PEACEBUILDING EVALUATION BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN MINDANAO: TOWARDS ROBUST EVALUATION OF PEACEBUILDING PROGRAMS

by

Wilfredo Magno Torres III
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of
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Date: ___________________________________ Summer Semester 2022
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# Peacebuilding Evaluation by Civil Society Organizations in Mindanao: Towards Robust Evaluation of Peacebuilding Programs

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at George Mason University

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# DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my loving wife, Kaye, and our wonderful boys Ulan and Buhawi.

In loving memory of my beloved Nanay, Elizabeth.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to my family for their invaluable support in my journey of study. I am forever grateful to my wife, Kaye, who has sacrificed a lot for our family. She has been my pillar of love and support ever since. I owe a lot to my dear sister Teresa and our father, Wilfredo Jr., who kept me in this race to make sure I'd finish. My relatives have been a constant in my life: My Auntie Eleanor T. Mitra, who was taken during the pandemic, still visited me in my dreams to constantly prod me to finish; and my Auntie Wilma and Uncle Ben Cariaga who were my cheering squad; they kept our house from falling apart while I was writing this dissertation.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEA ........ American Evaluation Association
AFP ........ Armed Forces of the Philippines
AJE........ American Journal of Evaluation
Alert ........ International Alert
ARMM........ Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
ASG........ Abu Sayyaf Group
Balay ........ Balay Mindanaw Foundation Inc.
BARMM ........ Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
BDP........ Barangay Development Planning
BDSP........ Barangay Development and Security Plans
BIFF ........ Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
BMFI........ Balay Mindanaw Foundation Inc.
BOL........ Bangsamoro Organic Law
BWSC ........ Bangsamoro Women Service Center
BWSF........ Bangsamoro Women Solidarity Forum
CAB ........ Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro
CAFGU ........ Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit
CBCS ........ Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society
CHD ........ Center for Humanitarian Dialogue or HD Centre
COPERS ........ Center of Psychological Extension and Research Services
CRE........ Culturally Responsive Evaluation
CRS ........ Catholic Relief Services
CSO........ Civil Society Organization
CVE........ Countering Violent Extremism
CVO ........ Civilian Volunteer Organization
ECOWEB........ Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefits, Inc.
FAB ........ Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro
FPA ........ Final Peace Agreement
GPH........ Government of the Republic of the Philippines
HD........ Humanitarian Dialogue Centre or Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
IAG ........ Institute for Autonomy and Governance
ICG........ International Contact Group
IID ........ Initiatives for International Dialogue
INGO........ International Non-Governmental Organization
IRDT ........ Integrated Resource Development for Tri-People
ISIS ........ Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
Kalimudan........ Kalimudan sa Ranao Foundation, Inc.
MARADECA........ Maranao People Development Center, Inc.
MILF........ Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF ........ Moro National Liberation Front

MOA-AD ... Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain
MOSEP ... Mindanao Organization for Social and Economic Progress
MPC ... Mindanao Peoples Caucus
MRCW ... Marawi Reconstruction Conflict Watch
Nagdilaab ... Nagdilaab Foundation Inc.
NDE ... New Directions for Evaluation
NDE ... New Directions for Evaluation
NGO ... Non-governmental Organization
NP/ NPF ... Nonviolent Peace Force
NPA ... New People's Army
P/CVE ... Preventing/ Countering Violent Extremism
PNP ... Philippine National Police
PWD ... Persons with disabilities
RIDO Inc ... Reconciliatory Initiatives for Development Opportunities
RMCMDP ... Ranao Muslim Christian Movement for Dialogue and Peace
RPMM ... *Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa sa Mindanao*
SCAA ... Special Civilian Active Auxiliaries
SPMS Box ... Collective name for 4 municipalities of Shariff Aguak, Pagatin, Mamasapano and Datu Salibo located near Liguasan Marsh in Maguindanao.
TAF ... The Asia Foundation
THUMA ... Thuma Ko Kapagingud Service Organization Inc.
TSS ... Tumikang Sama Sama
UNYPAD ... United Youth for Peace and Development
UNYPAD RANAO ... United Youth for Peace and Development-Relief Assistance Network and Organization
USAID ... United States Agency for International Development
USIP ... United States Institute of Peace
ZABIDA ... Zamboanga-Basilan Integrated Development Alliance, Inc.

# ABSTRACT

PEACEBUILDING EVALUATION BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN MINDANAO: TOWARDS ROBUST EVALUATION OF PEACEBUILDING PROGRAMS

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George Mason University, 2022

Dissertation Director: Susan H. Allen

Peacebuilding and conflict resolution is an exciting field of study and engagement. But trying to find out if peacebuilding efforts are really making a difference is often a tedious and painful process for many project managers and practitioners. This is especially true for peace and conflict resolution projects that operate in real-world conflict and fragile settings as these often pose serious and unique challenges to existing evaluation methodologies. This dissertation investigates the experiences of civil society organizations (CSOs) in evaluating their peacebuilding efforts by exploring their understanding of key evaluation issues and how these relate to peacebuilding and evaluation theory and practice. The central question that frames this study is: *How do CSOs working in conflict and fragile settings in Mindanao want to improve evaluation to support peacebuilding efforts in that region?*

This qualitative study elicits the tacit knowledge of CSOs and their subjective understandings on how they think their peace projects are making a difference in addressing conflicts in their respective contexts, based on how they conduct evaluations. The study gathers data on at least three spheres of CSO endeavor: peacebuilding efforts, evaluation practices, and CSO understanding of key evaluation issues, dimensions, or concepts such as: causation, impact, attribution/ contribution, effectiveness/ success, issue of transfer, complexity, sustainability/ adaptability to change; and the effects on drivers of conflict. Data gathered on these key evaluation issues are used as a set of lenses for guiding the process of inquiry in scrutinizing evaluation approaches and challenges, and the possible improvements to make evaluation more supportive of peacebuilding efforts.

The knowledge shared by CSOs based on their own experiences of peacebuilding and doing evaluations, compared with the current state of peacebuilding and evaluation theory, generates new insights that can provide some clarification on the commonly contentious issues in the evaluation of peacebuilding efforts, thereby enriching the peacebuilding and evaluation fields as a whole.

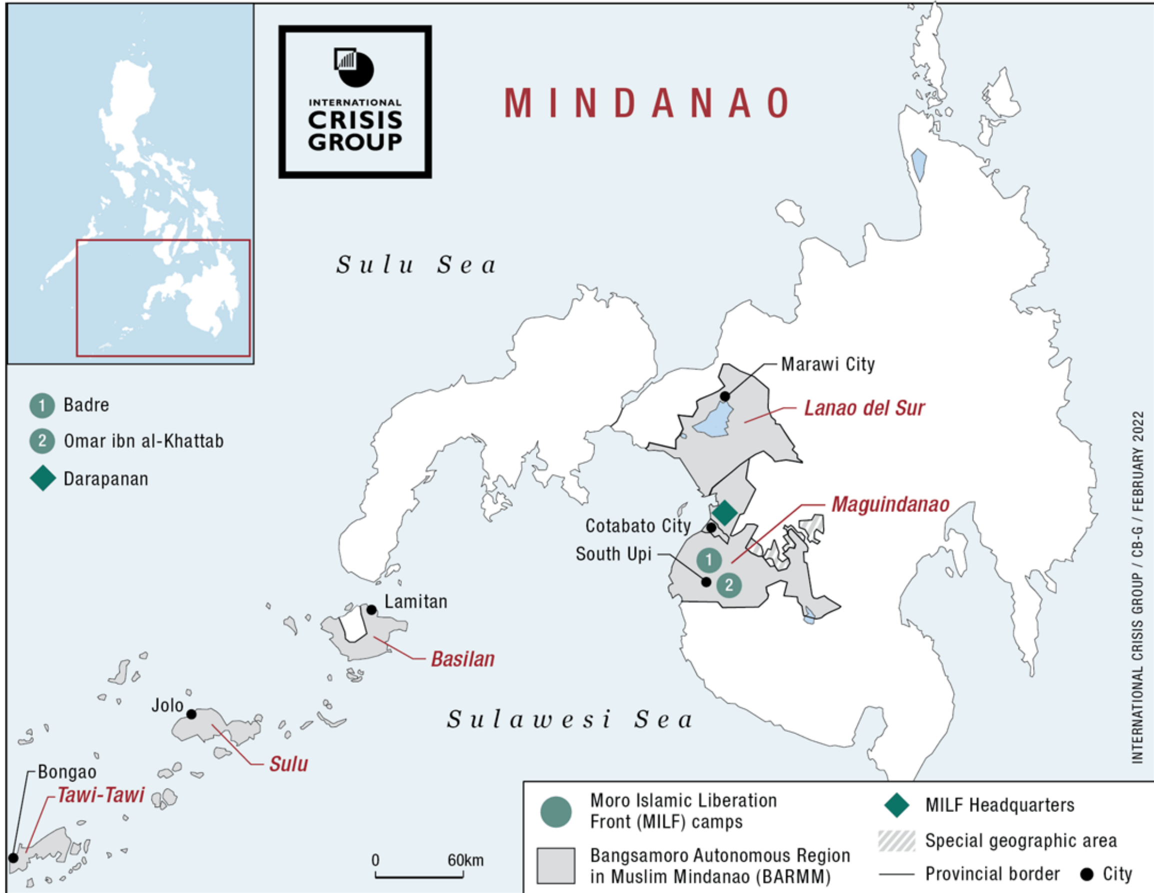


Figure 1: MAP OF MINDANAO, PHILIPPINES

Source: International Crisis Group

# CHAPTER ONE:  INTRODUCTION

Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution is an exciting field of study and engagement. Many practitioners in the field can relate to this sense of excitement and mission—of making headway in dealing with the persistent problems of our times.  But trying to find out if our peacebuilding efforts really made a difference is often a tedious and painful process for many project managers and practitioners.  Nothing can drain a project partner's enthusiasm and smother their spirit of volunteerism and innovation more than a typical evaluation process that demands rigid accountability, while dismissing their experience-based learnings and insights.

*Did our peacebuilding efforts really make a difference?  How do I know?*  These are the questions that perennially haunt peace workers.  As per experience, explaining to donors and their evaluators the merits of a peacebuilding project or how and why a conflict resolution process works can be frustrating.  Donors have often criticized such projects as "band-aid" solutions, piecemeal, scattered, and unsustainable, with results not easily replicable and difficult to quantify.  Donors understandably want a certain kind of evidence gathered from a scientific method as credible proof that the changes can be attributed to project interventions.  This lies in contrast with field practitioners and local stakeholders who often rely more on experiential evidence, as seen in the use of stories, narratives, and testimonies about how and why a particular project mattered in their lives.

Donor consultants and evaluators also often ask questions like: *How do you know your projects are successful? How do you measure success? How do you attribute the observed outcomes to your project? How do you scale up your initiatives? Do these projects add up or connect to support the broader peace process? How do you capture complexity? Are the changes durable? How do you institutionalize these efforts? Are we just mowing grass?* Throughout my experience in running a conflict management program, my attempts to answer these questions have never fully satisfied the skepticism of evaluators and specialists. Too often, their evaluations narrowly focus on accountability and attribution with little concern for learning from the project. Such evaluations often frustrate project implementers and local stakeholders because they did not learn anything from the evaluation process, or what they think matters is often taken for granted. Despite being really smart people, there were no helpful suggestions from evaluators either on how to improve our projects, much less find answers to the questions they posed. When project stakeholders do not find evaluations meaningful, learning from such projects suffers which in turn affects the overall effectiveness of projects.

International development agencies, donors, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) continue to deliberate over how best to evaluate a range of social interventions that target various beneficiaries within dynamic contexts. In particular, the credible and robust evaluation of peacebuilding and conflict resolution programs remains a challenge. Peacebuilding and conflict resolution projects that operate in real-world conflict and fragile settings are often complex endeavors that constantly need to navigate many obstacles to ensure success. Such projects often pose a serious challenge to existing

evaluation methodologies. Aside from the typical evaluation constraints of budget, time, data, geography, and political influences (Bamberger, Rugh & Mabry 2012), peacebuilding evaluation is faced with systemic impediments in the aid and development industry (Blum 2011); the unique challenges of working in conflict-affected and fragile contexts (Bush and Duggan 2013); and the diverse understandings of the theoretical and methodological issues underlying evaluation and their relation to peacebuilding theory and practice.

The failure of evaluation to adequately capture change and insights from peacebuilding efforts has implications for program funding and improvement. Funders are often under pressure from oversight committees to show results so that they can prioritize limited resources where they can be most effective. Consequently, funders often dictate the manner and approach by which an evaluation is conducted which normally focuses on accountability and efficacy, with little consideration for the evaluation needs of implementing partners like civil society organizations (CSOs) and NGOs. Many donors commonly support state-centric programs and assess project success or failure at the aggregate level. This chain of accountability and pressure extends down to the level of implementing NGOs, who are forced to comply with donors' evaluation requirements, usually at the expense of more in-depth learning about a conflict resolution process. The results of such assessments that focus on the needs and use of donors rarely benefit the project communities or enhance the skills and knowledge of partners CSOs. Moreover, informal evaluations and community assessments initiated by CSOs to document their own project learnings that utilize participatory approaches are

often criticized by donors and hard-nosed evaluators for lacking the necessary rigor and for evidence that they often consider as "merely anecdotal."

Highly unstable conflict settings also pose a unique challenge for project implementers and evaluators alike. Aside from the obvious security risks for personnel working in such areas, conflict-affected settings are considered complex—meaning there is high uncertainty and high social conflict in such areas (Patton 2011). Conflicts in such environments are also commonly described as intractable, multi-layered, and multi-dimensional. Faced with these challenging circumstances, peacebuilding and conflict resolution interventions have similarly become increasingly complex, more diverse, and more nuanced to better respond to the demands of a dynamic conflict context. This increasing diversity and complexity of peacebuilding projects is often not matched by appropriate evaluation methodologies for capturing change and project insights. Understanding causation and the contribution of project interventions to the expected outcomes is also a challenge. In such dynamic conflict settings, making sense of all the uncertainty and capturing change continues to be a methodological challenge.

The diverse understandings of the theoretical and methodological issues underlying evaluation and their relation to peacebuilding theory and practice is hotly debated and often poorly understood by project proponents and evaluators. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC)[1] has published standard evaluation criteria and definitions

[1] *Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management* (OECD 2002); *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully* (OECD 2021).

which has provided overall guidance in assessing the merits of programs over the years. The elements of this criteria (i.e., relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability) are often understood or appreciated differently within the context of peacebuilding and conflict resolution, and may not entirely account for other issues emerging in the field.

For instance, results of impact evaluations of peacebuilding projects are often contested because of the different conceptions of impact, different views of causation and causal inference, and different understandings of how to do impact evaluations. As mentioned earlier, complexity is another issue often encountered in the peace and conflict resolution field, which is outside the purview of the standard OECD evaluation criteria. Complexity can have diverse meanings depending on how people make sense of uncertainty, how they appreciate their context, the problems within their context, and the solutions to these problems that are acceptable to them. Meanwhile, evaluators who assess peacebuilding projects may come from different disciplinary paradigms, with little or no knowledge about peace and conflict theory. This points to the challenge of bridging the disciplinary boundaries among the academe, evaluators, and peace and development practitioners in order to make better sense of the problems of this world.

Investigating these evaluation challenges in peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts within a complex setting is an exciting prospect. Decades of armed conflict in Mindanao in the southern Philippines has spawned a plethora of peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives by a vibrant civil society. Despite this rich experience in peacebuilding, there has been a dearth of studies that delve into the nature, provenance,

and evolution of these peacebuilding efforts as well as how these efforts are being evaluated. More recently, the 2017 Marawi Siege in Mindanao and its aftermath has again spawned a variety of peacebuilding efforts amid the huge influx of donor funding to support rehabilitation and address the new issue of violent extremism. It is interesting to know how this current state of events are influencing CSO peacebuilding efforts and how evaluations are being undertaken, as well as the extent of CSO evaluation needs, all of which are the focus of this study.

This dissertation is organized in nine chapters. **Chapter One** sets the stage for the investigation by initially raising some evaluation questions encountered from my own work experience and relating these to evaluation issues of concern in peacebuilding. This transitions to **Chapter Two** which explores the literature on evaluation, peacebuilding, and civil society in the Philippines. The review mainly delves into the theoretical and methodological issues and challenges in doing peacebuilding evaluation. It interrogates the so-called "gold standard" in research; grapples with the concept of causation; touches on competing worldviews in research; and discusses the various dimensions of evaluation which can be relevant for evaluating peacebuilding efforts. The review eventually narrows down relevant evaluation issues and dimensions which are then used as lenses in investigating the central research question of this study. **Chapter Three**, the methodology chapter, raises the central question of this study: *How do CSOs working in conflict and fragile settings in Mindanao want to improve evaluation to support peacebuilding efforts in that region?* It then sets out the plan for the study. **Chapter**

**Four** details the study setting and discusses the Mindanao conflict and the various peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts that have emerged in this context.

The subsequent four chapters answers the four specific questions of the study and presents the main findings which are mostly drawn from the interviews. **Chapter Five** answers the question, *how do CSOs in Mindanao evaluate their peacebuilding projects* and presents their experiences of doing evaluations. **Chapter Six** probes for answers to the question of *what criteria and key evaluation concepts or dimensions do CSOs often use or find important in evaluating their peacebuilding initiatives*. **Chapter Seven** provides details to the question on *what are the evaluation challenges encountered by CSOs and their suggestions to improve the evaluation of their peacebuilding initiatives*. **Chapter Eight** is the analysis and discussion chapter which answers the question on *what insights can be gained from the relationship of CSO peacebuilding efforts and their evaluation practices in Mindanao?* The final section, **Chapter Nine**, concludes with a summary of findings, a sharing of some insights, and a reflection on my own journey of discovery in the study of peacebuilding and evaluation.

The numerous questions posed earlier in the introduction by evaluators assessing the quality of peacebuilding efforts point to evaluation issues. This will be the starting point for our exploration of the literature in this study.

# CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This review explores the literature on evaluation, peacebuilding, and civil society in the Philippines. It attempts to highlight some conversations, debates, and approaches in the fields of evaluation and peacebuilding. The review mainly delves into the theoretical and methodological issues and challenges in doing peacebuilding evaluation. It interrogates the so-called "gold standard" in research; grapples with the concept of causation; touches on competing worldviews in research; and discusses the various dimensions of evaluation which can be relevant for evaluating peacebuilding efforts. The review eventually narrows down relevant evaluation issues and dimensions which are then used as lenses in investigating the central research question of this study.

## What is Evaluation?

The Encyclopedia of Evaluation defines evaluation as "an applied inquiry process for collecting and synthesizing evidence that culminates in conclusions about the state of affairs, value, merit, worth, significance, or quality of a program, product, person, policy, proposal, or plan. Conclusions made in evaluations encompass both an empirical aspect (that something is the case) and a normative aspect (judgment about the value of something). It is the value feature that distinguishes evaluation from other types of inquiry, such as basic science research, clinical epidemiology, investigative journalism, or public polling." (Fournier 2004, 139-140).

This definition reflects the earlier thoughts of classical evaluation theorist Michael Scriven (1991) who stated that "evaluation is the process of determining the merit, worth,

and value of things, and evaluations are the products of that process." (cited in Patton 2015, 6). In reference to the valuing feature, Scriven (1991) opined that the evaluation process identifies relevant values or standards to apply to what is being evaluated, in contrast to social science research which does not aim to achieve evaluative conclusions (cited in Coffman 2004, 7).[2] There is a lack of consensus even among evaluation scholars on what is evaluation and how it differs from research. For those who want to delve into this, Wanzer's (2021) paper provides a stimulating discussion on the definition problem of evaluation while illuminating some distinctions between evaluation and research. But for the purpose of this dissertation, I think it would suffice to say that to evaluate something means to determine its merit, worth, value or significance. (Patton 2008, 5).

Evaluative thinking is inherent in the human species and central to our everyday affairs. However, as a systematic and formal field of professional practice, evaluation is relatively new (Patton 2008, 14). In the U.S., evaluation grew out of the Great Society legislation of the 1960s that resulted to ambitious social programs that addressed poverty (ibid.). The massive federal spending on various programs also increased the demand for accountability which include fiscal audits and the demand for more systematic empirical evaluations on the effectiveness of such programs (ibid., 15). Thus, it was during this time that program evaluation became a distinct field of professional practice (ibid.).

