

## **REFLECTING ON PEACE PRACTICE PROGRAM**

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### *Understanding the Cumulative Impacts of Peace Efforts*

This document provides information regarding:

- General background regarding the Reflecting on Peace Practice Program
- The cumulative impacts question
- The RPP cumulative impacts case process
- The purpose of Feedback Workshops

#### **Background on the Reflecting on Peace Practice Program (RPP)**

RPP aims to improve the effectiveness of peace programs. From 1999 through early 2003, RPP engaged over two hundred agencies and many individuals who work on conflict around the world in a collaborative effort to learn how to improve effectiveness. RPP conducted 26 case studies, and consulted with over 200 agencies and over 1,000 people to analyze peacebuilding experience. The findings of three years of analysis and consultation are presented in *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners* (available at <http://www.cdainc.com>). *Confronting War* reviews recent peace practice, assesses elements that have been successful (or not) and why, and presents lessons on how to improve effectiveness.

Since September 2003, CDA has been working with active peace programs to test the lessons of *Confronting War* as applied in practice. The goals of this Utilization Phase are a) to further improve the effectiveness of existing peace programs through application of the RPP learnings; and b) to gather the experiences gained through using the RPP lessons, in order to improve the impacts of subsequent peace practice. RPP works with local and international NGOs, UN agencies and donors to reflect on whether and how their programs have an impact on the broader peace, individually and collectively.

#### **The Challenge of Cumulative Impacts of Peacebuilding Efforts**

RPP has focused on the effectiveness of programs vis-à-vis “Peace Writ Large” – the overall conflict situation. Assessing contribution to Peace Writ Large is difficult as most peacebuilding programs are discrete efforts aimed at affecting one (often small) piece of the puzzle, and no one project can do everything. Outcomes are also difficult to assess. As one practitioner noted: “Peace requires that many people work at many levels in different ways, and, with all this work, you cannot tell who is responsible for what.” Moreover, when the goal of just and sustainable peace is so grand, and progress toward it immeasurable in its multitude of small steps, then anything can qualify as peace practice. In the face of this complexity, practitioners often say, “I have to assume that, over time, all of our different activities will add up.”

The evidence gathered by RPP suggests that although many people do, indeed, work at many levels, conducting good programs at each level, these programs do not automatically “add up” to peace! RPP found that peace programs that were effective in contributing to Peace Writ Large addressed key factors driving the conflict. Many programs, however, did not relate their objectives to the driving forces of conflict, and consequently had little impact on the overall situation. Often, programs that had powerful impacts on participants’ attitudes and relationships did not lead to activity or changes that to affect a broader constituency of people, and programs working at the elite or grassroots levels were often not linked. Good programs had impact on the local situation, only to see this undermined by national regional developments. In addition, experience showed that peace programs were not linked to each other in ways that improved joint effectiveness and efforts at coordination did not necessarily result in synergies and increased effectiveness.

RPP’s findings to date have pointed to many factors that have *prevented* programs from “adding up” to have an impact on the overall conflict situation, but yielded less evidence on what contributes to the “adding up” process. Key questions remaining include:

- How do multiple different peace efforts have cumulative impacts on a situation? What elements and/or processes determine whether there is a positive cumulative impact of multiple programs, reinforcing what others are doing as well as responding to changes in circumstances?
- How can we link micro (“peace writ little”) and macro (“peace writ large”) levels in programming decisions in order to improve the impacts of all programs on the broader peace?

Many practitioners are uneasy with the emphasis on Peace Writ Large as the standard of effectiveness. They question whether it is possible or fair to hold small, often grassroots initiatives to this standard. Further, they do not want to undervalue the success of “peace writ little” – positive impacts at the community level. But here we are challenged to reconcile the findings of the first phase of RPP about adding up with the concerns raised by our field colleagues. It is important to figure out how to link these small, community-level, geographically limited programs to impacts at the macro level.

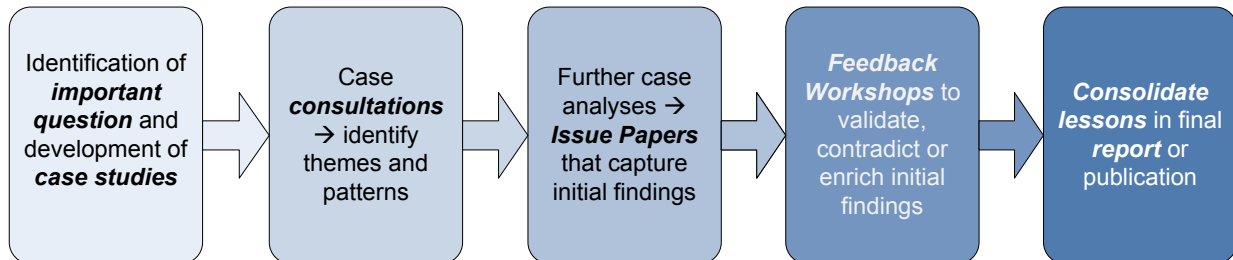
### **RPP Cumulative Impact Case Studies**

RPP is addressing the questions outlined above in a series of new case studies reflecting on situations that have changed in the direction of peace—even if full “peace” was not achieved, and in some cases later was reversed. Sixteen case studies have been completed, including: South Africa, Mozambique, Burundi, Liberia, Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Israel/Palestine, Kosovo, Tajikistan, Sri Lanka, Aceh (Indonesia), Cambodia, Mindanao (Philippines), Solomon Islands, Haiti, and Guatemala.

In these cases there has been a great deal of peacebuilding activity at multiple levels, and there has been a shift towards peace at some point, even if sustained peace settlements were not achieved in every case. By reflecting retrospectively on situations that have changed, it may be possible to identify what and how the various efforts contributed to that change.

## Cumulative Case Studies: Approach and Process

The Cumulative Case Study Process has followed the usual collaborative learning process of CDA Collaborative Learning. The typical sequence of steps is presented in the diagram below:



The cases studies have been analyzed in a series of consultations among case writers, participating organizations and an ongoing advisory group. In addition, staff have worked extensively with the case material, applying social science software and exploring themes and issues identified in the consultations. RPP staff have produced a set of Issue Papers that capture the initial, tentative findings of the process. These Issues Papers are the basis for the Feedback Workshops—the current stage.

**Feedback Workshops** constitute an effort to test the initial findings based on the case studies, by engaging peace practitioners in discussions all over the world. While the Issue Papers provide a springboard for these conversations, participants bring their own experience to the process. Thus, they may validate the initial findings, offer counter evidence, or deepen the discussion. To date, RPP has held twelve feedback workshops around the world. The feedback from these workshops has been incorporated into revised Issue Paper. An additional six feedback workshops will be held by the end of June, 2012.

In the final stage of the process, RPP staff will capture the points made and participant narratives offered in Feedback Workshops, which significantly enriches the findings, and ensures that final conclusions reflect broad experience in the field. Revised Issue Papers and the input from the Feedback Workshops will consolidated into a final report or more substantial publication for distribution by the end of 2012.