



## RPP PROGRAM REFLECTION EXERCISE

### Introduction

The Reflection Exercise is recommended as a group exercise, usually composed of people from within the implementing agency. If the group includes people from other outside agencies (often true in a training setting), then be sure to remove any budgetary or personnel information or other extraneous material. The elements needed for the exercise are only the program title, location, the background or underlying analysis, the goal, key activities and expected outcomes. If there is no external facilitator, you may wish to choose a facilitator from within the group and a recorder (but this should not be the person whose program or program concept is being discussed).

The key steps are the following:

1. Review the conflict analysis.
2. Review the program goal.
3. Identify the program activities, intended changes and theories of change.
4. Plot the program goal, activities, and changes onto the RPP matrix.
5. Assess the program's theories of change.
6. Explore the program logic.
7. Reflect and recommend changes in program design and/or implementation.

Each of these steps is explored below. Note: use your judgment to determine whether you need to perform all of the steps; you can select those most relevant to your situation. The individual tools or concepts are further explained in the RPP Participants Manual, available at [www.cdainc.com](http://www.cdainc.com).

### 1. Review the conflict analysis.

Program design and periodic review should be based on an up-to-date conflict analysis. This step is aimed at ensuring the “relevance” of the program—that is, whether it is working on the right issue with the right people at the right time using an appropriate methodology.

- Is the available analysis current (within a few months)? Has the situation changed significantly since previous analyses? Is the available analysis really a general ‘context’ analysis rather than a conflict analysis?
- Does the analysis identify the key driving factors of conflict (both issues and people)? Key driving factors are factors without which the conflict would not exist or would be significantly different. Key actors are people or groups that can significantly influence the conflict dynamics.
- Does the analysis explore or depict the relationships among factors and/or among factors and actors?
- Does the analysis identify actual or potential factors *for* peace? What are the forces in the situation that can be built upon to promote movement towards peace? What connects people across conflict lines? Who exercises leadership for peace and how?

- What needs to change? Who or what needs to change to transform a negative and destructive dynamic into a more constructive one? Does the analysis identify what must absolutely be **stopped** or reduced before peace efforts will have a chance of making an impact?
- Does the analysis consider past and ongoing efforts at peace, and what can or must be learned from their perceived effectiveness—or lack thereof?
- Does the analysis suggest possible points of leverage to create change in conflict dynamics? Given the nature of your organization, what do you see as points of leverage, and why? To effect change, will your efforts alone be sufficient, or do they need to be supported and complemented by other efforts? If so, by whom?
- **If the program is already being implemented:** Has an updated conflict analysis been performed? Does the basic approach or program focus need to change as a result?

## 2. Review the program goal.

Program goals should be articulated as intended changes at an appropriate level of ambition.

- Is the program goal, as stated, ‘robust’? Is it change-oriented, realistic, time-conscious?
- Is the program goal too general (at the long-term vision level) or too ambitious (over-claiming)? Or is the program goal too specific—that is, actually more of an activity?
- How does the program goal relate to the dynamics of conflict and peace as analyzed? If there is no apparent link to the key drivers of conflict and peace, the program may be worthwhile, but will not have a peacebuilding impact.
- If the program goal envisions changes at a local level or on a less central aspect of the conflict and peace dynamics (peace writ little), how might it create linkages to wider peace at the societal level (Peace Writ Large) in the particular context?
- If the program goal is stated as ‘a contribution to [an element of peace]’, is it clear how it will make such a contribution and how to observe or measure it?
- Does the program goal seek changes at the socio-political level? Peace efforts that focus only on change at the individual-personal level and do not link those efforts to change at the socio-political level will have no discernible impact on peace.
- How does the program goal relate to any of the RPP Criteria of Effectiveness (also called “Building Blocks for Peace”)?
- **If a program is already being implemented:** Is the program making reasonable progress towards the goal? What kind of feedback (monitoring data) indicates such progress? Is the goal still appropriate—or has the situation changed significantly, requiring redesign?

## 3. Identify the program activities, intended changes and theories of change.

This step uses the RPP Four-Column Chart showing activities, expected changes, theory of change, and other assumptions. (See blank chart at end of this section and the example in RPP Participant Training Manual.)

- In the top row of the chart, enter the goal/objective of the program/project and the associated overall theory of change at this level.
- Identify five or six key activities in this project/program? Enter them in the first column of the Four-Column Chart.

- In the other columns, identify the actual or expected change from each individual activity, as well as the theory of change and other assumptions associated with the activity.