[2] https://archive.globalfrp.org/var/hfrp/storage/original/application/f1be9c61c5a4011b6637bb5d1a3190ed.pdf

More precisely, the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 which insisted on mandatory evaluation requirement to ensure proper expenditure is considered the formal birth of contemporary program evaluation (Fitzpatrick et. al. 2004 cited in Hall 2020, 15-16). This wave of social programs accompanied by the newly-minted practice of evaluation unfolded over a divided social landscape of America as reflected in the struggles for recognition by African-American communities and indigenous peoples (Hall 2020, 15). This critical piece of history provides an important backdrop in discussing the developments in the evaluation field. The subsequent discussion tackles the growth and development of the evaluation field using the evaluation theory tree. It also discusses the pertinent debates that have emerged and have moved the field forward in relation to my own inquiry.

**The Evaluation Theory Tree: Growth and Divergence of Evaluation**

Evaluation theory is sometimes referred to as evaluation models or evaluation approaches (Cristie and Lemire 2019, 492; Bundi and Pattyn 2022, 3). The development and evolution of evaluation as a field of professional practice can be better understood by looking at the evaluation theory tree. The evaluation theory tree is a useful metaphor and category system that shows the primary emphasis of evaluation theorists and their influences (Alkin et. al. 2004, 2). It also highlights the similarities and differences across evaluation theorists (Alkin & Christie 2019, 12). I personally find the evaluation theory tree a useful heuristic device for charting the growth of evaluation and the debates in the field, `within the context of historical developments. Below is a discussion of the evaluation theory tree's core branches and some notable theorists, their context, and the

emerging conversations and debates in the field. Not all evaluation theorists and scholars are cited, but only those which I think drives the conversations in the field forward within the framing of my own study.

The methods branch. The evaluation theory tree originally categorized evaluation theories into three core branches: *use*, *valuing*, and *methods* (ibid.). The *methods* branch is probably the most well-known of the evaluation branches because of the circumstance in which it came about. The aforementioned rise of the Great Society social programs in the 1960s also saw a growing demand for evaluation services, and many scholars from the social sciences became involved as evaluators (Patton 2008, 15, Hall 2020, 14). During this time, the prevailing *zeitgeist* in the social sciences was dominated by scientific rationality and a vision of modernity. Donald Campbell, the foremost theorist of the methods branch, had a background in psychology. He was well-known for his work on experimental and quasi-experimental designs. Campbell became the leading visionary in conceptualizing evaluation as a cornerstone of what he calls "the experimenting society." (Patton 2008, 17). Hence, the methods branch has always been known to advocate for the use of rigorous evaluations that utilize experimental and quasi-experimental designs (Alkin & Christie 2019, 13).

The use branch. By the end of 1960s, it became apparent that the evaluations of the Great Society social programs were largely ignored and politicized (Patton 2008, 18). The underutilization and even non-use of evaluation results became a problem, but so was the misuse, deception, and abuse of evaluation (ibid., 18; 25). Carol Weiss, who is recognized as the "Founding Mother" of evaluation lamented that evaluation results have

not been influential in program decision-making (ibid., 18; 19). Weiss subsequently became involved in studying and writing about knowledge utilization and is one of the influential contributors on evaluation use (ibid.). Hence, the *use* branch of evaluation theory prioritize the importance of evaluations that are context-specific and offers insights that assist stakeholders in decision-making (Alkin & Christie 2019, 12). A main pillar in this branch is Daniel Stufflebeam, known for his work on evaluation standards and his CIPP model of evaluation which stands for evaluations of an entity's context, inputs, processes, and products (Stufflebeam 2004, 2). His work on CIPP began in 1965 and grew out of the need by public schools to meaningfully evaluate their federally-funded projects, which they did not find feasible using the so-called "gold standard" of program evaluations which are controlled, variable-manipulating, comparative experiments (ibid.). Included in this branch is my personal favorite, Michael Patton, who is known for his work on Utilization-Focused Evaluation and Developmental Evaluation. He is heavily cited in this dissertation.

The valuing branch. The *valuing* branch of evaluation is primarily concerned with how value or evaluative claims are crafted (Alkin & Christie 2019, 12). It is quite ironic that this valuing quality which makes evaluation distinct from the other forms of social inquiry was initially muted by the dominance of the scientific rationality of scholars in the 1960s. Ernest House, whose work is classified under the valuing branch of evaluation, attributes this state of affairs to the "Red Scare" that pervaded the U.S. in the early part of the 20th century (House 2004, 2). During this time, some social scientists were said to be dismissed from universities for voicing unpopular opinions. In general,

social scientists became value-traumatized (ibid.). There was an aversion to taking "value" stands due to the political events at that time (Ross 1991 cited by House 2004, 2). The prevailing philosophy of positivism gave a convenient excuse for social scientists to concentrate on methods and leave the valuing to others—a view which Campbell holds (ibid.). This value-neutral stance continued throughout the Cold War (ibid.).

Michael Scriven, was one of the first prominent evaluation theorist to reject the idea of "value-free" evaluations (Alkin & Christie 2019, 14). He is best known for his contributions to the field's conception of the science of valuing, hence he occupies the major valuing branch and has greatly influenced many evaluators (ibid.). Scriven advocated for the act of valuing to become an integral feature of evaluation practice, and placed a heavy onus on evaluators as experts, to not only provide information to stakeholders, but also offer a value judgement on the evaluand (ibid.). Scriven coined the terms "formative" (feedback) and "summative" (merit) which describe the two aspects of evaluations (ibid.). He is supportive of a *goal-free evaluation* which urges evaluators to set aside a program's intentions and instead unearth what a program is actually achieving (ibid.).

Like Scriven who advocated for the prominent role of evaluators in valuing, Ernest House believes that evaluators are "fully situated" in the deepest sense—they are "value-imbued, value-laden, and value-based." (ibid., 15). For that matter, House argued that evaluation had the obligation and potential to support the pursuit of a more just society by addressing social inequities and advancing better policies and programs in their practice (ibid.). House wrote on the connection between evaluation, inequality, and

social justice, and he believed that evaluators should adopt an ethical framework that prioritizes the needs and views of the disadvantaged (ibid.).

Both Ernest House and Michael Scriven are representatives of two different approaches in the *valuing* branch of evaluation theory (Alkin & Christie 2019, 12). Michael Scriven has advocated for a systematic and objective approach to valuing, wherein the evaluator plays a prominent role (ibid.). In Scriven's objective approach, the evaluator does not collaborate with stakeholders, but instead begins with independent research to establish evaluation criteria to evaluate merit (ibid., 15). In contrast, Ernest House views truth as both subjective and dynamic, and believes that evaluations should be collaborative (ibid., 12, 16). Recognizing that evaluations are inherently political, House advocated for an integration of diverse perspectives of stakeholders especially those lacking in political power when making value claims in evaluation (ibid., 12, 15). These concerns that were gradually surfacing in the field (i.e., inequality, social justice, and ethics) were a portent of things to come.

Enter the husband-and-wife team of Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba whose work as educators and evaluators signaled an important shift across the three branches of evaluation theory. Their highly influential book on *Naturalistic Inquiry* (1985), critiqued the positivist paradigm that dominated social inquiry which posits that there is an objective truth or reality that is tangible and fragmentable. They proposed an alternative "naturalistic" paradigm, which they described with the following axioms:[3] (1) Realities

[3] Lincoln and Guba define axioms as a set of undemonstrated and demonstrable "basic beliefs" accepted by convention or established by practice as the building blocks of some conceptual or theoretical structure or system (1985, 33).

are multiple, constructed, and holistic (ontology); (2) the knower and known are interactive and inseparable (epistemology); (3) inquiry is value-bound (axiology); (4) only time- and context-bound hypothesis is possible (generalizability); and (5) all entities are in a state of mutual and simultaneous shaping so it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects (or causality) (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 37). The importance of this book cannot be overstated as it reminds us that we are so saturated by the tenets of science that we often take for granted the need to question these assumptions, and see that there can be other ways of thinking (ibid., 8-9).

What fascinates me is how Lincoln and Guba dovetailed their work in education and social theorizing, and applied it to evaluation.[4] Their book on Fourth Generation Evaluation (1989) uses the constructivist paradigm in evaluations (earlier called "naturalistic" paradigm).[5] They define Fourth Generation Evaluation (FGE) as a form of evaluation "in which the claims, concerns, and issues of stakeholders serve as organizational foci (the basis for determining what information is needed), that is implemented within the methodological precepts of the constructivist inquiry paradigm (Guba & Lincoln 1989, 50). Much like in their earlier work on *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Lincoln and Guba described FGE along several axioms, which they now call ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions (Egon and Guba 2001, 1). A notable addition from their earlier work was the streamlined description of the methodological

[4] In their preface to the volume, the authors stated that they have been applying the naturalist perspective to the area of evaluation, wherein Guba (1978) noted nine different definitions of naturalism (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 8).

[5] *Naturalistic inquiry* as used by Lincoln and Guba should not be confused with *naturalism* as a methodological perspective in the philosophy of science. See Moses and Knutsen 2012.

assumption of constructivism which they call *hermeneutic-dialectic*:  "hermeneutic because it is interpretive in character, and dialectic because it represents a comparison and contrast of divergent views, with a view to achieving a higher level of synthesis…" (Guba & Lincoln 1989, 149).  FGE builds upon the first three generations of evaluation (typified by measurements, descriptions, and judgment) by incorporating some elements of it, and distinguishing FGE as focused on the negotiation of meanings through the hermeneutic-dialectic approach (Guba & Lincoln 2001, 8; Lincoln & Guba 2004, 4).

Despite the popularity of Guba and Lincoln's ideas, FGE lacks case studies and is rarely favored over the conventional evaluation approaches (Fishman 1992; Lay and Papadopoulos 2007).  Some critique FGE for being difficult to use as it needs skillful facilitation and certain preconditions for its success (Lay and Papadopoulos 2007, 503-504; Koch 2000, 124).  Its use can sometimes be considered politically naïve and operationally endless (Fishman 1992, 269).  Nevertheless, it is clear that the works of Lincoln and Guba made the sophisticated discourse of social theories more widely accessible or in their own words, made them "palatable and appear reasonable." (Lincoln & Guba 1985, 9).  Their works continue to influence and reorient the social sciences, opening up more debates about the alternative ways of knowing, which nurtured the growing critiques of the times on the "gendered, classed, colonial and perhaps raced nature of the scientific enterprise as practiced by western scientists." (Lincoln & Guba 2004, 1).  Lincoln and Guba comfortably rest on their own valuing branch in the evaluation tree, while also straddling the use and method branches.[6] The work of these

[6] Which they eloquently argued in Lincoln and Guba (2004, 3).

two esteemed theorists provide fertile ground for more conversations that nurture the offshoot of new branches in the evaluation theory tree.

**Emerging debates and the sprouting of new branches in the evaluation theory tree**

There are several important conversations and debates on issues related to marginalized groups and the diversity of peoples and cultures in evaluation. These discussions initially problematized how racial and ethnic minorities have little to no influence in defining programs that affect them, and in determining how such programs that have impacted their lives are evaluated. These conversations kicked-off with Madison's (1992) discussion of minority issues in program evaluation, followed by the 1999 issue of the American Journal of Evaluation (AJE) that revisited minority issues and raised new questions about race, power, privilege, and transformation. New Directions for Evaluation (NDE) came out with a special issue in 2004 which focused on culture and cultural competence, closely followed by a 2005 book by a group of scholars wanting to plant their flag on Culturally Responsive Evaluation (CRE). In 2020, NDE came up again with another issue that updates and contemporizes the previous evaluation literature and contribute to the transformative, critical paradigm. Through the years, these discussions gradually matured to account for other relevant issues of marginalized groups and expanded the social identities that are captured within the broader lens of diversity. These issues dealt with the importance of culture, context, and addressing the needs of people through evaluation; as well as exploring alternative epistemologies and methodologies to better grasp these multicultural experiences which impinge on the

practice of evaluation.  All of these are eventually linked to challenging the status quo to impact wider issues surrounding social inequity and justice.

One of the earliest discussions regarding racial and ethnic minorities in evaluation and often cited is Anna-Marie Madison's (1992) seminal work, *Minority Issues in Program Evaluation* in the special issue of New Directions for Program Evaluation (now New Directions for Evaluation).  Madison discussed some concerns about the impact of cultural dominance on definitions and measurement, and explored techniques and procedures for including minorities in the evaluation process (Hopson 1999, 449).  In particular, Madison emphasized the crucial role of program participants in problem definition which drives the purpose of such programs, and where often, the dominant culture's interpretation of reality prevails (SenGupta, Hopson & Thompson-Robinson 2004, 8).

Years later, an important round of conversations happened during the 1998 American Evaluation Association (AEA) annual conference which was documented in the 1999 Fall issue of the American Journal of Evaluation (AJE).  Plenary speaker, John H. Stanfield II (1999) elaborated in his essay the problem of racialized conventional wisdoms and academic traditions that impede the understanding of colored life worlds—pointing out the rich complexity of black cultures that exists beyond racial categories.  He argued that until such epistemological and biographical problematics are sorted out in the social sciences, it is useless to deal with the technical issues of technique and measurement (ibid.).  Stanfield challenged the evaluation profession to look more closely at the issues of power and privilege that reproduce the dominant-subordinate relations

especially in the academe. He concluded by highlighting the need for the genuine empowerment of marginalized groups to help transform institutions.

Several responses to Stanfield's essay were written by notable scholars. Hopson's (1999) commentary added fuel to Stanfield's bonfire by revisiting minority issues within the broader American social context and raising the problem of how these issues are conceptualized and constructed, noting the underlying contestations that also reflect the issues surrounding race, power, and hegemony. Patton (1999, 438) responded by framing questions about race and evaluation, some of which include: *How does the lens of race shapes and affect our understandings and actions? What methods and measures fairly capture and communicate the experiences of people of color and the poor? Given the reality-shaping power of racial categories, what variables and categories are meaningful and appropriate? And for those inclined, how do we find and follow the path to transformation?* Meanwhile, House agreed with Stanfield's assessment and further ventured that the situation may be worse as indicated since people are also discriminated against according to racial and ethnic characterizations which are further separated by gender and social class distinctions within racial and ethnic categories (1999, 433-435). He added that such categorizations or miscategorizations have damaged evaluation and portrayed minorities in a negative light. A way out he argued could be to draw inspiration from our democratic ideals and use evaluation expertise in the pursuit of social justice. This all comes back to an earlier call by Donna Mertens (1999) who convincingly argued for the use of a transformative paradigm which places central importance to the lives and experiences of marginalized groups (ibid., 4). Using

transformative theory to conduct more inclusive evaluations allows for a sharper analysis of asymmetric power relations and actively links evaluation results to actions which can eventually impact the wider questions of social inequity and justice (ibid.).

New Directions for Evaluation (NDE) in 2004 came out with a volume focused on culture and cultural competence. Building from previous work by scholars calling for the need to attend to issues of diversity, cultural responsiveness, and multicultural validity, this volume discussed how the evaluation field can integrate notions of cultural competence into evaluation theory, policy, practice, and methodologies (Thompson-Robinson, Hopson, and SenGupta 2004, 1-4). The opening chapter gave a thorough discussion of culture and cultural competence that synthesizes ideas from other disciplines and frames the other chapters. The authors also proposed a working definition of cultural competence in evaluation, which they broadly defined as "a systematic, responsive inquiry that is actively cognizant , understanding, and appreciative of the cultural context in which the evaluation takes place; that frames and articulates the epistemology of the evaluative endeavor; that employs culturally and contextually appropriate methodology; and that uses stakeholder-generated, interpretive means to arrive at the results and further use of findings." (SenGupta, Hopson, and Thompson-Robinson 2004, 13). The chapter is a very good read as it provides helpful nuggets of information that makes the reader realize other interesting facets of evaluation, the importance of culture in defining programs and evaluation design, the integral role of values in culture and its common thread with evaluation as valuing social inquiry. An important theme that runs in this chapter and throughout the volume is the need for

critical reflection of the evaluation field and of the self, to recognize the pluralistic nature of the endeavor and the need to challenge the status quo of existing power structures (ibid., 14).

In the intervening years, there was a growth of discourse on culturally competent evaluation and by extension, culturally responsive evaluation (CRE). A group of scholars, realizing how the evaluation field was far behind anthropologists and sociologists in considering culture, rushed to plant their flag on culture and cultural context with the publication of a 2005 book on the *Role of Culture and Context: A Mandate for Inclusion, the Discovery of Truth, and Understanding in Evaluative Theory and Practice*. The book has an equally long-winded updated edition about *Continuing the Journey to Reposition Culture and Cultural Context in Evaluation Theory and Practice* (Hood, Hopson & Frierson 2015). The smorgasbord of chapters are all centered on the core principle that good evaluation rests on the nuanced consideration of cultural context that includes the diverse ethnic, linguistic, economic, and racial communities of color (ibid, ix). Meanwhile, all these conversations and self-reflection in the field bore fruit in the 2011 AEA's *Statement on Cultural Competence*, which affirms the importance of culture and cultural competence in evaluation, where cultural competence is a stance toward culture and a process that requires self-awareness, reflection of one's own cultural position, awareness of others' positions, and the ability to interact genuinely and respectfully with others (AEA 2011).[7]

[7] http://www.eval.org/ccstatement

Fast forward to 2020 and beyond, where the world is a far different place. We find ourselves in a world ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic and poverty, divided by political provocations leading to more intolerance, and standing on the precipice of major ecological and climate disaster. Scarred by these events, we have emerged chastened, more introspective, and more conscious of our limitations, as well as more cognizant of the urgent need for action to avert impending calamity. It is in this challenging context that succeeding issues of NDE (2020) and AJE (2021) journals seem to coalesce around proposing answers to previous questions and calling for more liberation praxis and global transformations.

The 2020 summer issue of NDE updates and contemporizes the previous evaluation literature on minority issues and cultural responsiveness in evaluation with the aim of responding to some earlier questions raised and contributing to the transformative, critical paradigm with the intent to incite change. The volume also highlights a younger generation of culturally responsive evaluators and showcases scholarship of social-justice oriented evaluation. Notable among the chapters is the work of Melvin Hall (2020, 13-22) who retraced the historical roots of program evaluation, and described how evaluation unfolded over two Americas—the privileged white class on the one hand, and the African American and indigenous communities struggling for recognition on the other. Citing Madison (1992), Hall pointed out that evaluation's reluctance to engage in social justice issues stem from the perception that such preoccupation threatens the field's legitimacy as form of scientific inquiry. He further argued that because of this, evaluation became complicit in delineating and maintaining the two Americas by

providing a “cloak of certainty and rigor,” thereby supporting the institutionalization of inequalities (Hall 2020, 16).

In a seeming response to Stanfield’s earlier challenge of discovering the rich life worlds of black culture, Hall drew inspiration from the black tradition of the social gospel as a vehicle of change and cited how it reflects and nurtures “oppositional consciousness” or a community’s motivation and push to confront oppressive social structures and a key ingredient in social movements (ibid., 20). Hall encourages the exploration of CRE, indigenous evaluation, and other critical theory-based inquiries as these also build ideational resources and increase our collective sense of legitimacy for oppositional consciousness to happen. He concludes that evaluation needs to be a productive and liberating force in nurturing oppositional consciousness in any culture or society for reforms to happen.

Continuing this trajectory of liberation discourse are two complementary journal articles that illustrate the use of alternative paradigms, methods, and measures in evaluation to change oppressive narratives and address epistemic violence in evaluation. In *Radical Inquiry—Liberatory Praxis for Research and Evaluation*, the authors Dhaliwal, Casey, Aceves-Iñiguez, and Dean-Coffey (2020, 50) try to answer the question *how can evaluators use their position and power to move away from metrics of compliance, and the narrative these reinforce, toward measures of liberation?* Recognizing the often-harmful narratives and assumptions that portray young people of color as deficits instead of assets to the larger community, the RYSE Youth Center in

Richmond, California employs a mindset of radical inquiry and theory of liberation to create safe spaces for the youth grounded on social justice.

Radical inquiry involves intentional, active, and ongoing listening to RYSE members and to those closest to them, while striving to facilitate connection, proximity, and empathy that is often resisted in traditional social science research (ibid., 55). This has resulted to a shift in thinking and practices that are more meaningful for youth. For instance, evaluators of RYSE made a conscious effort to unbind themselves from the dominant narrative on the role of evaluator to becoming facilitators that accompany and shepherd the development of the youth program, where young people's voices are front and center. The evaluation team integrated their findings to documents that the RYSE board, staff, and stakeholders could use to take action. This close collaboration between evaluators and RYSE stakeholders, resulted in the development of a theory liberation which grew out of their theory of change. Their theory of liberation articulated a bolder vision where "systems are transformed" and "young people are loved" and this served as a foundation to build alignment across the organization (ibid., 61). The case of RYSE provides an inspiring example of how development and evaluation practitioners can extricate themselves from oppressive structures by shifting the burden of responsibility and change from those most structurally vulnerable to those most protected and privileged (ibid., 63).

