectively to encourage resources be used in productive and cost-effective ways. Although there was limited discussion of cost-effectiveness, the COPE summit contributed to ongoing conversations about peacebuilding in at least two important ways. First, participants in the COPE summit captured several principles that may guide effective peacebuilding work and they underscored how to gauge its effectiveness. Second, the COPE summit raised both general questions and specific recommendations for funders and practitioners as both work to move the field forward. In the future, practitioners and funders should not only consider *how* peacebuilding should be done, as was discussed during the COPE summit, but also pinpoint what strategies are the most (cost) effective. In so doing, the peacebuilding field would achieve two of the original goals of the COPE summit – identify what strategies are most cost-effective and collectively work together to identify ways in which resources may be utilized wisely.

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REFERENCES

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX: GOOD DESIGN STRATEGIES

- ◇ When doing intergroup work, work with existing social institutions
- ◇ Combine rapid responses with investing in capacity building
- ◇ Support existing strengths instead of seeking to transform
- ◇ Leverage the social capital that women have
- ◇ Have inclusive processes; think of impacted parties
- ◇ Open lines of communication
- ◇ Do not just focus on inter-ethnic areas
- ◇ Ensure effective dialogue space
- ◇ Make sure the intervention is long enough to be effective
- ◇ Collaboration is key
- ◇ Empower moderates

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The Purdue Peach Project

Our Mission: The Purdue Peace Project (PPP) encourages and assists local leaders to take constructive action to prevent violence in conflict-prone regions of the world. Where local groups already exist, PPP offers to assist them. Where such groups do not exist, PPP convenes local leaders and supports them to take action.

PPP seeks to contribute knowledge about preventing violence in fragile states and to disseminate that knowledge to the peace-building community and beyond. PPP will document its efforts, assess its effectiveness, and evaluate the results.

What We Do: PPP addresses situations in which violence appears to be imminent by empowering local leaders to take immediate action to prevent violence. PPP builds on the experience of local leaders in successfully preventing or ending armed conflict in their countries. Many small countries that have avoided armed conflict have made impressive political, economic, and social progress without significant outside help.

Where We Work: PPP's first operations are in West Africa. It cooperates with local, regional, and international organizations working for peace in the region. The Project maintains impartiality with respect to conflicted parties, focusing only on preventing violence between them.

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