#### 4. Plot the program goal, activities, and changes onto the RPP matrix.

- Start with locating the goal on the RPP matrix. Is it at the Individual/Personal level of change, or the Socio-Political level? Is it more in the realm of ‘More People’ or ‘Key People’?
- Plot the program activities and their intended changes onto the matrix. Use different visual identifications for ‘activities’ and ‘changes’. (Note: for a program already being implemented, completed activities and actual results can be plotted, as well as further planned activities and expected results.)

#### 5. Assess the program’s theories of change.

Note that theories of change operate at different levels. They can relate to micro level changes, usually associated with specific activities. They can describe how an overall program approach and goal will be achieved—as well as how achieving the goal will contribute to Peace Writ Large.<sup>1</sup> Use the filled-in Four-Column Chart and RPP Matrix for this section.

- Are the theories of change appropriate and realistic in the context? Will change actually come about in the ways envisioned as a result of the planned activities?
- How would successful achievement of the program goal make a significant contribution to the realization of Peace Writ Large? What is the theory of change at this level?
- ***If the program is already being implemented:*** Have the activities completed so far resulted in the expected changes? Are there any unexpected positive or negative outcomes? Are the theories of change proving viable in the context—or is rethinking indicated?

#### 6. Explore the program logic.

This section uses the Four-Column Chart and the RPP Matrix together. In addition to reviewing the theory of change associated with individual activities in the previous step, it is important to make sure that the overall program will add up to the intended goal.

- Examine the logic between the activities and the goal. Would achievement of the activities actually lead to the goal? Is anything missing?
- Are there unexamined assumptions underlying the links between the different activities, such as willingness, availability, external events etc.?
- What kinds of obstacles might the project encounter in its implementation? Who/what might get in the way?
- Are “hope lines” revealed on the Matrix or in the logic presented in the Four-Column Chart? (“Hope lines” are leaps in logic or gaps between activities and desired results—depicted on the Matrix by dotted lines.) How might hope lines be converted to desired changes?

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<sup>1</sup> Theories of change can also operate at a broad policy level. Thus national governments or external assistance actors or multilateral peace operations may invest resources and efforts in specific sectoral or thematic areas of work in the belief (the theory of change) that these are critical to achieve sustainable peace. For example, significant investments can be made in a range of programs that are intended to promote inter-ethnic interactions in the belief that this will lead to a multi-ethnic society. This goes beyond the individual project/program and beyond the work of individual agencies, and is not the focus of this exercise.

- ***If the program is already being implemented:*** Is the program on track to achieve its goal/objective? Have new gaps in program logic or other obstacles appeared in the course of implementation, requiring adjustments in the future planned activities or a new approach?

### **7. Reflect and recommend changes in program design and/or implementation.**

The fundamental purpose of this reflection exercise is to strengthen program design or to encourage changes in direction or implementation, based on the first stages of program activities.

- What insights have you gained regarding this program? What challenges have been raised?
- Based on all the previous steps and associated reflections, how might this program or its continuation be strengthened or its concept further elaborated?
- Does this program need to link more actively with other agencies, with other efforts? Which ones and why?
- Reflect on other dimensions of this program, in light of the context and of what you know about the peace efforts of other actors/agencies:
  - Is this program 'big' enough, does it have enough 'scale' to be able to have some meaningful influence? Why?
  - Is this program moving at the right pace, not too fast and not too slow? Why?
  - If this program achieves meaningful influence and impact, can this be sustained? Why and by whom?
- If you are proposing changes to the program design or implementation process, are you confident that the redesigned program will be indeed stronger or more effective? Why?
- Will it be necessary to seek approval for program design changes from others in the organization or from a primary donor? What will be the best strategy for gaining donor approval for changes?
- Finally, assess this Reflection Exercise itself. What was helpful or not so helpful? What suggestions would you make for improving the process? Please share these insights with RPP!

## RPP FOUR COLUMN CHART: Identification of Activities, Changes and Theories of Change & Assumptions

Program Goal (formulated based the conflict analysis and identified key driving factors of conflict):		Program Goal – Theory of Change: how does achieving your program goal contribute to Peace Writ Large?			
		Proposed Program Activity	Expected Changes, due to the Activities	Activity Level Theory of Change	What assumptions are made re: this activity?
		Describe 4 significant activities you are planning toward achieving your program goal.	The 'then' part of your Theory of Change	<b>If</b> we do xxx [ <i>activities</i> ] <b>Then</b> we achieve yyy [ <i>the type of change you want to see</i> ] <b>Because</b> zzz [ <i>Rationale for why this change will be achieved</i> ]	Assumptions could relate to participants, activity partners, conditions that will enable activity, etc.
Do the program activities together contribute to the achievement of the program goal?  Is anything missing?	1.				
	2.				
	3.				
	4.				
	5.				