Finally, the chapter by on *Indigenous Made in Africa Frameworks: Addressing Epistemic Violence and Contributing to Social Transformation* is a fitting end to cap this discussion on what is evaluation. Aware of the decades-running theme on the dominance

and detrimental effects of western cultural frameworks and its tug-of-war with other alternative paradigms, the authors Chilisa and Mertens (2021) delve into the various paradigmatic perspectives and explore their long neglected philosophical assumptions (axiological, ontological, and epistemological, and methodological) that inform evaluation. The authors contend that the dominance of western paradigms has forced out other ways of knowing and silenced local indigenous voices leading to what Billman (2019) calls "systemic, institutionalized fragmented knowledge." (cited in Chilisa & Mertens 2021, 243). This state of affairs has led to a crisis of representation in terms of defining problems, solutions, and evaluation strategies which can be harmful to communities and reduce the effectiveness of sustainable development goals (SDGs). Chilisa and Mertens argue that transformative change is needed to achieve SDGs which means attention should be given to culture, values, and ethics. This in turn requires development and evaluation practitioners to be open to other paradigmatic frameworks such as the indigenous framework as exemplified by the Made in Africa Evaluation Framework (MAE).

What is intriguing in their discussion and useful for my own study is that Chilisa and Mertens proposed an ingenious way of looking at the classic evaluation theory tree by adding two more branches and aligning the branches with the "big four" philosophical paradigms of postpositivist, constructivist, pragmatic, and transformative paradigm, plus the emerging indigenous paradigm (Figure 2). The original tree which had the three classic branches of methods, use, and valuing, is now proposed to have two more branches: the social justice branch and the needs and context branch (ibid., 245). The

authors also proposed that the branches of the evaluation tree also correspond with the "big four" philosophical paradigms: the methods branch aligns with the postpositivist paradigm; the use branch aligns with the pragmatic paradigm; the values branch aligns with the constructivist paradigm; and the social justice branch aligns with the transformative paradigm. The newly-proposed needs and context branch is also aligned with the emerging indigenous paradigm.

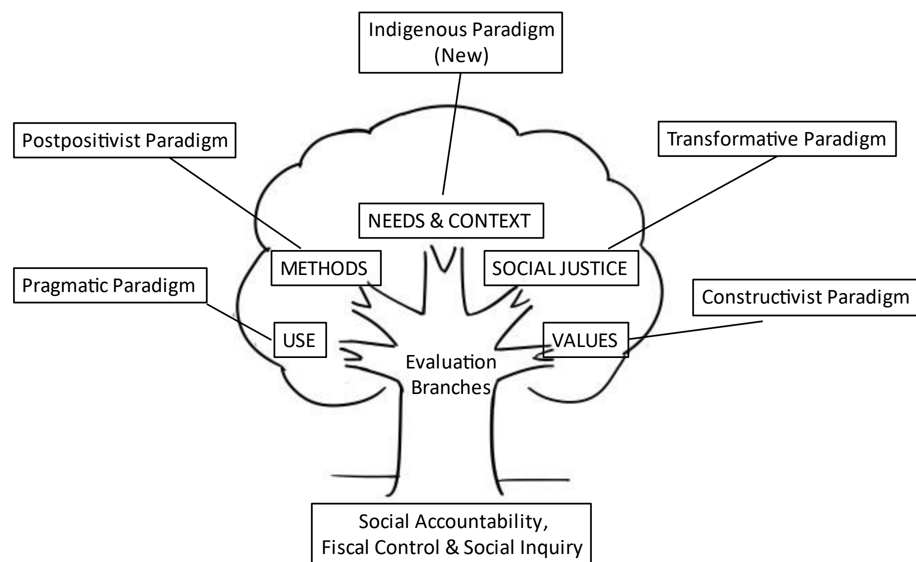


Figure 2: Expanded Evaluation Theory Tree (adopted from Chilisa and Mertens 2021).

The advantage of viewing the various paradigms in this way in relation to evaluation theories is that it points to the porous nature of paradigms and presents a valuable opportunity for what Johnson and Stefurak (2013) refer to as *dialectical pluralism* wherein the indigenous paradigm can be suitable for integration with other paradigmatic perspectives (ibid., 246; 250). One practical example of this is

conceptualizing the mixed methods approach to go beyond the usual quantitative-qualitative dichotomy and also see it as an integration with other knowledge systems (ibid., 250). Dialectical pluralism also resonates with Margaret Hargreaves' (2021) concept of *bricolage* which she describes as a transdisciplinary, mixed paradigm approach to evaluation that can be used to help improve and enrich the four elements of evaluation design: theoretical frameworks, inquiry frameworks, methods and metrics, and values and valuing. Accordingly, an adoption of bricolage prevents evaluation from becoming captive to any research paradigm or perspective (ibid., 114). The weaving together of these various paradigmatic perspectives to enhance evaluation and even social science research presents an exciting new frontier to explore.

This is the current state of theory and practice in the field of evaluation. The various discourse and lessons learned in the evaluation field are also very relevant for peacebuilding being also a relatively new field of study. The issues, challenges, and debates in evaluation also parallels and resonates with the peacebuilding field and certainly a lot of mutual learning and cross fertilization can happen between the two fields. The transdisciplinary nature of the peacebuilding field presents some challenges, but also more opportunities for the exploration of the various paradigmatic perspectives and nuances of its philosophical assumptions as these apply to peacebuilding. Dialectical pluralism and paradigmatic diversity is the way forward.

**Types of Evaluation**

There are different types of evaluation depending on the purpose of the evaluation and what is being evaluated. The Department for International Development or DFID

(2005, 13) provides a simple but useful way of classifying evaluation. They categorize the types of evaluation according to: (1) when they take place; (2) the processes used; and (3) where they focus. Using these three categories, I provide some descriptions to enrich each category as well as examples of evaluations that fall under these groupings based on my own research.

1. **Type of evaluations according to when they take place**. These are evaluations conducted at different times throughout the design and implementation of a program or project (ibid.). Examples of these are formative, summative, and impact evaluations. These three are usually considered the most basic types of evaluations for evaluating projects. Formative evaluations are undertaken to determine progress and how to improve interventions; while summative evaluations are usually conducted at the end of the project to provide an overarching assessment of the project's overall value (Church & Rogers 2006, 110-111). Impact evaluations seek to determine change in the conflict catalyzed by a project (ibid.).
2. **Type of evaluation according to the processes used**. The evaluations under this category are variously known as evaluation theories, evaluation models, or evaluation approaches (Cristie and Lemire 2019, 492; Bundi and Pattyn 2022, 3). Church and Rogers (2011, 112) define an evaluation approach as "the framework, philosophy, or style of an evaluation." According to Bundi and Pattyn (ibid.), these evaluation models should not be seen as directly empirically verifiable for a given theory, but rather as a scholar's attempts to characterize the central concepts

and ideal procedures which can serve as guidelines in evaluation. The authors (ibid., 4) present a comprehensive taxonomy of evaluation based on the work of Widmer and De Rocchi (2012). This taxonomy consists of 22 models situated in one of the three overarching types: (1) effective models which focus on program impact; (2) economic models which are concerned with efficiency; and the (3) actor-oriented models which are concerned with the needs and interests of actors (ibid.).

Evaluations that fall under this category are nearly all the evaluation approaches found in the evaluation theory tree. For example, **empowerment evaluation** is designed "to help people help themselves and to improve their programs using a form of self-evaluation and reflection" (Church & Rogers 2011, 115). It has five main facets: training, facilitation, advocacy, illumination, and liberation (ibid.). **Utilization-focused evaluation** is premised on the assumption that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use, and therefore the focus of utilization-focused evaluation is on *intended use* by *intended users*. (Patton 2008, 37). In addition, the primary use of this approach is to test practitioner theories about "why they do what they do and what they think results from what they do."(ibid., 345). **Developmental evaluation** aims to "help social innovators to explore possibilities for addressing problems and identify innovative approaches and solutions" (Patton 2011, 46). While this seems to overlap with formative evaluation, it is in the spirit of exploration and finding innovations to

real-time problems in the field where developmental evaluation distinguishes itself from formative evaluation.

3. **Type of evaluation according to focus or subject**. According to DFID (2005, 13), since evaluation teams do not have the time and resources to look at everything, those commissioning evaluations need to focus the scope of any evaluation within the resources available. Examples of evaluations that focus on a particular subject include: project, program, sector, aid instruments, thematic evaluations, etc. (ibid., 16).

The other ways of classifying evaluation is Bamberger, Rugh, and Mabry's (2012, 20-22) dizzying array of 14 dimensions of evaluation scenarios which depend on the characteristics of the evaluand and the purpose and nature of the evaluation (i.e., complexity of the evaluand), and methodological dimensions which will depend on stakeholder preferences and what is feasible given the constraints (i.e., level of rigor, quantitative or qualitative preference, mixed methods, and data sources). Meanwhile Elliott, d'Estrée & Kaufman (2003) see evaluation within an evaluation utilization continuum comprised of conflict assessment, formative, summative, and knowledge-oriented evaluations. Viewing evaluation in such a utilization continuum already approaches the intersections between peacebuilding and evaluation fields.

## Defining Peacebuilding Evaluation

Evaluation in the peacebuilding field is relatively young in terms of being recognized as a formal professional practice. The increasing attention to peacebuilding evaluation is part of the recent attempts to professionalize the field after decades of

peacebuilding interventions that rapidly increased in the mid-1990s (Gürkaynak, Dayton, and Paffenholz 2011). While there was an initial resistance in the evaluation of peacebuilding activities due to the difficulty of measuring complex social and political phenomenon (e.g. protracted social conflicts and peace processes), issue of sustainability, and to differences in epistemological and methodological groundings, one cannot underestimate the importance of evaluation in fostering accountability and learning to improve interventions, which are the driving forces behind peacebuilding evaluation (Church and Rogers 2006; Gürkaynak, Dayton, and Paffenholz 2011).

There is a broad consensus in defining evaluation, but definitions of peacebuilding evaluation are varied. This research draws from two definitions. Cheyanne Church (2011, 460) defines peacebuilding evaluation as "the use of social science data collection methods (including participatory processes) to investigate the quality and value of programming that addresses the core driving factors and actors of violent conflict or supports the driving factors and actors of peace." A variation of this definition by Church is "the use of social science data collection methods to investigate the quality and value of interventions which seeks to stop violence from re-igniting or promote a positive change in the conflict context" (Church cited in Reimann, Chigas, and Woodrow 2012: 2). Meanwhile, Andrew Blum (2011: 2) draws from the OECD definitions of peacebuilding and evaluation to draw up his own definition of peacebuilding evaluation which he defines as "an evidence-based process designed to create accountability for and learning from peacebuilding programs." Using these two definitions, this study proposes a working definition of peacebuilding as an evidence-

based process that investigates the quality and value of efforts that address the causes and consequences of conflict toward learning and accountability.

But what makes peacebuilding evaluation distinct from the evaluation of other fields? According to Church (2011, 468), this distinction can be assessed through the process, content, and context of the evaluation. She argues that in any evaluative process, one must understand the issues or questions to be explored, which are commonly called evaluation criteria (ibid.). The OECD-DAC posits six criteria for the evaluation of all fields which includes peacebuilding: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and coherence. According to her, one needs to have some knowledge about the peacebuilding field for the evaluation criteria to be properly tailored to it, and to understand its implications for the evaluation process (ibid.).

Meanwhile, looking at the content of an evaluation involves the need to compare results to certain standards in order to ascertain value of an achievement. In this aspect, Church argues that peacebuilding may differ because the field does not have yet clear standards for comparison, which means that evaluation may need to draw out different ways of concluding about the value of a peace intervention (ibid., 469). This also applies to assessing the quality of processes with certain process standards, which may be adapted to the realities of the cultural context and conflict environment (ibid., 470).

Finally, the context of peacebuilding evaluation makes it more distinctive because of the challenges posed by conflict and post-conflict environments to data collection (ibid.). These challenges can be seen in terms of access to informants and concerns for

their well-being, as well as the general concerns of doing no harm in the process of data collection (ibid.).

## Challenges to Evaluations of Peacebuilding Initiatives

There are many challenges in evaluating peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives. These challenges, which are further explained below, include the following:

- the diverse and emergent nature of the peacebuilding field itself;
- the typical constraints of doing a real-world evaluation;
- the systemic impediments in the aid and international development community; and
- the theoretical and methodological issues behind evaluation.

### The Diverse and Emergent Nature of Peacebuilding[8]

The history of the peacebuilding and conflict resolution field is a response to adversity that spans several generations and continents. Interrelated fields concerned with peace-making such as international relations, peace studies, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding are products of a dialogue with Machiavellian writings on statecraft; the traumatic events of the two World Wars, Cold War, Vietnam War, genocides; and a utopian/ idealist tradition that the world needs to be improved. International relations, which was influenced by realist thinking, became focused on state-building, diplomacy, and power.

The more inclusive peace-making efforts in response to traumatic events are generally thought of as coming from two streams—the North American tradition of conflict resolution which is mainly concerned with basic human needs, social grievance,

[8] This section is heavily influenced by readings from Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse 2011; Avruch 2013b, 10-31; Wallensteen 2011, 14-32; Byrne and Senehi 2011; and Lawler 2013.

and problem solving; and the European/ Scandinavian tradition of peace studies which approaches peace-making from a more structural perspective. Meanwhile, contemporary peacebuilding was originally conceptualized in the context of postwar recovery but has since become a broader field (Snodderly 2011, 40). Peacebuilding is now considered an overarching term for an entire range of actions designed to contribute to building a culture of peace (OECD 2008, 15).

Depending on a scholar's training and intellectual provenance, some (like the Europeans led by Galtung and the graduates of Kroc Institute) would argue that Peace Studies is broader, while the North American tradition started by Kenneth Boulding, would consider conflict resolution as the broader field. Others would say peacebuilding is broader and comes from the tradition of conflict resolution and peace studies (Ramsbotham & others 2011). Kevin Avruch's lectures and writings (2013b) seem to prefer the use of "Peace and Conflict Studies," while the 2014 Symposium on the State of Graduate education in Peace and Conflict Resolution use the term "Peace and Conflict Resolution," and abbreviates as CR/PB or PCR.

Peacebuilding, peace studies, and conflict resolution are all concerned with the question of violence and the search for alternatives to it. Ramsbotham and others (2011) consider peacebuilding as the heart of conflict resolution. Since all of these promote the constructive means of dealing with conflict, this study considers peacebuilding, peace studies, and conflict resolution as one and the same. Hence, from here on in this dissertation, I use the terms "peacebuilding" and "conflict resolution" interchangeably to

refer to the same thing, unless otherwise specified. The reason for this is explained throughout the essay.

For the purpose of this study, I adopt the United States Institute of Peace' (USIP) and Lisa Schirch's working definitions of peacebuilding: "Peacebuilding is an effort to address the causes and consequences of violent conflict. Where conflict has turned destructive and violent or where that potential exists, peacebuilding is the effort to build relationships and institutions in societies that allow them to better manage those conflicts in a nonviolent way." (USIP 2015, 11). For Schirch (2013, 7), peacebuilding involves a wide range of efforts by diverse actors at the local, national, and international levels such as government, civil society, and communities, to address the immediate impact and root causes of conflict before, during, and after violent conflict occurs. Peacebuilding efforts also supports human security, where people have freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom from humiliation (ibid.). Schirch's conception of peacebuilding that includes preventive peacebuilding efforts such as diplomatic, economic development, social, education, health, legal, and security sector reform programs—or activities that attempt to address the potential sources of instability and violence—is a useful framing as it finds resonance in my own study and experience of the situation of peacebuilding efforts in Mindanao (ibid.).[9]

The very nature of the peacebuilding and conflict resolution field and how it is being conceptualized and applied in practice is an evaluation challenge for several

[9] Schirch also reminds us that some peace actors may not consider the work they do as peacebuilding.

reasons. The peacebuilding field is quite young,[10] emergent, diverse, and still in the process of becoming coherent. This means that different stakeholders may have different experiences and different appreciation of their conflict context that can lead to varying approaches in dealing with conflict. In certain areas, the sheer number and complexity of conflicts can produce a confusing plethora of peacebuilding and conflict resolution interventions that sometimes result in a mismatch between the intervention and the conflict being targeted, which has implications for evaluation.

Those who are formally schooled in the peacebuilding field are more familiar with its broad distinctions: peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding (structural and cultural) (Ramsbotham et al. 2011, 14). Kevin Avruch contends that the field of conflict resolution is traditionally focused on negotiations, and on ways to facilitate negotiations or mediation, though he also stresses that the field also begins where bilateral negotiations have failed, and disputing parties need some help from outsiders which comprise the various third-party interventions (2013, 99). Meanwhile, Druckman (2005, 302) points out that most peacebuilding interventions are intended to "alter the course of events in a particular direction, from violent to nonviolent interactions or to change relationships from hostile and unfriendly to friendly and enduring." He further adds that while there is a general agreement on this broad goal, there is very little agreement on how to evaluate whether this goal has been achieved (ibid).

[10] Dean Pruitt would say that the field is both young and old, though both the theory and empirical research in the field is relatively new (2011, xix). *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution*.

The sheer complexity of conflicts can also sometimes generate a mismatch in the application of conflict resolution approaches. This can happen when different actors have different diagnosis of the conflict, or when there is confusion in distinguishing between conflicts over negotiable interests (disputes) and conflicts that are non-negotiable over basic human needs (deep conflicts). This distinction is eloquently articulated by John Burton (1993) in "Conflict Resolution as a Political Philosophy." The mismatch in understanding the nature of conflicts and peacebuilding responses points to a deeper debate on values between liberal peace and post-liberal peace which further complicates evaluation of peacebuilding initiatives.

Liberal peacebuilding is based on "western" political thought which values democracy, free markets, and international institutions in attaining peace (Russet and Oneal 2001; Richmond 2011). Liberal peace has been criticized for being too state and security-centric, technocratic, ethnocentric, and for lack of dexterity when responding to complex situations. From the standpoint of post-liberal peace, the story of peacebuilding is a critique of the top-down approach to peace, while accepting the reality that liberal peace ideas have cascaded down to the local level, and also seeped into what Richmond calls the *local-local* level, which reflect the multiplicity of voices and diversity of peoples interacting within various contexts. (ibid.). This interaction between liberal peace and the local context eventually takes on newer and emergent hybrid forms of peace that can be considered more inclusive, emancipatory, and transformative (Richmond 2011; Mac Ginty 2010). Recognizing this discourse between liberal peace, post liberal peace, and hybrid peace is crucial in gaining a thorough insight into the problems and dynamics of a

local context which has implications in designing peacebuilding interventions, and eventually in evaluation design.

Many of the interventions which come from the liberal peace tradition prefer state-centric approaches in addressing conflict. This include a preference by the international aid community for supporting state building and governance approaches, rule-of-law, and elections.[11] But a more postliberal peace perspective would reveal that the very state institutions that liberal peace tries to strengthen are sometimes the same institutions that locals are struggling against because these institutions may not be responsive to a multi-ethnic spectrum; and may also be perceived as partisan and abusive which could only fuel grievance among people. This problem has already been recognized by World Bank's World Development Report 2011 in terms of the need to develop legitimate formal and informal "best-fit" institutions.

For instance, in the southern Philippines where governance is contested in some parts of Mindanao, the way elections are carried out is a serious concern for locals because elections are often a major cause of feuds and deaths among families (Torres 2007). Moreover, the same democratic process of elections in conflict-prone areas has the tendency to install local leaders that are political strongmen because of their symbiotic relations with national politicians who aim to manipulate votes during elections. Examining the discourse of liberal peace, post-liberal peace, and hybrid peace is one way of trying to nuance peacebuilding interventions which can be helpful in evaluation.

[11] This was also observed by Sabaratnam cited in Avruch (2013, 24).

Closely related to this debate between liberal and postliberal peace are the various frames used in organizing our understanding of conflict situations and interventions. Peter Coleman, in his paper on *Intractable Conflicts* (2006), discussed the characteristics of intractable conflicts and proposed five major paradigms used in framing research and practice in this area: realism, human relations, pathology, postmodernism, and systems. Coleman sees these paradigms as clusters of approaches to intractable conflicts. From these paradigms, Coleman generated several guidelines for intervening in intractable conflict. Most relevant for this study is Coleman's proposed framework on how to model change in complex systems (2006, 553-554). Coleman provided nine categories of strategies for initiating constructive change in situations of protracted conflict which was organized according to two dimensions: the type of change initiative (episodic impact, developmental impact, and radical impact) and the level of intervention (top-down, middle-out, bottom-up). This framework is a useful way of organizing projects or interventions that fall under a broader peacebuilding program. The reason for this, is that Coleman's framework helps in diagnosing the nature of conflict in particular localities across a conflict spectrum, and helps in designing particular interventions to match with the type and intensity of conflict, and the level of engagement necessary to effect the desired change.

Peacebuilding interventions can also be understood according to the assumed *Theories of Practice* and *Theories of Change* that they affect. Marc Howard Ross argues that all practice is grounded in beliefs about the nature of the social world which need to be articulated explicitly to allow evaluators to understand the working assumptions

underlying specific interventions (Ross 2004, 3-4). He thus classifies peacebuilding efforts according to the major *Theories of Practice* these activities espouse: community relations, principled negotiation, human needs, identity, intercultural miscommunication, and conflict transformation. Meanwhile, a *Theory of Change* is "a set of beliefs about how change happens" (Church & Rogers 2006). It is also an articulation that explains how and why a particular intervention works (Weiss 1995 cited in Stein and Valters 2012, 3). The Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID-CMM) identifies at least seven families of theories of change: inside-out peacebuilding, attitudes towards peace, healthy relationships, peace process, functioning institutions, reform the elite, and coming to terms with the past (Allen 2010).

Theories of change are useful for articulating intended changes of a particular peacebuilding intervention. Despite this, there are different understandings of what a theory of change is, which is further confused by the proliferation of other related terms. For instance, in evaluating interventions, it is important to distinguish between program theory and theory of change, as well as a practitioner's espoused theory and theory-in-use. Though some authors use the terms "program logic," "program theory" and "theory of change" interchangeably,[12] **program theory** is a step above the logic model because of the added change mechanism (or causal mechanism), and usually implies the theory that is articulated by program managers and donors (Patton 2008, 337-338). Program theory is distinguished from theory of change in that a **theory of change** is comprised of

[12] See for instance the discussion of Patricia Rogers (2008, 30) on the various terms used.

both a program theory and social science theory (ibid.). In the meantime, an **espoused theory** involves how a practitioner explains what they are trying to do, while the **theory-in-use** is what their behavior reveals about what actually guides their action (Patton 2008, 338-339).

It is not possible to comprehensively consider all the ways that peacebuilding is conceptualized in this review. But for the purpose of this study, the discourse on liberal peace, postliberal peace, and hybrid peace, as well as the theories of change and practice, and the distinction between program theory, espoused theory, and theory-in-use serve as useful ways of looking critically at conflict and the peacebuilding interventions in preparation for evaluation. This is especially important in giving an evaluator a decent peace and conflict lens to better sift through program attributes, the intentions of stakeholders, and the context of conflict. Such a peace and conflict lens will also help prevent a mismatch among peacebuilding interventions and the intended conflicts they want to address. A glaring gap that emerges from this discussion is often the failure to account for practitioner and local stakeholder theories and assumptions about their initiatives, especially on how they understand the pathways to successful conflict resolution and peace outcomes, and how these relate to program theories of change and broader social science theories.

**Typical Constraints as a Challenge in Doing Peacebuilding Evaluation**

Evaluating peacebuilding initiatives is a challenge because of the various constraints often faced by evaluators when doing an evaluation in real world contexts. Bamberger, Rugh, and Mabry (2012) discussed these common constraints (budget, time,

data, and political influences), and how to systematically address these through the flexible use of designs and methods to help compensate for evaluation weaknesses. In addition to these typical constraints, conducting evaluations in general, within conflict zones is especially challenging because such areas are characterized by a high degree of fluidity, uncertainty, volatility, risk, and insecurity (Bush and Duggan 2013, 16). These challenges and constraints are often interrelated in such a way that one constraint can lead to another and add up, affecting the overall quality of an evaluation, research, or development project.

**Budget** constraints are often the most common reason why an evaluation is not done or not conducted properly. In my nearly 10 years of doing conflict programming, I have yet to see the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) section of our project proposals being funded. Often, the M&E section of a project proposal is only a statement of how the project will be monitored and evaluated, specifically stating the outcomes and indicators that will be used. But requesting budget for the M&E component in a proposal only makes the proposal more expensive and less competitive in responding to RFPs. Donors often assume that conducting evaluation is already the counterpart contribution of the INGO/ NGO. But without the budget to pay for the time and expertise of an evaluator or for the training of NGO staff in evaluation, the evaluation effort will only suffer and amount to tokenism just to please the donor. Oftentimes, the decision of the management to do an evaluation comes late in the day, and consequently, the funds for evaluation are not included in the original budget. The lack of funds limits the ability of an evaluator to conduct an appropriate evaluation and this often results in time

constraints. Regardless of the availability of funds, peacebuilding evaluation encourages project staff to always have an evaluative mindset, which involves constantly asking probing questions and finding data to answer those questions.[13]

**Time** constraints happen when an evaluator is called in late to do an evaluation and the project has already started or in an advanced stage of implementation. When this happens, the flexibility of an evaluator to use a strong evaluation design diminishes. For instance, this means that the evaluator can no longer conduct a pretest-posttest evaluation design, and a baseline will also be more difficult to reconstruct (ibid.). Planning is essential in a good evaluation. Good planning translates to g*ood timing* or knowing when a project is already mature enough for the results to be reflected in the evaluation. The lack of foresight to do an evaluation means that planning is not done ahead of time, which means that available budget for an evaluation is not anticipated, resulting in less time for an evaluator to do stakeholder consultations and *evaluability* assessments. This situation could result in added time pressures which especially affects external evaluators who are not familiar with the context.

Time, or the lack thereof, is also a common excuse of program officers for not doing an evaluation. Project officers would often declare an evaluation as "a waste of time." While this can indicate that project staff might feel threatened because an evaluation is often equated with judging work performance, it is more often that the project staff are truly overworked and cannot devote quality time to think of an evaluation or even entertain evaluators.

[13] From USIP lecture on Demystifying Monitoring and Evaluation (2015).

**Data** constraints can be described as situations wherein: (a) existing data is of poor quality; (b) the existing data does not match the requirements of an evaluation; or (c) there is an actual dearth of information. These data constraints can be tied to how project data was recorded and gathered. Poor quality data can be due to reporting biases and poor record-keeping standards in projects (ibid.). It can also be because the evaluation design and methods used were inappropriate, survey instruments were faulty, or simply because of lazy research. Data constraints can also be due to secondary data that is not in a format required by the evaluation such as in a before-and-after analysis; data was gathered at a different level or unit of analysis; or the data does not fully match the project populations (ibid.).

In the context of peacebuilding, some program managers have experienced that the data required by donors in evaluating projects often do not match with the level of analysis necessary for a particular conflict resolution engagement. For instance, donors prefer aggregate data such as conflicts resolved by a project, which tends to dismiss the richness of a conflict resolution process, while problem solving sessions that prevent a conflict from escalating in the first place were often ignored in the counting of achievements during evaluation. Results of macro-level peace efforts such as national or regional-level peace processes are often privileged over local level conflict resolution efforts that control flare-ups in communities (Autesserre 2010). In one instance, I was required by a donor to produce data on the ratio between conflicts resolved and the existing conflicts in a locality which produced a skewed percentage that puts a negative light on peacebuilding efforts.

Sometimes there is also a dearth of available data about a problem or conflict situation which is not gathered during baseline research or because the intended beneficiaries of projects are difficult to reach groups such as drug addicts, criminals, ethnic minorities, or illegal residents (ibid.). These difficult to reach groups may also include combatants and target populations that reside in conflict-affected or fragile areas which makes access to data difficult (Church 2011, 470). In such cases, ethical considerations for the safety and well-being of research participants are given priority over data access. The difficulty of accessing data in conflict areas is often the weakness of macro level policy studies of donors, and this very much relates to political constraints of doing an evaluation.

Bamberger et al. (2012) use the term **political constraints and influences** to refer to pressures from government, agencies, politicians, and other stakeholders that might affect the conduct and results of an evaluation. Evaluations conducted in such situations often have political or ethical considerations that affect its design and use (ibid). Political constraints usually appear in the form of funding and regulatory requirements; the influence and agenda of a politically motivated group; or the differences of opinion among program staff and professionals in the evaluation and research fields. These political influences in an evaluation can lead to decisions that may be perceived as favoring a certain group, intensify competition for funding, expand or terminate programs, or advance the political agenda of a particular group (ibid.).

In the Philippines, the conflict management program of an INGO that I worked with has always been under the shadow of USAID's democracy and governance

programs which operates on a more liberal peace framework. Consequently, many of the indicators and data required during evaluation were geared towards state building that includes improving governance, rule-of-law, and elections. On certain occasions during assessments, many of our partners' localized conflict resolution efforts have been chastised by a USAID officer for being out of bounds of the state's legal process and therefore weakening the rule-of-law which USAID promotes. This was one of the early challenges that our programs had to contend with. More recently, I was hired to do a summative evaluation of a project and the contractors asked if I could help make it "look good" to donors. In response, I stuck to the guiding principles for evaluators to ensure that the evaluation remains ethical.[14] While the evaluation ended well, it was revealing how the request was framed which speaks to the constraints discussed herein.

Related to political constraints are the **dangers and high risks** associated with conflict-affected areas which is a major constraint in doing evaluation of peacebuilding initiatives. Conflict environs pose serious risks to the safety of evaluation and project personnel and local informants which affect access to good data. Evaluators and other outsiders might be seen as a source of funds (potential kidnap-for-ransom victims) or can be perceived as biased to one side of a conflict. Conflict-affected areas also have low trust which could impede the cooperation and forthrightness of respondents, resulting in poor data (ibid.). A climate of fear in conflict-affected areas contributes to a drain in talent resulting to a **lack of expertise** in the area.

[14] Integrity/ honesty and respect for people were the applicable guiding principles in this case. See Patton for a thorough discussion of guiding principles for evaluators (2008, 27).

**Administrative and organizational constraints** complete the most typical challenges to peacebuilding evaluation. There is nothing that can turn a program officer's blood dry more than mind-numbing administrative work and conformity to organizational standards. Doing administrative tasks may seem mundane, but it is necessary in any project implementation and evaluation process. Requirements to adhere to administrative procedures and standards, and conform to organizational arrangements can sometimes be a hindrance to evaluation. In my personal experience of evaluating projects, procurement systems have always been a sore point for program officers, community stakeholders, and evaluators alike as compliance with such standards and procedures seem to hinder creativity, innovation, and quick action which is vital in peacebuilding projects.

Aside from these typical constraints, Bush and Duggan (2013, 16) raised certain **ethical issues or challenges** in the conduct of evaluations in conflict zones. The question of ethics arise because of the high degree of insecurity in conflict zones decrease normally existing oversight structures that typically condition ethical behavior such as societal norms, rule of law, and codes of professional conduct, which increases the risk for evaluation stakeholders and which in turn raises the ethical imperative for evaluators to ensure safety and well-being of stakeholders during and after evaluation. Some common ethical issues include: managers or funders trying to influence or control evaluation findings; the dissemination and suppression of reports; and political interference (ibid.).

## Systemic Level Challenges in the Aid and Development Community

Systemic level challenges in the aid and international development community weigh down progress in both the peacebuilding field and in the evaluation of peacebuilding interventions. While great intellectual strides have been achieved in the areas of research and evaluation theory and methodology, this progress is being held back by structural and institutional impediments. Andrew Blum's (2011) excellent article discusses this self-perpetuating dynamic happening at the systemic level that create dysfunctional practices in peacebuilding evaluation.[15] Blum cites four interrelated problems that cause this dynamic: the scale problem, the weak results problem, the accountability chain problem, and the request for proposals (RFP) problem (ibid).

The **scale problem** involves the tension between project level peace which is focused on particular areas or topics, and *peace writ large* which involve broader level changes in society. While grassroots peacebuilding (*peace writ small*) is important for local stakeholders, too often what is considered meaningful in peacebuilding by government and donors are results at the broader societal level (*peace writ large*). Hence, this mismatch in terms of looking at results between project level peace and *peace writ large* has implications for evaluations and ultimately affects progress in peacebuilding itself. Related to this is the **weak results problem** wherein evaluations often do not produce any strong conclusions that can be backed up by solid evidence and research methodologies (ibid.). What is considered credible evidence and appropriate

[15] Blum, Andrew. *Improving Peacebuilding Evaluation: A Whole-of-Field Approach*. Special Report. USIP. 2011

methodology are some of the debates in this area. This depends on the audience, for instance, as field-level staff prefer anthropological approaches, while government prefer more quantitative, data-driven approaches (ibid.). The **accountability chain problem** involves the chain of oversight between funders and implementers (e.g., from legislative committees, donors, INGOs, NGOs, to community-based organizations, etc.). This problem in the accountability chain involves the lack of incentive for transparency among implementers in order to maintain the partnership with the funder; lesser knowledge about the situation in field as the level of accountability goes up in the chain; and different incentives for using information in each level of the chain. Finally, the **RFP problem** involves the RFP as the dominant strategy by funders in distributing funds to implementers. Because of the nature of RFP mechanics, the bureaucracy, and its competitive process, this strategy hinders collaboration and coordination among funders and implementers; encourages overambitious proposals; and hinders the integration of learning into proposals and in the project cycle, which affects the utilization of knowledge.

All of these problems that Blum cited are interrelated and feed into a vicious circle of mutually reinforcing dynamics that hampers meaningful learning, weakens peacebuilding evaluation, and stunts the growth of the peacebuilding field. Blum proposed a number of ways peacebuilding evaluation can be disentangled from the vicious cycles through a whole-of-field approach, that includes strengthening norms that are acceptable to peacebuilding; generating consensus points on central concerns that can be engaged collaboratively by peacebuilding interventions and evaluation; and by

disrupting stagnant development practices that hold back the field and providing alternatives (ibid.).

Reflecting on these issues, I have encountered other readings that wrestle with the same problems. The problem of scale is probably best exemplified in Séverine Autesserre's study of violence and peacebuilding in the Congo (2010). Autesserre's study reveals that a dominant international peacebuilding culture has shaped the interventions which privileged regional and national level settlements, but ignored micro level tensions that eventually jeopardized macro-level settlements. This international peacebuilding culture comes from the socialization and training processes of UN officials, diplomats, NGOs, which understand that the violence is a result of national and regional tensions and the propensity of locals for violence (2010, 11).

This international peacebuilding culture is further reinforced by systems and structures in the aid industry that sometimes demands an unreasonable level of accountability from implementers. This is illustrated in Andrew Natsios' article on the systemic problems that are causing the clash between the compliance side of aid programs (counter-bureaucracy) and the technical programmatic side which is creating an imbalance that is threatening program integrity of aid programs.[16] The growth of the compliance side through the years has increased the demands for accountability to the point that the transformational objectives of aid are hindered.

[16] Andrew Natsios. *The Clash of the Counter-bureaucracy and Development*, 2010. http://www.cgdev.org/files/1424271_file_Natsios_Counterbureaucracy.pdf

The demands for more information and for more control systems by risk-averse congressional oversight committees and the resulting increase of requirements for accountability are very much related to the issues being addressed in the report *The Big Push Forward* (IDS 2010). This report deals with the politics of evidence (*who decides what data is needed, and how it should be collected, and why and how it is used as evidence*). It does this by analyzing *artefacts* (organizational processes and protocols) and the tensions between evidence about performance and monitoring (small e evidence), and the evidence of what works under what conditions (Big E evidence); and shows how all of these are affecting the transformative potential of international development.

**Theoretical and Methodological Challenges in Doing Peacebuilding Evaluation**

Theoretical and methodological issues constitute a serious challenge in evaluating peacebuilding interventions. Why is this a challenge? Because evaluators, project stakeholders, development practitioners, and social science professionals are a product of their respective disciplines that each have prevailing and competing worldviews or paradigms about how they see social reality (their context, their problems, and solutions); what they consider as knowledge or evidence to investigate that social reality; and how they respond to challenges in their social reality. Humanity is faced with the complex social reality of destructive conflict (and its drivers), which cannot be dealt with from the narrow confines of the individual disciplines. There is a need to interrogate what we consider knowledge about conflict and the means of getting that knowledge. This means shaking up our intellectual comfort zones, questioning our assumptions, and challenging the hegemony of our respective disciplines towards theoretical and methodological

bridge-building. Rocking the boat of our disciplines reveals several tensions, key issues or challenges. This section discusses some of these key issues or challenges: the "gold standard" in research and its relation to competing worldviews; contested definitions of impact and impact evaluations; causality and the attribution problem; defining success and effectiveness; the issue of transfer; complexity and sustainability; and the effects of interventions on the drivers of conflict.

***Challenging the "Gold Standard" of Research***. What has propelled me out of my comfort zone of ethnography and into the flames of evaluation and research methods is the constant bitter debate with my principals, donors, policy-makers, and evaluators about the question *did our peacebuilding efforts make a difference*.[17] Our conflict resolution efforts have regularly been criticized by academics, evaluators, and donors for being too piecemeal, scattered, biased, unsustainable, and not replicable. I found it very difficult explaining to donors how the projects of our NGO partners are making a difference in addressing conflict. Donors understandably want a certain kind of evidence gathered from a "scientific method" as credible proof that the changes can be attributed to project interventions. Because of this preference, donors often dismiss "thick description" in the field as merely anecdotal evidence. This problem set me off on an intellectual pilgrimage to understand the phenomenon of conflict better and to search for creative and acceptable ways of capturing evidence of "success" in conflict settings.

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[17] There have been so many times that I was so tempted to resist the current of dealing with methods and just go with the flow and settle on research that I am comfortable with as an anthropologist.

The scientific method as embodied in experimental research designs such as Randomized Control Trials (RCT) are often considered the "gold standard" of research and evaluation (Gerring 2007; Stern et al. 2012; Patton 2015).[18] My first foray into evaluation was to follow and understand this "gold standard." RCTs are experimental designs that can be used in evaluating peacebuilding projects under certain conditions. Despite some arguments of its limitations,[19] RCTs can be useful for assessing the impact of interventions when designed carefully into the project cycle and deployed simultaneously with project implementation.

Several studies have proven that RCTs are feasible in more stable conflict environments. An example of this approach is Elizabeth Paluck and Donald Green's study on assessing the effectiveness of a peace messaging radio program in post-genocide Rwanda (Paluck and Green 2009). The radio program that they were investigating aimed to reduce intergroup conflict by discouraging blind obedience and promoting critical thinking and collective problem solving among listener groups. There are similar studies that have used experimental designs in conflict settings such as Fearon, Humphreys and Weinstein's impact assessment of a Community-Driven Reconstruction (CDR) in Northern Liberia which used a process of randomization of villages to determine which village will receive CDR treatments (2008). The World Bank has also recently compiled a rich collection of studies related to peacebuilding that utilized RCTs (Gaarder and Annan 2013). These examples demonstrate the feasibility of using an experimental

[18] This allusion to the gold standard derives from international finance wherein exchange rates among national currencies were fixed to the value of gold (Patton 2015: 93).
[19] See Byrne 2013; Bamberger and others 2012.

design in a real-world post-conflict situation. Despite these examples however, I still argue that RCTs are quite limited in capturing the process of change induced by peacebuilding projects because such an evaluation needs to control a lot of variables which is nearly impossible in a complex and volatile conflict environment.[20]

RCTs are superior in controlling for bias and are able to produce a counterfactual (*What would have happened without the intervention?*). RCTs gives insight into causality through the random assignment of cases into treatment and comparison groups. However, using RCTs in complex situations can be problematic.[21] Byrne (2013) for instance argues that methods organized around simplicity such as RCTs have little place in a complex social world. Conflict settings are very fluid, dynamic, and contingent environments, such that the controls required by RCTs are very difficult to meet in a complex setting. Moses and Knutsen (2012) also argue that the very complexity of the social world means that it is impossible to control all contingencies.

While experimental and quasi-experimental designs (QED) can establish an association between specific variables and show the extent of effects, such methods cannot really account for other factors that influence the results of peacebuilding interventions. Establishing an association between variables is only an initial step in ascertaining causation. The other important aspect to establishing a causal relationship is by answering the *why and how* of an intervention which the experimental and QED cannot really answer because these designs are more appropriate for looking at statistical

[20] Patton (2011) argues that traditional evaluation approaches aim to control and predict.
[21] Ramsbotham and others 2011, Patton 2015, Moses and Knutsen 2012.

associations between variables. Hence, meeting the demands of the gold standard in research requires standardization and uniformity in research, which is really inappropriate and misleading in the complex and dynamic nature of the human condition (Patton 2015, 93).

Challenging the "gold standard" is important because this methodological approach has a privileged position among donors and policymakers, despite its narrow application in the evaluation of development programs (Stern et al. 2012). The privileged position of RCTs has implications in the allocation of resources that explore other credible evaluation design approaches for impact evaluation. For instance, a scoping paper by International Initiative for Impact Evaluations (3ie) that reviewed the supply and demand for rigorous evidence on peace initiatives shows that most of the impact evaluations they surveyed utilized RCT (Cameron et al. 2015). The requirement to do an RCT in evaluation by some donors may also hamper project results and affect decision-making for funding NGOs not using RCTs in evaluation. Instead of the "gold standard," Patton proposes to supplant the "gold standard" with the platinum standard of "methodological pluralism and appropriateness" (2015, 95).

***Competing worldviews that influence research.*** This study purposely begins by challenging the "gold standard" because this is the most obvious starting point of many heated debates among academicians, field practitioners, and evaluators on research methods and on finding out *what works*. This debate is only the tip of the iceberg which points to deeper issues and is symptomatic of the different philosophical assumptions being held by various actors—the same orientations that influence the different

disciplines. Various authors on research methods have discussed the different worldviews or paradigms that influence research and even the conduct of development work. The three authors that have complementary discussions of paradigms are discussed below.

John Creswell (2014) usefully proposed four philosophical worldviews or assumptions that influence the practice of research: postpositivist, constructivist, transformative, and pragmatic. The **postpositivist worldview** represents the traditional form of research which espouses the scientific method and can be characterized as deterministic (causes determine effects); reductionist (that ideas can be reduced to variables that can be tested); and viewing an objective reality that is governed by laws and theories (ibid.). The **constructivist worldview** is typically associated with qualitative research and holds the view that there are multiple meanings out there and that these meanings are socially constructed. The **transformative worldview** holds the view that the research inquiry should be intertwined with politics and a political change agenda to confront social justice issues. Closely related to this is the **pragmatic worldview** which is more problem-centered or issue-centered and is concerned with finding solutions to real-world problems (ibid.). In planning research, Creswell recommends explicitly stating at the outset the philosophical orientation of the study, in order to explain why a particular research design and methods were used. The interconnections between philosophical worldviews, design and research methods are what constitutes his framework for the broader research approaches of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods.

Moses and Knutsen (2012) delve deeper into the nature and histories of these different worldviews or what they call methodological traditions by explaining the links between their ontology (*what is the world really made of?*), epistemology (*what is knowledge?*), and methodology (*how do we know?*), and by providing examples of each tradition in contemporary social science. According to Moses and Knutsen, the social sciences are dominated by two methodological traditions—**naturalism** and **constructivism** (the definitions of which, also corresponds with Creswell's definition of postpositivist and constructivist worldviews).[22] Naturalism assumes that there are regularities or patterns in the real world that is independent from the observer, which can be observed and tested empirically according to a principle of falsification (*what evidence would falsify a claim*?);[23] while the constructivism sees such regularities or patterns as ephemeral and contingent on human agency (ibid.). Moses and Knutsen also briefly tackle a younger third approach—**scientific realism**, which they say straddle the ontological position of naturalism and constructivism (ibid). Scientific realism recognizes that the real world exists independent of our experiences, but this is buried under layers of meaning (ibid.). This real world consists of causal mechanisms which can only be grasped through the method of science (ibid). Though the authors see this third approach as a strategic synthesis, they argue that scientific realism is still wanting in that it conveniently avoids the problem of two different and irreconcilable ontologies (ibid.). Moses and Knutsen instead conclude by arguing for the fourth path of

[22] The authors are disdainful of using the "quantitative/qualitative" divide which they view as unhelpful.
[23] This principle is closely associated with Popper (1968) who believes that disconfirming a theory is the key to science (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994: 100).

**methodological bridge-building** which recognizes the usefulness of "maintaining different ontological points of departure and embracing the methodological diversity that results from interacting across the ontological divide" (ibid., 303).

Kristin Luker (2008) distinguishes between **canonical** and **non-canonical** social science which at first seem to be the usual debate between the quantitative and qualitative approaches. But her distinction between the two approaches is not so much about which methods are better, but about emphasizing the kinds of questions that can be asked and the kinds of answers that can be gained from the different approaches when used appropriately. For Luker, canonical social science is mainly about sampling, operationalization, and generalizability, and is grounded on the logic of verification; whereas non-canonical social science is more qualitative and akin to a voyage of discovery especially in finding out relevant categories that work rather than the distribution of population among pre-chosen categories (ibid., 60, 102). Nevertheless, Luker acknowledges the huge contribution of canonical social sciences to the body of knowledge and urges non-canonicals to be familiar with it. What is most striking is her discussion of the history of social science and methodology and how research standards have become gendered, and how these standards shifted with the Depression, the wars, and the increasing governmentality, all of which, point to the salience of history, money, and power in shaping research methods. The shift in research standards and worldviews as a result of world events, and its interaction with power dynamics and funds should be kept in mind as these can influence how research is done and how causation is understood, which is discussed in the next section.

***Contested Definitions of "Impact" and "Impact Evaluation".*** Given the initial salvo on the importance of challenging the "golden standard" and the discussion on the philosophical foundations that influence research, this section attempts to wrestle with the concepts of impact and impact evaluation. Understanding how impact is conceptualized and the various ways of approaching an impact evaluation is essential for this study because impact evaluations play a central role in assessing change in a conflict that is being influenced by a peacebuilding initiative. It attempts to answer the question *Did our peacebuilding efforts make a difference and how do we know?*

The challenges specific to impact evaluations fall under several categories: how impact is defined; the extent to which the focus is on the short-term or long-term; the kinds of interventions that are considered or ignored in an evaluation; the kinds of designs and methods that are in use and their appropriateness; and the extent to which the needs of different groups are considered (Stern et al. 2012, 19). For this review, I narrow my focus on challenges that involve (1) the contested definitions of "impact" and "impact evaluation"; (2) key theoretical and methodological issues that hinder credible impact evaluation; and (3) the challenges of aligning various design considerations to produce situationally appropriate evaluation designs that reveal causation, which is the heart of an impact evaluation. I focus on these three clusters because these are specific and crucial to impact evaluations and encompass the categories already proposed by Stern et al (2012, 19).

The way impact is understood affects how an impact evaluation is conducted. Different understandings of impact prioritize different aspects; have different concepts of

causality; and have different ways of assessing the extent of impact (Stern et al. 2012, 5). The most widely used definition of impact comes from OECD-DAC (2002) which defines impact as “positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.”[24] Bamberger, Rugh, and Mabry (2012, 26-27) follow the OECD-DAC definition but add more elements. They define impacts as “long-term economic, sociocultural, institutional, environmental, technological, or other effects on identifiable populations or groups produced by a project, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.” Among project implementers and evaluators, impact is commonly understood as that final level in a causal chain which is usually associated with long-term effects (White 2010, 154). Other definitions of impact are “the proportion of changes that can be attributed to the project”; “higher level outcomes” or “equitable and durable improvements in human wellbeing and social justice” (Bamberger et al. 2012).

The latest version of OECD Evaluation Criteria simply defines impact as “the extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.” (2021, 64). Impact asks the question: *What difference does the intervention make?* (ibid.). The OECD document also reminds readers to consider certain key concepts when looking at impact: higher-level effects, significance, differential impacts, unintended effects, and transformational change (ibid., 65). Impact captures the *significance* or the “so what”

[24] http://www.oecd.org/development/peer-reviews/2754804.pdf

question of an evaluation and its *higher-level results*, which is essentially how much the intervention really mattered to those involved (ibid.). Assessing for impact should also consider the *differential impacts* of interventions which can hide negative distributional effects and certain groups excluded from benefits. This is related to *unintended effects* which can be positive or negative. Positive effects can have implications for innovations and scaling, while paying attention to negative effects is critical for mitigating serious consequences of interventions on the environment and vulnerable groups. *Transformational change* or "holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms" is something that is called upon by the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals Agenda, and that evaluators should increasingly consider especially the systemic drivers of poverty, inequalities, exclusion, and environmental damage (ibid.).

Given these varying conceptions of impact, it is not surprising that there are also multiple conceptions of impact evaluations. Vaessen and Raimondo (2012, 331) usefully outlines some of the sources of diversity in approaches to impact evaluation which they point out as coming from: definitional issues, epistemological differences, particular characteristics of the *evaluand* or the context; and the constraints in which impact evaluations are carried out. Meanwhile, Hulme (2000) distinguishes impact evaluations from impact assessments and discusses the shift in their usage in development circles. For Hulme, the use of the terms "impact evaluation" and "impact assessment" is only cosmetic, wherein the shift in usage reflects more on the goals of the main users such as "proving impacts" for donors and "improving interventions" for program managers and field staff. He also provides an epistemological discussion on the three paradigms of

impact assessments: (1) the scientific method, which largely assess impact through experimentation and statistical controls; (2) the humanities tradition, which seeks to interpret the intervention process leading to impact and infers causality from information about the causal chain gathered from beneficiaries and informants; and (3) participatory learning and action which recognizes multiple realities and that stakeholders themselves should be enabled to act on these realities (ibid.).

Howard White (2010) identified two meanings of impact evaluations: (1) impact evaluations that involve outcome and impact indicators, which he says are more open to alternative methodologies (ibid.: 157); and (2) impact evaluations that addresses the issue of attribution by identifying counterfactuals in a rigorous manner, and this usually involves statistical manipulation (ibid.: 154). White's first meaning of impact evaluation as both involving outcome and impact indicators provides a very useful clarification which gives more options to work with issues "closer" to the ground, rather than limiting impact evaluations to the search for counterfactuals.

Church and Rogers (2006) seem to use impact evaluations and impact assessment interchangeably. They define an impact evaluation as an evaluation that "seeks to determine change in the conflict catalyzed by a project," to which they add that "these evaluations almost exclusively look at impact identification and adaptability of change although other evaluation objectives may also be included" (2006: 111). Within a Conflict Transformation Evaluation Framework, Church and Rogers (2006) offer a more nuanced definition of impact assessment to include its scope which varies with the scale of the project "from *peace writ large* down to a local community—to include unintended

positive and negative effects" and more importantly, identifying the transfer of changes from the target group to others (2006, 103).

A highly influential study commissioned by the Department for International Development (DFID) explored the various design options available in conducting impact evaluations in development (Stern et al. 2012). According to Stern and colleagues, some elements of impact evaluations include demonstrating that programs lead to development results; accountability for expenditure; and the need to accumulate lessons for the future. After reviewing different conceptions of impact evaluation, Stern and others (2012, 12) proposed their own definition, which they said should look into: (1) positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects on final beneficiaries that result from a development intervention; (2) assess the direct and indirect casual contribution claims of such interventions whether intended or unintended; and (3) explain how policy interventions contribute to an effect so lessons can be learned. Crucial in Stern's definition is that impact evaluations attempt to link causes to effects and explain *how* and *why* this happens, which highlights the importance of theory (2012, 5).

Barnett and Munslow (2014: 19) similarly concur that impact evaluations should attempt to elucidate a clear link between causes and effects, and explain how an intervention worked and for whom. In addition, these authors also emphasized the importance of assessing contribution of an intervention towards an outcome, which they qualify can be short-term or long-term (ibid.). Significantly, the authors also proposed that impact evaluations should consider power dynamics, such as who defines impact and

who is affected (ibid.). Both Stern et al., and Barnett and Munslow believe that impact evaluations are not method-specific.

In their paper *Evaluating Impacts of Peacebuilding Interventions*, Chigas, Church and Corlazzoli (2014, 10) pointed out three different interpretations of impact evaluations which are not mutually exclusive: (1) attribution of specific outcomes to an intervention; (2) effects of intervention on drivers of conflict[25]; (3) sustained outcomes of an intervention.[26] According to the authors, in whichever interpretation of impact, understanding causation is the heart of an impact evaluation (ibid.).

Given these comprehensive and diverse definitions of impact and impact evaluation, my own study will consider the four interrelated threads on the conceptualization of an impact evaluation: (1) White's (2010) definition which considers both outcome and impact indicators as included in an impact evaluation; (2) Church and Rogers' (2006) definition of impact assessment which deals with the question of "transfer"; (3) Chigas, Church, and Corlazzoli's (2014) definition which looks into the effects of interventions on the drivers of conflict; and (4) Stern's (2012) definition which answers the *why* and *how* questions. In my view, these meanings of impact evaluation dovetails beautifully into the criteria of effectiveness for *peace writ large* proposed by Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP).

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[25] Drivers of conflict is a dynamic situation resulting from actors mobilizing social groups around core grievances; wherein drivers of conflict are considered active energy, and core grievances are potential energy (ICAF 2008, 10).

[26] Chigas, Diana, Madeline Church and Vanessa Corlazzoli. 2014. *Evaluating Impacts of Peacebuilding Interventions*. (http://dmeforpeace.org/sites/default/files/071114_Evaluating-Impacts-of-Peacebuilding-Interventions_DFID.pdf)

RPP's criteria for effectiveness came about in response to the challenge of assessing how programs contribute to *peace writ large*. Contributions to *peace writ large* or the deeper and broader societal peace (OECD 2012, 25), is difficult to assess because it requires a consideration of the multitude of actors working at different levels, in different ways (RPP 2016, 62). Based on their analysis of cases and practitioner reflections of their own experiences, the RPP process identified five to six intermediate building blocks that can support progress towards peace writ large. These are the following (RPP 2004: 15; RPP 2016, 62):

- The efforts contribute to stopping a key driving factor of war or conflict.[27]
- The efforts contribute to a momentum for peace by causing participants and communities to develop their own peace initiatives in relation to critical elements of context analysis.
- The efforts result in the creation or reform of political institutions to handle grievances in situations where such grievances do, genuinely, drive the conflict.
- The efforts prompt people increasingly to resist violence and provocations to violence.
- The efforts result in an increase in people's security and in their sense of security.
- The efforts result in meaningful improvement of inter-group relations.

The criterion on efforts contributing to stop key driving factors of war or conflict are initiatives that address people, issues, and dynamics that are key contributors to ongoing conflict (RPP 2004: 15). This criterion was apparently removed in RPP's 2016 version of the criteria and replaced with the criteria on improving inter-group relations. Efforts contributing to a momentum for peace by causing participants and communities to develop their own peace initiatives in relation to critical elements of context analysis, is a

[27] RPP's updated 2016 criteria replaced this with the criteria on meaningful improvement of inter-group relations.

criterion underscoring the importance of ownership and sustainability of actions to bring about peace (ibid.). It asks the questions on *what needs to be stopped*, *what are areas where people continue to interact positively that needs to be reinforced*, and *what are the regional and international dimensions of the conflict* (ibid.). Efforts resulting in the creation or reform of political institutions to handle grievances, is a criterion the underlies the importance of moving beyond individual or personal level impacts to the socio-political level where institutions or mechanisms are developed to address inequalities, injustices, and other grievances that cause and fuel conflict (ibid.). The criterion on efforts that prompt people to increasingly resist violence and provocations to violence means that more people are developed with the ability to resist the manipulation and provocations of negative key people such as warlords and spoilers (ibid.). Efforts resulting in an increase in people's security and in their sense of security is a criterion reflecting positive changes in both socio-political (in people's public lives) and individual/personal levels as people gain a sense of security (ibid.). The latest addition is the criteria on efforts resulting in meaningful improvement of inter-group relations. This entails a transformation of polarized and polarizing attitudes, behaviors and interactions toward more tolerance and cooperation, which can be seen in changes in public opinion, group attitudes, social norms as well as improved relationships between conflicting groups (RPP 2016, 63).

The RPP criteria of effectiveness for *peace writ large* is a very useful and flexible framework for assessing not only effectiveness, but also the impact of peacebuilding programs. This is because an assessment of impact also considers both outcome and

impact level changes as subscribed to by White (2010), which are also the levels described in the criteria of effectiveness. Stern's (2012) *how* and *why* questions that defines impact evaluation, and Chigas, Church, and Corlazzoli's (2014) focus on the effects of interventions on the drivers of conflict are all captured in the RPP criteria. The RPP criteria also touches on the concept of transfer or "the ways in which work in a particular area can have more extensive effects on the course of the wider conflict which is characteristic of impact level changes." (Ross 2004, 3.), wherein Church and Rogers (2006) posit can be another way of thinking about impact. These are explained in more detail under the subsection on Issue of Transfer.

***Causation and causal inference and their links to methods.*** Causation is a key element of evaluation (Mayne 2019, 173) and considered central to the question of impact. A discussion of causation and causal inference is necessary because understanding causation is crucial for establishing the link between peacebuilding efforts and their intended outcomes.

Causation is at the heart of an impact evaluation (Stern et al., 2012, 5); while inference (whether descriptive or causal inference) is the goal of any scientific research (King, Keohane & Verba, 1994). At its simplest, causation or causality is a cause-and-effect relationship (Byrne 2013), while causal inference is the process of drawing conclusions about a causal relationship on the basis of observed data (Brady & Collier 2010). Usually, causal inference is initially based on descriptive inference which is about reaching descriptive conclusions about phenomena by inferring information from unobserved facts, and by distinguishing between systematic and unsystematic (random)

components in the data (King, Keohane & Verba 1994, 34). Both descriptive and causal inference are crucial in social science research (ibid.).

However, trying to establish causation and explaining the *how* and *why* of this linkage can be very difficult because it delves into philosophical, epistemological, and methodological debates. Causation continues to be a central object of scientific discovery. (Moses & Knutsen 2012). Defining a causal relationship is one of the most difficult topics in the philosophy of science, and there is little agreement on how to establish causation (Schwandt 2001 in Patton 2015, 582). Not surprisingly, according to Rothbart and Cherubin (2011), the field of conflict analysis and resolution is also muted on conceptualizing causation.[28] In referring broadly to conflict theory, and to identity conflicts in particular, Rothbart and Cherubin (ibid.) contend that conflict analysis is silent on two questions: *what notion of causation best serves conflict studies and how can analysts determine that they have discovered the root causes of such violence?*

In the philosophy of science, David Hume's understanding of causation rested on his theory of sense perception (the human mind absorbs impressions through the senses) and on the pattern-seeking habits of the human mind (Moses & Knutsen 2012). This theory of sense perception is the empirical basis of science. Immanuel Kant (of *Perpetual Peace* fame) also agreed on Hume's idea of sense perception, but he also added that the human mind was not merely an empty vessel that passively absorbs sense impressions, but comes equipped with preconditioning concepts that helped organize,

[28] Curiously, Church and Rogers' (2006) influential peacebuilding evaluation volume *Designing for Results: Integrating Monitoring and Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Activities*, is also silent on causation.

categorize, and store these impressions for later use (ibid: 175). For Kant, the human mind was an agent in its own right (ibid.). Kant's argument that the mind is an agent, opened the floodgates of constructivist epistemology, and eventually the human agency groundings for causation. Furthermore, in speculating about the nature of causation, Hume used billiards as an example to explain why the ball moved (ibid.). He points out several causes: (1) the physical cause; (2) an intentional cause by the person playing snooker; and (3) an institutional cause due to the rules of the game (ibid., 171-172). The manner in which Hume explains causation, especially the institutional cause (or rules of the game) being a social construction, and the intentions of the snooker player, figures a lot in this study's understanding of the generative model of causation wherein human agency and causal mechanisms play a huge role in explaining causation.

King, Keohane, and Verba view causation as a theoretical concept independent of the data used to analyze it, and a counterfactual condition is essential behind their definition of causality (1994, 76-77). For these authors, the difference between this counterfactual condition and the actual condition is the causal effect. Hence, they define causality in terms of causal effect, which they argue are comprised of systematic and non-systematic components (ibid., 85).[29]

In contrast, George and Bennett (2005) warn against conflating the definition of causality with causal effect. Causal effect, according to George and Bennett, is

[29] Systematic components are the fundamental features of phenomena under study, while non-systematic components do not persist from one situation to another. Non-systematic factors are usually unpredictable such as weather conditions, an unexpectedly bad performance, a surprisingly good speech, etc. (KKV 1994: 56, 79).

ontological because it is based on an unobservable counterfactual outcome (ibid.). George and Bennett espouse a more holistic approach to understanding causality which includes casual effects and casual mechanisms (ibid.). Much earlier, Lawrence Mohr (1999, 78) has similarly observed that causation is still ruled by a counterfactual definition and he argues that this has been a barrier to advancing a qualitative approach to impact analysis.

From a simplistic view, causation is a cause-and-effect relationship; it seeks to connect the cause with the effect (Byrne 2013, 223; Stern et al. 2012, 27). It involves relationships between events or conditions and is often discussed in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, or is seen as the direct effect of one event on a future event (Mayne 2012, 275; Church & Rogers 2006, 203). Causation can be viewed in two ways: from the conventional statistical perspective where causation is a contest of variables to explain variations in outcome, or from the diversity-oriented view wherein causation is both *conjunctural* and multiple (Byrne ibid.). This latter view of causation lends itself more to contribution analysis in evaluation. Causation can also be viewed differently depending on the level of complexity (simple, complicated, complex). The extent to which the cause-and-effect relationship can be known depends on the degree of complexity of a situation (Patton: 2011, 92).

In a lecture on statistical analysis for evaluation, Theodore Poister explains that determining a causal relationship in an association of variables goes beyond statistics.[30] Poister argues that there are four things to consider in order to assess if an association has

[30] Dr. Theodore Poister lecture and manual on Applied Statistics for Evaluation. TEI, July (2015)

a causal relationship: (1) plausible theory or logic about the relationship; (2) data should conform to expectations; (3) chronology is in the right order; (4) rival explanations are ruled out. This criteria also corresponds with Stephen Gorard's (2013) four ingredients in making a causal claim: (1) there should be a correlation between cause and effect; (2) the effect appearing after its cause; (3) changes in the effect produced by varying strength of the cause; and (4) a plausible explanation of the process by which it happens (ibid.). Moses and Knutsen (2012, 93) affirm these arguments stating that statistical approaches are unable to examine causal mechanisms which are important in understanding causality.

Causality is said to be a property of a model and not of the data, and as such, there are many models that may explain the same data (Heckman cited in Brady and Collier 2010, 6). True enough, the mere terms "cause-and-effect" implies a linear model which is quite limiting. Tina Grotzer (2012) argues that since we live in a complex world, we need to develop better ways of reasoning about causal complexity. So, for instance, instead of asking *what happened*, which implies an event or sequence of events, Grotzer prefers to ask *what's going on* which implies something ongoing and simultaneous. To help students understand and learn about how the world works, Grotzer introduces various models of causality that can be used in education which go beyond a simple linear model: domino causality, cyclic causality, spiraling causality, mutual causality, and relational causality. These models are useful heuristic devices for capturing complexity in the phenomena under study. More importantly, Grotzer argues that we can detect the causal structure of a phenomenon through interventions (2012, 27-28). This

means that interventions will help us see what happens with different manipulations (ibid.). As a program implementer, I can attest to this very important argument since project interventions often uncover conflict dynamics which are unobservable under normal circumstances. A more comprehensive discussion on complexity is found in the proceeding sections of this paper.

Barbara Befani provided a comprehensive discussion on the different models of causality and causal inference and their strengths and weaknesses (2012).[31] Befani explained three different models of causation: (1) simultaneous presence of cause and effect (*successionist* view); (2) co-presence of multiple causes that are linked to the effect as a block which can either be necessary or sufficient (or neither) for the effect; (3) causes that demonstrate active manipulation or generation of the effect (ibid.).[32]

The first model or **successionist view of causality** is traditional causality that is based on regularity and counterfactual thinking. In the regularity framework, causation is claimed by agreement, wherein there is an observed regular co-presence of both cause and effect. Causality can also be claimed by difference (under a counterfactual framework), wherein the cause is isolated between two carefully chosen events that are identical on a number of elements except the cause and effect (ibid., 5). The main critiques for the *successionist* view are that it does not provide adequate criteria to deal with the direction of the causation; does not reveal the nature of causal relation (which

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[31] In *Broadening the Range of Designs and Methods for Impact Evaluations: A Report of a study commissioned by the Department for International Development*, 2012.

[32] Barnett and Munslow (2014, 20) also has a similar explanation of the different logics of causal inference (frequentist logic, comparative logic of elimination, and Bayesian logic of subjective probability).

can be spurious); and the possible interaction with other causes based on contextual factors is not addressed (ibid.).

The second model of causality involves the **co-presence of multiple causes** which are linked to the effect as a block. According to Befani (ibid.), there are two interrelated ways of looking at this model. The first uses John Mackie's notion of analyzing the "causal field" which is comprised of a "causal package" and its effect (Befani 2012, 13). This causal package is a "block of single causes that might not have an independent influence on the effect" (ibid.). This is what Mackie calls an INUS cause, wherein the block of single causes can be seen as insufficient (I) but necessary (N) part of the causal package, which is in itself unnecessary (U) but sufficient (S).[33]

A clearer explanation of this is Luker's categorization of causes or conditions as "necessary" cause, "sufficient" cause, and "necessary and sufficient" cause (2008, 205). A "necessary" cause is when, for something to happen (the effect B), it needs something else to happen first (the cause A); but there can be effects (B) that do not happen even though (A) is present. A "sufficient" cause/ condition is when effect (B) happens, and the cause (A) may be present, but not always. In a "necessary and sufficient" cause, if (B) happens, (A) is always present; if (B) is not present, (A) is not present. Seen in a spectrum, the "necessary and sufficient" cause or condition is a more stringent criteria for causality. Hence in the canonical social science, the "necessary and sufficient" condition is often expected in a causal relationship and reflects a notion of linearity (ibid.).

[33] J.L. Mackie cited in Befani (ibid., 13).

Related to this is the configurational view of causation wherein different configurations of casual packages or constellation of conditions combine to affect different or same outcomes. What is useful here is that Befani distinguishes between the "ground preparing causes" of the effect (or conditions), and the immediate "triggering causes," and how these work together to produce the effect (ibid., 11). According to Befani, this type of model lies half-way between the first and third model and is used when there is no fine-grained knowledge on how the effect is manipulated by the cause but the presence or absence of conditions can still be spotted which can gives us a peek into the causal process (ibid., 2). A critique of this model is that despite the list of causal conditions, we still do not know how these are linked, its temporal order, and whether there are synergies between these factors (ibid., 15).

The third model of causality not only shows that simultaneous presence is sufficient and necessary, but also demonstrates that it could actively manipulate and generate effect (ibid., 2). There are two aspects to this model. The first aspect emphasizes human agency claiming causation through intervention, wherein causation is a "forced movement" or a "manipulation of objects by force" (ibid., 15). This also means alternative possibilities, wherein failure to engage in manipulation will prevent the effect from happening, or that a certain intervention "crowds out" another effect. This latter possibility of "crowding out" is actually a critique of the human agency intervention model, because it cannot account for all the causes that could have acted but were prevented from acting by the cause that actually operated (ibid., 17). The second aspect of this model is generative causation, wherein causation is claimed by digging deep into

the **causal mechanisms** and describing these mechanisms (ibid., 18-19).[34] Digging deep into causal mechanisms offers a more fine-grained explanation of causation that answers the questions of *how* and *why* a particular effect came about and *under what conditions*.

Another useful explanation for generative causation is found in the process tracing approach to case studies. Process tracing is based on the Bayesian tradition which "aims to detect the transmission of casual forces through a casual mechanism to produce an outcome in a single case" (Barnett and Munslow 2014). Here, the logic of empirical testing is: "if we expect X to cause Y, each part of the mechanism between X and Y should leave the predicated empirical manifestations which can be observed in the empirical material" (ibid.). There are four tests of causal inference used in process tracing: *Hoop tests*, *smoking-gun*, *straw-in-the-wind tests*, and *doubly decisive tests* (Barnett & Munslow 2014, 21-22; Bennett & Checkel 2015).

The critique of the generative/ causal mechanism approach to causality is that while it is strong on explanation, it is weak on estimating quantities or the extent of impact (Befani 2012). Generative causation is also difficult to untangle in all its complexity (ibid., 23). Nevertheless, no less than the World Bank Policy Research Working paper on RCTs by Gaarder and Annan (2013, 19) has acknowledged the potential of mechanism-based approaches and the concept of theory of change as possible consensus of quality for small *n* impact evaluation, in contrast to the well-established

[34] Causal mechanisms are causal forces and processes (Westhorp 2012) or entities and activities (Beach and Pedersen 2013). A fuller discussion of causal mechanism is found in the later sections.

consensus of quality for large-N impact studies. In sum, the generative/ mechanism model of causality explains how effects are produced and how changes come about.

Davidson (2000) cited in Bamberger, Rugh and Mabry (2012, 201), identifies a range of nine potential types of evidence for inferring causality that can be obtained from program theory models which are based on different kinds of logical inference. These are: causal list inference, modus operandi influence, temporal precedence, constant conjunction, contiguity of influence, strength of association, biological gradient, coherence, and analogy (ibid.). While some of the descriptions of the different types of evidence fit with the earlier discussion on models of causality, this list of evidence by Davidson is still a very useful guide when thinking about program theory evaluation.

Given these different models of causation, causality can thus be inferred from **regularity frameworks** which depend on frequency of association between cause and effect; **counterfactual frameworks** that depend on difference between two identical cases which is the basis for experimental and quasi-experimental approaches; **multiple causation** which depends of combinations or configurations of causes that lead to an effect; and **generative causation** which involves identifying mechanisms that explain effects (Stern et al. 2012). It is here that the different research methods play a role in investigating different types of causalities (Moses & Knutsen 2012, 51). For instance, statistical approaches are more appropriate in analyzing regularity frameworks; experimental approaches (such as RCTs) and quasi-experiments lend themselves better to counterfactual and manipulation-based frameworks; while case studies and theory-based approaches are more appropriate for looking at generative causation and causal

mechanisms which we associate more with process-oriented understandings of causation (Moses & Knutsen 2012, 51; Stern et al. 2012, 15-16).

Based on the different models of causation discussed, Stern and others (2012) identified five design approaches: **experimental**, **statistical**, **theory-based**, **case-based**, and **participatory**. Chigas, Church, and Corlazzoli (2014) usefully organize these evaluation approaches into three types: (1) variable-based approaches; (2) mechanism-based/ theory-based approaches; and (3) participatory approaches. **Variable-based approaches** identify indicators that can be assessed largely through quantitative methods and make judgements about causation based on counterfactuals. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs, including Randomized Control Trials fall under this approach. **Process/ mechanism-based/ theory-based approaches** involve identifying changes or impacts and analyzing the processes that connect them. Examples of this approach are case studies, realist evaluation, contribution analysis, and process tracing. **Participatory approaches** involve participants and stakeholders in the evaluation process as co-evaluators and sources of information (ibid.). Among participatory approaches mentioned are Most Significant Change, Participatory Impact Assessment, and Outcome Mapping/ harvesting (ibid.).

**Experimental and quasi-experimental** approaches are strong in reducing selection bias, quantifying attribution and contribution, and showing the extent of contribution. This approach is not strong in showing effects on *peace writ large* and drivers of conflict; and cannot really assess how and why an intervention achieved its impact. The strengths of **theory-based/ mechanism-based** (or theory and cased based

approaches) are their realistic assessment of causality in complex and multi-dimensional settings, their provision of rigor through triangulation, and their better construct validity. Its weakness is in obtaining the extent of impact or precise estimates of attribution. **Participatory approaches** can contribute to a better understanding of *impact for whom* questions and are better able to integrate views of project participants. The weaknesses of participatory approaches are the risk of bias and group think, which results in limited rigor in inferring causality.[35] Given the different strengths and weaknesses of the different design approaches, it is only logical that the different designs should match the research questions and should be combined when necessary to compensate each other's weaknesses.

To reiterate, Stern and others identified a range of possible design options for impact evaluation, but according to them, the designs identified outside of the variable-based approaches are poorly applied in development evaluations (2012, 80). The three main design approaches that have potential in linking interventions with outcomes and impacts but are not currently widely deployed in impact evaluation are: theory-based, case-based,[36] and participatory approaches (ibid., 25). According to Stern et al., these innovative approaches need more tailoring, refining, and field-testing (ibid., 83).

In particular, the use of process tracing in impact evaluation which is intimately related to theory-based/ case-based/ mechanism-based design approaches, is a recognized

[35] Please refer to Chigas, Church and Corlazzoli for a full range of strengths and weaknesses of each research approach (2014: Annex 1). Also refer to Table 3.1 of Stern et al. (2012, 18).

[36] For this paper I will use the categories of Chigas, Church and Corlazzoli that combines theory-based/ mechanism-based/ case-based approaches (2014).

gap which needs to be further explored and field-tested.[37] Process tracing is considered "a key technique for capturing causal mechanisms in action" and a basis for causal inference (Bennett and Checkel 2015). Causal mechanisms play a central role for capturing causal processes. I also argue that process tracing has a huge potential in evaluating peacebuilding projects. Despite this, process tracing is rarely used in the field of evaluation, and almost nil in peacebuilding evaluation. When I started my review of literature in 2015, a review of three reputable evaluation journals show only 12 "hits" that deal with process tracing in evaluation.[38] Most of the studies that mentioned process tracing were epistemological discussions and/ or overviews of research methods and their potentials for engaging with complexity and processes.[39] A third of the articles only made passing reference to process tracing and do not directly use it in their evaluation methodology.[40] Only two studies used process tracing as part of their methodology in evaluation.[41] Befani and Mayne's 2014 paper demonstrated a test case as for combining process tracing and contribution analysis. While the paper is not based on an actual project that was evaluated, it nevertheless presents a "proof of concept" that combining both approaches is feasible (ibid., 25). However, in the narrower realm of peacebuilding

[37] A recent paper by Barnett and Munslow (2014) is exploring is this gap.

[38] The evaluation journals reviewed were: (1) Evaluation: The International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice; (2) Evaluation Review: A Journal of Applied Social Science Research; and (3) American Journal of Evaluation. Out of 119 "hits" only 12 actually mentioned process tracing, and only 2 studies used process tracing in their evaluation methodology. *Evaluation Review* had 0 articles on process tracing.

[39] See Mohr 1999, Schwandt 2014, Schmiedeberg 2010, Byrne 2013, Stern 2013, Woolcock 2013, Copestake 2014.

[40] Brandon, Smith and Ofir 2014, Giel Ton 2012, Vellema et.al. 2013.

[41] Frey and Widmer 2011, Bjurulf et. al. 2012.

evaluation, process tracing is mentioned by Chigas, Church, and Corlazzoli (2014), but there are no examples of its use in peacebuilding evaluation in public documents.

Among the studies that light a path for the utility of process tracing in investigating causal mechanisms is Virginia Page Fortna's study of peacekeeping effectiveness (2008). Fortna's volume *Does Peacekeeping Work?* demonstrates the causal mechanisms behind successful peacekeeping by first highlighting the possible pathways to renewed fighting in the aftermath of a civil war: (1) aggression due to shifts in power or new information; (2) fear and mistrust due to security dilemma; (3) accidents; (4) political exclusion; and (5) a combination of these four (ibid: 82). She then eloquently shows how peacekeeping activities disrupt each of these pathways. She argues that peacekeeping has a causal effect on the stability of peace when these: (1) reduce aggression by raising the costs of war or benefits of peace; (2) disrupt spirals of fears and security dilemmas by reducing uncertainty about each other's intentions; (3) prevent accidents by controlling them; and (4) deterring or preventing one side from reneging on a political deal and or excluding the other from power (ibid., 86). It is surprising how Fortna's 2008 study is not considered seriously in evaluation literature (at least in evaluation journals). This underscores the need to bridge theory and practice in the evaluation field, the academe, the development field, and the peace and conflict field.

Given these gaps and opportunities, future evaluations that apply and test these three innovative design approaches would be a good step to provide more "exemplar" cases needed that can strengthen and give insights into the capacity of such innovative

design approaches. These efforts will give voice to the perceived silence of the conflict analysis and resolution field on the issue of causation.

***The Attribution Problem and Contribution Analysis***. An important aspect of causation is the attribution problem, or how to connect the intervention with the results of interest (Chigas, Church, and Corlazzoli 2014, 9). Any evaluation is faced with the difficulty of making a credible claim in a cause-and-effect relationship, such as attributing observed changes to the intervention being studied (White 2010, 159). Analyzing attribution involves identifying the cause of the effect, and at the same time estimating quantitatively the extent to which the effect is due to an intervention (Mayne 2012, 273). But attributing a successful outcome to a certain project can be problematic especially if there is a universe of projects existing on the ground. In the real world, it is difficult to reduce multiple interventions and other factors in the environment into variables, and statistically controlling these variables to identify the most salient factor that has affected an outcome.

Instead of analyzing attribution, John Mayne (2008; 2012) proposed doing **contribution analysis** which also explores attribution by assessing the contribution of a program is making to the observed results. According to Mayne (2012, 273), "in light of the multiple factors influencing a result, has the intervention made a noticeable contribution to an observed result and in what way?" Key to conducting contribution analysis is establishing a credible theory of change which is embedded in the context of the intervention and is developed by incorporating the perspectives of key stakeholders, beneficiaries and existing relevant research (ibid.). A conclusion about a contribution

claim can be reached by verifying the theory of change behind the program and accounting for other influencing factors. According to Mayne (2008; 2012) causality can be inferred from the following logic and evidence:

1. The intervention is based on a reasoned theory of change, wherein the assumptions behind why an intervention is expected to work are sound and plausible, and agreed upon by some of the key stakeholders.
2. The activities of the intervention were implemented as outlined in the theory of change.
3. The theory of change is verified by evidence: the change of expected results occurred, and the assumptions held.
4. Other factors (context and rival explanations) influencing the intervention are assessed and are either shown not to have made a significant contribution or, if they did, their relative contribution is recognized.

In a more recent paper, Mayne (2019) discussed some updated thinking on contribution analysis (CA) as well as some clarifications about confusions in using the approach. Included in his discussion is the necessity of robust theory of change in CA and how it adds to an impact pathway; using different theories of change for different situations; the need for evaluable theory of change models; as well as the use of nested theories of change to unpack complex settings. Mayne (ibid., 173) also discussed the new seven steps of CA which are: 1) setting out the specific cause-effect questions to be addressed; 2) developing robust theories of change for the intervention and its pathways; 3) Gathering existing evidence on the components of the theory of change model of causality (results achieves and causal link assumptions realized); 4) assembling and assessing the resulting contribution claim, and the challenges to it; 5) seeking out additional evidence to strengthening the contribution; 6) revising and strengthening the contribution claim; and 7) returning to step 4 if necessary.

Important for this dissertation is Mayne's discussion on the role of rival or alternative explanations in arriving at a contribution claim. He clarified that CA uses a stepwise or generative approach to causality and not a counterfactual approach (2019, 176). He also argues that the original terminology he used—alternative or rival explanations—may be misleading since all factors could be contributing to the results, meaning they are not rival or alternatives. Mayne (ibid., 176) explains that if an evaluation question is about assessing what brought about an observed impact, then these other factors or rival explanations would also have to be explored. But in a narrower question assessing whether or not an intervention contributed to an impact and how it did so, rival explanations need not play a major role in the analysis (ibid.).

Interest in contribution analysis has grown through the years and has been operationalized in various ways, across different settings. It is considered a promising method for assessing advocacy's impact (Kane et. al., 2021); enterprise support policy (Buckley 2016); and even research impact (Downe's et. al. 2019). In this dissertation, contribution analysis is explored towards evaluating the highly complex settings of conflict and fragility.

***Defining "Effectiveness" and "Success."*** OECD-DAC[42] defines effectiveness "as the extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance" (2002). This is not far from their more recent definition which defines effectiveness as "the extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and its results,

[42] http://www.oecd.org/development/peer-reviews/2754804.pdf

including any differential results across groups."  (OECD 2021).  Effectiveness answers the question:  *is the intervention achieving its objectives?*  Some key elements of effectiveness are discussed in the new OECD evaluation criteria.  These include:  the achievement of objectives; the varying importance of objectives and results; differential results across groups; and understanding the factors that influence outcomes.

Assessing effectiveness primarily involves establishing whether an intervention achieved its intended results at different levels of the results chain (OECD 2021, 53).  It underscores the importance of having clearly defined goals, and also accounting for why certain goals have changed while stating new goals.  In evaluating for effectiveness, evaluators are encouraged to take note of adaptive programs that make iterative changes based on stakeholder feedback and changes in the context (ibid.).  Much like impact, evaluating for effectiveness also involves examining the results of the intervention, which could be both positive or negative, intended or unintended, as well as examining the relative importance of achievements in cases wherein not all objectives were achieved (ibid.).  And similar to impact, paying attention to differential results of interventions among beneficiary groups is important for making sure that project design and implementation have an inclusive approach to ensure more equitable benefits (ibid., 54). Finally, an examination of the factors that influence results is also crucial for understanding why interventions worked or didn't work, which ultimately helps in improving project interventions (ibid.).

In peacebuilding, defining effectiveness is both a conceptual and operational challenge (Druckman 2005, 302).  Gürkaynak and others view effectiveness as the

"changes an intervention has achieved with respect to its immediate environment" (2011, 287). In juxtaposing OECD definitions with their Conflict Transformation Framework, Church and Rogers (2006) defines "effectiveness" as comprising of output identification and outcome identification, which consider the immediate and often tangible results of the activities undertaken (outputs); while exploring the changes that result from project activities (outcomes). Already discussed earlier is RPP's very useful criteria of effectiveness for *peace writ large*: (1) the effort contributes to stopping a key driving factor of war or conflict; (2) effort contributes to a momentum for peace; (3) results in creation of institutions to handle grievances; (4) increase in resistance to violence and provocations; and (5) increase in security and sense of security (RPP 2004, 15; Church & Rogers 2006, 107-108).

Some scholars like Druckman, Ross, d'Estrée and others use "effectiveness" and "success" interchangeably. Defining what constitutes a "successful" intervention has no consensus (d'Estrée et al. 2001). In his discussion of effectiveness, Druckman (2005, 302) talks about the different goals of peacebuilding interventions and points out the various ways of thinking about the possible dimensions of their success: violence reduction, short-term/ long-term change; consideration of elite and other perspectives; and reasons for success or failure.

D'Estrée, Fast, Weiss and Jakobsen (2001) consider the lack of consensus on what constitutes a "successful" intervention and the competing claims of effectiveness of various conflict resolution processes. They see two challenges in evaluating the success of interactive conflict resolution: the question of which criteria to apply, and how to link

the micro-level behavioral and attitudinal changes to the more structural macro-changes (2001, 104). In trying to answer the first challenge, d'Estrée and others point out a gap of making the necessary connection between the achievements or effects of processes and the underlying goals of such processes (2001, 102-103). This led the authors to develop a framework for evaluating conflict resolution processes based on the goals of these processes. This framework analyzes interactive conflict resolution in terms of its effects: Changes in Representation, Changes in Relations, Foundations for Transfer, and Foundations for Outcome/ Implementation (d'Estrée et. al. 2001, 105-106).

This emphasis on the criteria for "success" as endogenous to the goals of conflict resolution processes is also reflected in a 2003 article by Elliot, d'Estrée, and Kaufman wherein they mentioned multiple criteria that can be applied to measure success: achievement and quality of outcome, quality of conflict resolution processes; satisfaction with outcomes; quality of parties' relationships; improved decision-making ability; and increased social capital.

Marc Howard Ross probably provides the most convincing argument of the links between effectiveness and success. According to Ross (2004, 2), both success and failure can teach us a good deal about what constitutes effective conflict resolution, and that evaluation must consider evidence from two sources of failure: such as those arising from the intervention or implementation; and those arising from incorrect hypotheses about the conflict itself. Based on this, Ross (2004, 13-17) offers six guidelines for assessing when, how, and the extent to which specific conflict resolution interventions are effective: (1) goals of conflict resolution evolve in response to disputant needs and

changing conditions; (2) project goals are clear and the criteria for knowing when goals are achieved are spelled out; (3) understanding multiple criteria for success and recognizing partial success and failures; (4) the issue of transfer is addressed; (5) building on previous success and understanding the contingent nature of success; (6) recognition of "good enough" conflict resolution interventions and exploring its application in different contexts.

Ultimately, defining success (or effectiveness) will depend on the people involved in conflict, but a mutually agreed upon definition of success by parties is an important milestone in and of itself (Church and Rogers 2006, 13). Such a situation-specific definition of effectiveness is what is being argued by Séverine Autesserre in her study of international interventions. According to Autesserre (2014, 8, 23), "a peacebuilding project, program or intervention is effective when a large majority of the people involved in it—including both implementers (international interveners and local peacebuilders) and intended beneficiaries (including elite and ordinary citizens)—view it as having promoted peace in the area of intervention."

***Sustainability***. The OECD-DAC defines sustainability in terms of the continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed and its resilience to risks overtime (2002). OECD's recent evaluation criteria document defines sustainability as "the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue (2021, 71). It asks the question, *will the benefits last* (ibid.). The new OECD criteria also usefully breakdowns sustainability into its key elements for analysis: enabling environment, continuation of positive effects,

and risks and trade-offs (ibid, 72). The first element, e*nabling environment*, sees sustainability as a product of interventions that strengthens systems, develops institutions, or improves capacities that contribute to an enabling environment, thus ensuring sustainability (ibid.). The second element, *continuation of positive effects*, involves the need to assess sustainability across different timeframes such for both actual and prospective sustainability, cognizant that higher-level changes may take years or even decades to fully realize (ibid.). The third element of *risks versus trade-offs* analysis, invites us to consider the factors that enhance or inhibit sustainability as well as examine the trade-offs between immediate impact and potential longer-term effects or costs to give us a more comprehensive view of sustainability (ibid.).

The question of sustainability is often considered at the impact level. Gürkaynak and others (2011, 289) has highlighted sustainability as one of reasons for the initial resistance to doing evaluation in peacebuilding. This is because peacebuilding processes are extremely vulnerable even in the short-term, that the only thing that could probably be counted as success is sustainable peacebuilding. Other scholars such as Martina Fischer also proposed that sustainability should be dropped from criteria of peacebuilding evaluation due to the same reasons (Fischer 2009, 91). Meanwhile Church and Rogers view sustainability in terms of **adaptability of change** specifically on whether changes resulting from the project can adapt overtime to shifts in context and to different stresses and demands (2006, 104). According to Church and Rogers, this focus on resilience or adaptability to change is a new area of evaluation whose methodologies have yet to be

tested (ibid). Answers to the question of sustainability are also related to answering the issue of transfer.

***Issue of Transfer (from peace writ small to peace writ large)***. Related to sustainability is the issue of transfer. I have experienced evaluators say to me many times over that our community peacebuilding efforts (*peace writ small*) do not "add up" or provide support to something larger (*peace writ large*). I now understand this as the issue of transfer. The question of transfer problematizes the ways in which work in a particular area can have more extensive effects on the course of the wider conflict. (Ross 2004, 3).

In the context of Interactive Conflict Resolution (ICR), transfer is "the process by which individual changes (e.g., improved attitudes, new realizations) and group products (e.g., frameworks for negotiation, principles for resolution) are moved from the unofficial conflict resolution interventions to the official domain of negotiations, policy making, and the surrounding political culture." (Fisher 2020, 443). The concept of transfer was first realized by practitioners of problem-solving workshops (PSW) which was a means of preparing the way for negotiations. It was later recognized that PSW could also make contributions in any stage of the negotiation process (Fisher 2020 citing Kelman and Cohen 1976). According to Fisher (2020, 443) the pioneers of PSW have been variously addressing the nature and mechanisms of transfer from the workshops to the official negotiation stage (i.e., Burton 1969; Kelman 1972; Mitchell 1981).

Mitchell (1981) for instance distinguishes between the *internal effectiveness* of workshops which brings about changes in participants' thinking about the conflict, and the *external effectiveness* that occurs in parties' decision-making as a result of the transfer

process (ibid., 444). For this to happen, according to Mitchell, the participants must first restructure their view of the conflict, the parties, and future possibilities; retain these changed perceptions; and then transfer these new insights to the negotiators and their leaders, where it is assumed a reentry process happens which brings the ideas back into their societies (ibid., 445). Similarly, Kelman (2010) talks about transfer as a bridging of the microprocess as exemplified by PSW, that is intended to produce changes in the macroprocess, which is the official negotiations. These two processes are interrelated in that PSW provides inputs to the macroprocess, while the microprocess can serve as a metaphor for what happens or what is ought to happen at the macro level (ibid., 391).

In 1997, Ronald Fisher initially developed a schematic model of transfer from ICR interventions which identifies various elements such as major constituencies, lines of communication, and interactions that influence policymaking in situations of international or communal conflict (ibid., 446). While this provides a helpful overview of the process of transfer, it only shows the general connections among groups, the constituencies involved, and the directions and destinations of potential transfer effects (ibid., 449). Drawing from Kelman's idea of the two major elements of transfer—individual changes and political effects—Fisher improved on his initial ideas to come up with a more detailed process and outcome model of transfer that specifies its major components and illustrates some of the elements in each component that interact in order for a successful transfer to occur (2020, 449, 454). These major components include: identity and nature of participants; conditions of interactions; qualities of group and

intergroup development; individual changes; products or outcomes; mechanisms of transfer; targets of transfer; and effects of transfer.

As pointed out earlier, d'Estrée and others noted two challenges in evaluating interactive conflict resolution: the challenge of which criteria to apply, and how to link the micro-changes to the more structural macro-changes (2001, 104). This second challenge is related to the issue of transfer. The authors attempt to answer the question of transfer by developing a framework that differentiated the phases of impact and levels of intervention (ibid., 108-109). The authors identified three phases of change: *promotion phase* (interventions are promoted), *application phase* (interventions are applied by participants back home), and *sustainability phase* (where questions about enduring nature of changes and impacts are assessed) (ibid., 108). They arranged the phases of change in a matrix according to the level of intervention (micro, meso, macro). Crucial in this framework is the meso-level change which bridges the micro (individuals) with the macro (larger society). The meso-level are said to be the participants' reference groups, epistemic communities and local institutions, where the transfer of workshop activities to the larger group occurs (ibid., 108). This framework is especially useful in assessing the links between local level peacebuilding efforts and the national level peace process.

The Ripple Model is another framework that can be explored in assessing the issue of transfer. Much like the metaphor of a stone thrown in a pond that causes ripples, the model is often used to highlight the changes brought about by capacity building (Simister & Smith 2010, 9-11). The ripple model indicates the direction of the possible change and evaluation: bottom-up investigation, top-down, or middle-up-and-down

(ibid.). In viewing a results chain (Activities/Outputs-Outcomes-Impact), the **bottom-up method** involves starting from the inputs and tracing the changes up the results chain. The **middle-up-and-down** approach involves measuring capacity at different points in time in order to show change (ibid.). While the **top-down method** attempts to measure change at the impact level and works its way back to find out what contributed to that change. A characteristic of this model is that they are not mutually exclusive which means they can be utilized simultaneously.

Much like d'Estrée's timeframe and level of impact matrix, the ripple model can be useful for assessing transfer because it attempts to look at the changes affected by an intervention (capacity-building) on individual behavior, the changes at the organizational level, and ultimately the wider society. The challenge in the ripple model is how to find the link between the different levels of the results chain. Another challenge is that the top-down method might be the least likely to be able to draw meaningful conclusions about a particular intervention considering the distance of impact level changes from the input (interventions), and the possible multiple influences from the real world that could affect impact (ibid., 11). Nevertheless, there are number of ways that these challenges can be addressed in the research design and methods such as using appropriate theories of change and process tracing and utilizing retrospective developmental evaluation (Patton 2011, 294-303).

Finally, all of these ideas are also echoed in Reflecting on Peace Practice Project's (RPP) thinking about how community level peace (*peace writ small*) can contribute or impact the broader level societal peace (*peace writ large*). RPP has been working on

identifying effective strategies for impacting *peace writ large*. RPP (2004) outlined some common strategies for affecting *peace writ large*: (1) More people approaches (assumes that more people involved in peace activities translates to better peace outcomes at the broader level); and (2) key people approaches (assumes that involving key *influentials* add up to effective peace work). The study concluded that the two approaches are insufficient by themselves and need linkages to make these more effective. Two types of linkages were found to be particularly important to have an impact on *peace writ large*. These are the linkage between individual level with socio-political level; and the linkage between key people with more people and vice versa (ibid.).

***Complexity of contexts, problems, and interventions.*** Working on complex problems in complex settings is very challenging for evaluation. Marc Howard Ross cites some challenges for evaluation in such contexts such as the need to consider multiple goals of projects, diverse participants, shifting timeframes, and the attempts to change behaviors, perceptions, practices and institutions (2004, 2). Byrne (2013) argues that understanding the social world as emergent, shaped by human agency, and composed of intersecting complex systems with causation running in all directions, has implications for evaluation methods. Programs often pay lip service to accounting for complexity in their designs and interventions, but program implementers and evaluators alike still wrestle with the notion of complexity and most often do not know where to start in dealing with it.

Complexity is a sensitizing concept (Patton 2011). As mentioned previously, sensitizing concepts[43] are usually nominally defined notions that act like "containers" for capturing, holding, and examining certain manifestations, and serve to orient and give direction to a study (ibid). Complexity serves as a sensitizing concept because it informs our understanding of situations where there is uncertainty, emergence, dynamical interactions, nonlinearity, disagreement, and coevolution (ibid, 146-47). For Patton (2015, 99), a key question for understanding complexity is: *How can emergent and nonlinear dynamics of complex adaptive systems be captured, illuminated and understood?*

An approach to understanding complexity is to start by modeling complex situations. Glouberman and Zimmerman's study is often cited in evaluation articles because of its innovative approach in modeling complexity (2002).[44] Their study on medicare reform begins by arguing that the health care system is a complex system and repairing this system is a complex problem (ibid.). The study proceeds by proposing a model of complexity with a three-part distinction of simple, complicated, and complex problems (ibid.). In describing this model, the authors used metaphors such as following a recipe in cooking (simple problem); sending a rocket to the moon (complicated problem); and raising a child (complex problem). Solving simple problems involves following a recipe that is tested, easy to replicate, and does not require expertise.

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[43] Patton credits sociologist Herbert Blumer (1954) for originating the idea of sensitizing concept (2011: 146).

[44] Sholom Glouberman and Brenda Zimmerman. 2002. *Complicated and Complex Systems: What would Successful Reform of Medicare Look Like?*

Complicated problems require formulas and needs a high level of expertise, but the outcomes have a high degree of certainty. In complex problems, formulas have limited application and there is more uncertainty in outcomes (ibid.).

These ideas are further elaborated in Patton's discussion of situation recognition, which is essential to matching an intervention or an approach (i.e., evaluation approach) to the nature of the situation (2011, 84).[45] Patton expounded on the importance of Zimmerman's approach of beginning where people are and building on what they know (ibid.). In identifying the nature of challenging situations, Zimmerman uses a degree of certainty and agreement matrix. One dimension of the matrix (x-axis) shows the degree of certainty about what should be done to solve a problem, while the other dimension (y-axis) scales the degree of agreement or conflict among various stakeholders about an intervention's desirability or undesirability. Depending on how stakeholders view their situation/ problem, an intervention or problem for instance, can be regarded as technically complicated or socially complicated or both technically and socially complicated (which amounts to being complex). The mapping of their situation or initiatives is a very useful heuristic devise for assessing stakeholders' different perceptions and understanding of their predicament (simple, complicated, or complex), and deciding possible responses to it, whether these may be simple, complicated, or complex.

There are other variations to Glouberman and Zimmerman's model. David Snowden and his colleagues developed a parallel Cynefin Framework that looks at

[45] Patton also discussed Brenda Zimmerman's inspiring story and how she became interested in complexity.

variations in the nature of causality and the corresponding implications for decision-making and action (Patton 2011, 106).[46] This framework classifies causality from the known (simple cause-and-effect), to the knowable (complicated), unknowable in advance (complex), and unknowable ever (chaos). Patricia Rogers similarly builds on Glouberman and Zimmerman's work to devise her own way of looking at aspects of interventions and their implications to evaluation (2008, 32). The aspects of interventions that Roger focuses on (which can become complicated or complex) include governance, simultaneous causal strands, alternative causal strands, nonlinearity and disproportionate outcomes (tipping points), and emergent outcomes (ibid.).

Michael Woolcock (2013) is doubtful if our heightened awareness about the complex environment necessarily translates to better projects where lessons can be generalizable, replicable and/or scalable (external validity concerns). He provides a framework for assessing the external validity of complex development interventions, by focusing on 'key facts' that can improve decision-making (ibid., 234). He proposes three domains where 'key facts' might reside: **causal density** (the extent to which an intervention or its constituent elements are 'complex'); **implementation capability** (extent to which an organization can implement the intervention); and **reasoned expectations** (the extent to which claims about actual or potential impact are understood within the context of a grounded theory of change which specifies what can be

[46] Cynefin Framework was developed by David Snowden and his colleagues. *Cynefin* is Welsh for "haunt, habitat, acquainted, accustomed, or familiar" (Patton 2011, 106).

reasonably expected to be achieved by when). All of these domains he combines into a theoretical framework to accurately interpret the 'key facts' (ibid., 239-40).

In contrast, Tom Ling (2012) is less concerned with external validity (generalizability), but more on arriving at modest and contingent claims by structuring evaluation in such a way that it contributes more to reflexive learning. Ling believes that reflexivity, aside from changes is what makes complex interventions challenging. Rather than using the conventional approach of analyzing complexity according to simple, complicated, complex, and viewing interventions as combination of all of its parts, Ling proposes the notion of "complexity thinking" or the need to understand the systems within which parts operate (2012, 81). An evaluation that uses complexity thinking views interventions as supporting a system self-organize, and that attempts to manage interventions in complex environments is done by exposing and reducing uncertainties, and at the same time documenting the unfolding of contribution stories (ibid., 84, 86-87).

Taking this view of complexity thinking in which interventions can also support a system to self-organize, it is hardly surprising that peacebuilding interventions have become more sophisticated and multidimensional in response to complex conflict environments. Peacebuilding programs are commonly comprised of multiple components that support a variety of projects across a textured context, which can pose a challenge to impact evaluation. Deciding which components to evaluate and the units of analysis can be difficult. Breaking down multi-dimensional programs that have interconnected initiatives into component parts for these to be more evaluable and to make generalizations about the entire program is a common error in doing impact

evaluation (Stern et al. 2012, 81). A challenge that needs to be addressed is developing a criteria for when to view programs as a whole, and when and how to disentangle interconnected components without divorcing them from the whole system (ibid.).

**Bringing It All Together and Additional Design Considerations**

The issues and challenges discussed in the review of literature, organically emerged from the questions posed earlier in the introduction. As discussed in Chapter One, these are the questions that evaluators and CSOs commonly have in assessing the quality and value of peacebuilding interventions: *Did our peacebuilding efforts really make a difference? How do I know? How do you know your projects are successful? How do you measure success? How do you attribute the observed outcomes to your project? How do you scale up your initiatives? Do these projects add up or connect to support the broader peace process? How do you capture complexity? Are the changes durable? How do you institutionalize these efforts? Are we just mowing grass?*

The review of literature clearly shows that these questions are connected to issues or problems that have deeper theoretical grounding and a rich history of discourse. These issues include: causation, impact, attribution/ contribution, effectiveness/ success, sustainability, adaptability of change, issue of transfer, and effects on the drivers of conflict. Three of these issues (effectiveness, sustainability, and impact) are part of the six domains[47] of evaluative criteria, in particular the OECD Evaluation Criteria.

Other issues outside of the OECD Evaluation Criteria are also being investigated. While they are not yet considered part of an official evaluation criteria, these are

[47] A domain is the focus or substance of a criterion (Teasdale 2021, 355).

nonetheless relevant in the field of peacebuilding. Causation is a key element of evaluation and central to the question of impact (Mayne 2019, 173; Stern et al., 2012, 5), while its two aspects—attribution and contribution—are being explored in this study (Chigas, Church, and Corlazzoli 2014, 9). The issue of transfer may be considered a process that determines sustainability and eventually impact because it is concerned with contributing to societal level peace (*peace writ large*) (RPP 2016). Adaptability of change can be seen as an aspect of sustainability (Church and Rogers 2006, 104), while effects on the drivers of conflict are also one way of assessing impact (Chigas, Church and Corlazzoli 2014, 10). Finally, complexity informs our understanding of situations of uncertainty, emergence, nonlinearity, and dynamical interactions (Patton 2011, 146-47), which in turn raises the possibilities on the ways all of these issues or dimensions are interconnected.

All of these issues (both evaluation criteria and non-criteria) will be explored in this study. In general, I shall refer to all of these issues as *evaluation dimensions* or simply as *dimensions*. But for the purpose of framing my interviews with informants, I may also refer to them as concepts, issues, concerns, aspects, or criteria depending on the understanding of research participants, as these ideas may be more accessible compared to "dimension." Using it in this way during the interviews also makes the discussion more open to the other conceptualizations of participants in line with the idea of sensitizing concepts. I may also use these wordings in the text of this study as the need arises (such as to break the monotony of repetitions).

According to Patton (2021, 56), criteria is central to an evaluation as we cannot evaluate without criteria. Criteria also expresses what is valued and prioritizes what is important (ibid.). While the dimensions of causation,[48] attribution/ contribution, adaptability of change, issue of transfer, and effects on the drivers of conflict have not yet attained the status of criteria, we are certainly open that these may be considered criteria or even domains of a criteria in the near future. This aspiration is supported by Teasdale's (2021) study of evaluative criteria. Teasdale (2021, 364) suggests that an empirical examination of criteria domains can enrich and expand the conceptual discussion of evaluative criteria. She also explains that evaluative criteria have two aspects—domain and source—with domain being the substance and focus of a criterion, and the source being the person, group, or document from which it is drawn (ibid., 355). According to Teasdale citing Greene et. al. 2011, a fundamental challenge in the empirical study of evaluative criteria is that they are often assumed and implicit in the evaluation process (2021, 362). This requires evaluators to dig and uncover criteria from their source(s) (ibid., 370). This study is precisely trying to uncover from pertinent sources (research participants) other possible criteria for evaluating peacebuilding efforts. Since peacebuilding and peacebuilding evaluation are emergent disciplines, this means that new criteria or domains can still surface.

The OECD most recently released the latest version of their evaluation criteria which provides a useful set of guidelines for evaluating any project and for my own

[48] The concept of causation may have a more profound status as it seem to transcend all the criteria under study.

study.[49] These guidelines define a criterion as a standard or principle used in evaluation as the basis for evaluative judgement (OECD 2021, 18). These guidelines also use criteria as a set of lenses to provide complementary perspectives that simultaneously give a holistic picture of an intervention and its results (ibid., 10, 27). The peacebuilding evaluation dimensions under study parallel to some extent the standard OECD evaluation criteria, but are more focused on addressing peace and conflict resolution issues because of the nature of their key questions. Patton has argued that emphasizing the core questions of a theoretical perspective or dimension gives clarity and focus to a particular inquiry and can affect the analytical framework that guides fieldwork and interpretation (2015, 97). I also use the same approach of framing key or core questions for each evaluation issue or dimension under study to give clarity and focus on what aspect of peacebuilding and evaluation they cover. **Table 1** is a comparison of the OECD evaluation criteria and the evaluation dimensions under study with their key questions.

**TABLE 1: Comparison of OECD Evaluation Criteria and Evaluation Dimensions for Investigation**

| OECD Evaluation Criteria | Proposed Evaluation Issues or Dimensions for Investigation |
|---|---|
| • **Relevance**: *Is the intervention doing the right things?*<br>• **Coherence**: *How well does the intervention fit?*<br>• **Effectiveness**: *Is the intervention achieving its objectives?* | **Causation**: *What is the nature of the cause-and-effect relationship? How does modeling causation result to differing views of impact?*<br>**Attribution/ Contribution**: *How do you connect the intervention with the results of interest?*<br>**Effectiveness/ Success**: *What PB interventions worked for whom & why, how did it work, & under what circumstances?* |

[49] OECD. *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*. 2021.

| | |
|---|---|
| • **Efficiency**: *How well are resources being used?*<br>• **Impact**: *What difference does the intervention make?*<br>• **Sustainability**: *Will the benefits last?* | **Sustainability**: *Do the changes endure?*<br>**Adaptability of change**: *How does PB interventions change overtime to shifts in context & stresses?* (Church & Rogers 2006).<br>**Issue of transfer**: *Does the intervention contribute to the bigger picture? How does it add up to peace writ large?*<br>**Complexity**: *How can emergent and nonlinear dynamics of complex adaptive systems be captured, illuminated and understood?* (Patton 2015).<br>**Effects on the drivers of conflict**: *How did the interventions affect the drivers of conflict, create momentum for peace, & increase sense of security for locals?* (RPP 2004).<br>**Impact**: *Did our peacebuilding efforts make a difference, and how do I know?* |

The process of aligning all these elements is what goes into developing a research or evaluation design. The heart of any research or evaluation endeavor are the questions (*What do you want to know about the program?*). The central questions will be shaped by the purpose of the evaluation (accountability and/or learning), and how the evaluation results will be used (utilization-focused). These are the initial primary considerations from where an evaluation design would flow. Based on the purpose and questions of the study or evaluation, it is also good practice to think more broadly about the philosophical worldviews or paradigms that will inform, influence, or guide the inquiry. Creswell (2014, 6-10) suggests making explicit the broader philosophical worldviews or paradigms that will guide research: postpositive, constructivists, transformative, pragmatic, as well as the emerging indigenous paradigm (Chilisa and Mertens 2021). These paradigms can

further be interrogated along their philosophical assumptions: ontology (*what is the nature of reality*); epistemology (*what is knowledge*); methodology (*how do we know*); and axiology (*what is role of values in an inquiry*).[50] These paradigms and the interactions of their philosophical assumptions will also inform the methodology of the inquiry. Methodology, or the study of which methods are appropriate to produce reliable knowledge, also denotes an investigation of the concepts, theories, and basic principles of reasoning on a subject (Moses and Knutsen 2012, 5). The nature of the investigation will then influence methods which refer to the research techniques or the technical procedures of the discipline (ibid.).

Evaluations should especially take into consideration how causation and causal inference are viewed, because causality runs through the results chain and transcends most of the evaluation dimensions and there are many models of causality (domino, cyclic, spiraling, mutual, and relational causality—See Grotzer 2012). The other major considerations are of course the evaluands which are usually the program or project interventions and their attributes, as well as the context, including the conflict context. It is worth noting that peacebuilding interventions are usually a response to the problems and conflicts situated in a certain context. Thus, peace and development interventions have certain program attributes that are shaped by their intended purpose and their contexts (Stern et al. 2012, 81).

[50] Discussions on philosophical assumptions are influenced by the readings from Moses and Knutsen 2012; Creswell 2014; Lincoln and Guba (1985 & 2001); Mertens (1999); Mertens and Hesse-Biber (2013); and Chilisa and Mertens (2021).

A thorough knowledge of context is likewise important in research methodology, as this is a prerequisite to achieving descriptive and causal inference (Brady & Collier 2010, 24-25). Similarly, designing evaluations that assess impact is a function of implementation and context (Woolcock 2013, 233). The context includes, among others, the problems and issues faced by people within that setting; the social, economic, cultural, and political factors; the broader policy environment, and most importantly the stakeholders of any program or evaluation (*Who will benefit from the intervention and from the evaluation? Impact for whom?*). All these elements are brought into consideration when designing situationally appropriate evaluations of peace building activities (Chigas, Church and Corlazzoli 2014: 14). As the focus now shifts on the stakeholders or those most affected by these projects, this review of literature will now discuss the people who consider the local context their home.

## Civil Society in the Philippines

The level of analysis for this study will be at the level of civil society organizations (CSOs) and their peacebuilding interventions. CIVICUS defines civil society as "the arena, outside of the family, the state, and the market, where people associate to advance common interests" (Heinrich & Malena 2007, 4). Civil society organizations can include "all non-market and non-state organizations outside of the family in which people organize themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain" (OECD 2011). CSOs cover a wide range of groups which can be membership-based, cause-based, and service-oriented (ibid.). Examples include community-based organizations, village associations, environmental groups, women's rights groups,

farmers' associations, faith-based organizations, labor unions, cooperatives, professional associations, chambers of commerce, independent research institutes and the non-profit media (ibid.). Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) are a subset of CSOs involved in development cooperation (UNDP 2013). Although both terms are sometimes used interchangeably, the term CSO is more inclusive. In this study, I refer to CSOs and NGOs interchangeably, but also use CSOs to refer to community-based civil society organizations.

INTRAC (2008, 2-3) identifies at least five functions of civil society. These are: (1) generating the social basis for democracy; (2) promoting political accountability; (3) producing trust, reciprocity, and networks; (4) creating and promoting alternatives through collective action; and (5) supporting the rights of citizens and the concept of citizenship (ibid.). In the case of this study, CSOs also serve a very important function in several conflict-affected parts of the Philippines, which is to support peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

The rise of CSOs in the Philippines involved in some sort of peace advocacy is well-documented (See Gaspar, Lapad & Maravillas 2002; Coronel-Ferrer 2005a & 2005b; Dionisio 2005; Rood 2005). The emergence of the Philippine peace movement came within the context of democratic transition brought about by the People Power Revolution which ended the Marcos dictatorship (Gaspar et. al. 2002; Coronel-Ferrer 2005a). This created the conditions for building national consensus on the needed social and political reforms that would address the repressive apparatus of the martial law regime and address gaping social inequities (ibid.).

Miriam Coronel-Ferrer (2005b) refers to CSOs with a focused peace agenda as *peace CSOs*. She attributes the emergence of peace CSOs to the post Marcos dictatorship democratic transitional period. During this time, public outcry for national unity, reconciliation, and an end to political violence led government to start negotiations with the different Moro and communist insurgent groups (ibid.). State-led and non-state efforts in building a national consensus on a peace agenda encouraged the rise of more CSOs within and across Moro, Christian, and Lumad (indigenous) sectors (ibid.). Despite the intermittent escalation of violence between rebels and security forces, decades of CSO peacebuilding work that accompanied the Track 1 peace negotiations between the Philippine government and Moro groups have led to the 2014 signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), and the eventual ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law in January 2019, which created the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

In her comprehensive paper on civil society in the Philippines, Coronel-Ferrer (2005b) observes that peace CSOs formations range from grassroots people's organizations such as peace zones, to coalitions and networks, and NGOs/ programs/ institutions. They typically have roles such as service provider, watchdog of state, and advocates of alternative policies, programs, or paradigms (ibid). The study also describes the types of interventions of peace CSOs which include the following: (1) Peace constituency-building; (2) Conflict reduction efforts; (3) Conflict settlement efforts; (4) Peace research and training programs; and (5) Social development work (ibid.). Related to this is Steven Rood's (2005) study which describes three major peace activities of

CSOs which are the promotion of interfaith dialogues; creation of local "spaces for peace"; and involvement in macro (Track 1) peace process.

Josephine Dionisio's (2005) study focused on the broader coalition-building efforts of CSOs at the national level and their peacebuilding initiatives. Her study gave a useful overview in understanding coalitions, discussed the emergence of national peace coalitions, and analysed their contending discourses on peace and its impact. Dionisio points out that the strength of civil society peacebuilding lies in building constituencies for peace and the value of peace coalitions' advocacy and engagement lies in their contribution to the long-term process of nurturing a culture of peace. This contrasts with Jovannie Espessor's (2017) study which delved into the individual CSO strategies in engaging formal and informal powerbrokers and gatekeepers in conflict-stricken communities. His study produced a power map of Mindanao which highlights a hybrid socio-political regime that is maintained by longstanding conflict.

The peacebuilding approaches of civil society in Mindanao are also well-documented. The study of Gaspar, Lapad, and Maravillas (2002) provides an expansive and in-depth look at the tumultuous periods of conflict in Mindanao as well as the civil society responses to the conflict situation. Most notable in this study are their description of the series of events that took place leading to the disastrous events of the Estrada Administration's All-Out-War policy (ibid., 57). Meanwhile, Rudy and Leguro (2010) provides us with a panoramic view of the peace efforts of social actors which they categorize into top and mid-level actors, and grassroots movements. Notable in this study are the realizations of CSOs after the 2008 breakdown of peace talks between the

Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The types of peace efforts they documented includes initiatives in "peace education, interreligious dialogue, peace advocacy, development interventions integrated with peacebuilding, establishing and sustaining zones of peace, promoting good governance, strengthening local conflict resolution mechanisms, trauma healing, and formal peace negotiations." (ibid.). More recently, Trajano (2020) elaborated the contributions of NGOs and local actors to the peace process, which involves: (1) conflict prevention by countering violent extremism; (2) broadening peacebuilding by local women's organizations; (3) community-based mediation and resolving local conflicts such as *rido*; and (4) ceasefire monitoring and civilian protection. Wendy Kroeker (2020) adds to this body of knowledge by distilling the thoughts, knowledge, and experiences of local peacebuilders working in areas of protracted conflict in Mindanao, giving a glimpse of its huge potential for theory and practice in peacebuilding.

Despite the commendable work by CSOs, several weaknesses have been observed in their peace efforts. Rood (2005) elaborated some of these weaknesses which include: CSOs' continued disarray and their lack of awareness of each other; conflicting peace agendas and political visions; their little effect on general public opinion; underrepresented and less developed Muslim NGOs; mutual distrust between Christians and Muslims; little empirical work on the impact of CSO peace efforts; and finally, CSO failure to transcend specific interests to embrace a larger political agenda which means that civil society impact on macropolitical processes is limited. These weaknesses

notwithstanding, Rood believes that the continued involvement of civil society in peace efforts is important in achieving lasting settlements (ibid.).

This study precisely takes a cue from the stated weakness on the lack of empirical studies on the impact of CSO peace efforts in the Philippines. The emergence of peace efforts was a response to the human rights abuses and the war in Mindanao during the martial law period. With the recent devastation and resulting crisis in Marawi in 2017, a new batch of CSOs have emerged to tackle rehabilitation efforts and confront the new threat of violent extremism, supported by generous funding from donors. This new phase in the development of CSOs will be interesting to document, especially as they face new challenges in implementing and evaluating their peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts.

# CHAPTER THREE:  METHODOLOGY

Since civil society organizations are the major actors in many peacebuilding efforts especially within their respective areas of concern, it is only fitting that this study focuses on the problems and issues they face when it comes to evaluating their peace and conflict resolution initiatives.  Given that the evaluation process has revealed a set of common issues and questions that have concerned both evaluators and CSOs alike, this study has thoroughly problematized these issues in the review of literature and distilled these into a set of evaluation dimensions which can be used as a set of lenses for looking at peacebuilding efforts and for guiding the process of inquiry about the possible improvements that can be made to make evaluation more supportive of peacebuilding efforts.

## The Research Question

The central question that frames my study is:  ***How do CSOs working in conflict and fragile settings in Mindanao want to improve evaluation to support peacebuilding efforts in that region?***  This study investigates the experiences of CSOs in evaluating their peacebuilding efforts by exploring their understanding of key evaluations issues, criteria, or dimensions and how these relate to peacebuilding and evaluation theory and practice.  This study aims to answer the following specific questions:

1. How do CSOs in Mindanao evaluate their peacebuilding and conflict resolution projects?  What drives their decisions in doing evaluations?  What evaluation approaches, frameworks, methods, and tools do they typically use when

evaluating peacebuilding projects, and why? What are some of their experiences of evaluations of their peacebuilding projects?

2. What key evaluation criteria, issues, dimensions, or concepts do CSOs in Mindanao often use or find important in evaluating their peacebuilding initiatives and why? (e.g., impact, causation, attribution/ contribution, effectiveness/ success, issue of transfer, complexity, sustainability/ adaptability to change; the effects on drivers of conflict). How do CSOs understand each of these issues or dimensions in their own context and how do they deal with these during evaluation? Why do they prioritize certain criteria/ dimensions over others? What criteria/ dimensions do they find difficult answering?
3. What are the evaluation challenges encountered by CSOs and their suggestions on ways to improve the evaluation of their peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives?
4. What insights can be gained from the relationship of CSO peacebuilding efforts and their evaluation practices in Mindanao? In comparing the actual evaluation practices of CSOs and existing evaluation theories, what learnings can be used to improve peacebuilding programs and their evaluation?

**Central Hypothesis:**

Theoretical and methodological issues underlying evaluation and their relation to peacebuilding theory and practice is poorly understood. This continues to be a major hindrance for project stakeholders such as donors, evaluators, and implementing CSOs towards reaching a consensus on how to credibly assess peacebuilding and conflict

resolution efforts. Since the evaluation of peacebuilding projects are primarily driven by the needs and use of donors, and not necessarily for the use of CSOs and community stakeholders, certain assumptions about the evaluation process and its key aspects are seldom questioned and not thoroughly problematized.

This study advances the proposition that conducting a credible and robust[51] evaluation of peacebuilding programs requires addressing most of the key evaluation issues of impact, causation, attribution and contribution, criteria for success or effectiveness, issue of transfer, sustainability and/ or adaptability of change, complexity, and the effects on drivers of conflict. I consider these key issues important in evaluating peacebuilding efforts because these contribute in answering the question: *Did our peacebuilding efforts make a difference and how do we know?* Following Patton (2011), these key evaluation issues will be treated as "sensitizing concepts." A sensitizing concept is usually a nominally defined notion that acts like a "container" for capturing, holding, and examining certain manifestations, and serves to orient and give direction to a study (ibid.).

Given this proposition, I believe that enhancing CSO knowledge about these key evaluation concepts and allowing them to contribute their own definitions based on their own experiences will further enrich our collective understanding about these aspects of evaluation. This will also empower CSOs to better engage in conversation with donors,

[51] Robust or strong evaluations employ methods of analysis appropriate to the question; support answers with evidence; document assumptions, procedures, and modes of analysis; and rule out rival explanations or competing evidence (Patton 2008, 463).

evaluators, and other professionals on these issues and ultimately, improve how the evaluation of peacebuilding efforts are done.

## Significance of the Study

This study is significant from a broader theoretical and methodological standpoint because it attempts to address a common weakness of the peacebuilding and conflict resolution field: developing appropriate, credible, and useful evidence-based processes that determines how and why peacebuilding efforts are making a difference. An important step in this direction is understanding how peacebuilding stakeholders like CSOs are conceptualizing, appreciating, and applying evaluation concepts and approaches within their own contexts. Understanding these localized conceptions and practices of evaluation and comparing these with mainstream evaluation theory and practice will generate new insights that will enrich the peacebuilding and evaluation fields as a whole.

This study is also exciting because it attempts to look at the evaluation of peacebuilding efforts in a region undergoing political transition, with the recent ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, and the subsequent creation of the new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Some parts of this region continue to suffer from armed conflict and remain volatile due to the prevalence of clan feuds, rebellion, illicit shadow economy activities, clashes between rebel groups, and violent extremism (Conflict Alert 2020). Underlying these conflicts are societal divides that are exacerbated by the glacial pace of rehabilitation of war-torn Marawi, the government's problematic war-on-drugs policy, and the debilitating effects of the

pandemic. This evolving dynamic in the region provides an interesting backdrop for understanding CSO evaluation practices and exploring situationally adaptive evaluation methodologies as CSO peace and development efforts continue to navigate and adjust to this rapidly changing landscape.

Finally, this study provides an opportune moment to look back at Mindanao's rich peacebuilding history and assess its current status. More than 20 years after the eruption of the 2000 all-out-war in Mindanao, a plethora of peacebuilding and conflict resolution approaches from civil society groups has evolved and expanded in response to this complex conflict setting. The Marawi siege in particular, has served as a wake-up call for government, security forces, peace and development practitioners, local communities, and international aid agencies to the serious problem of violent extremism existing in fragile and conflict-affected areas of Mindanao. This realization has led donors and aid agencies to increase support for programs that address violent extremism in communities which can be seen in their requests for proposals (RFPs) and new projects awarded. The added burden of addressing violent extremism for CSOs to consider in their projects is an interesting development in the evolution of CSO peacebuilding efforts. The confluence of all these challenges and factors provides a good opportunity for me to study, as these are often where innovative peacebuilding and evaluation efforts develop.

The knowledge generated from this study will be used to give back to CSOs by supporting their activities and enhancing their skills and knowledge in evaluation. I anticipate that the knowledge shared by CSOs from their own experiences in peacebuilding and evaluation, combined with the current state of evaluation theories, will

generate new insights and provide some clarification on commonly contentious issues of evaluating peacebuilding efforts (i.e., impact, attribution/ contribution, success/effectiveness, sustainability, etc.). This knowledge will then be used in briefings, seminars, and trainings for CSOs to help them gain confidence in their evaluation activities; help them converse with donors on important evaluation issues; and empower them to conduct evaluations that cater to their own needs. As the USIP (2015) evaluation mantra goes, "M&E is everyone's responsibility."

## Conceptual Framework

The study's framework (**Figure 3**) illustrates how the investigation will proceed in relation to the flow of ideas in the review of literature. The study will investigate at least three areas of CSO endeavor: (1) CSO peacebuilding efforts, (2) CSO evaluation practices, and (3) CSO understanding of key evaluation concepts/ issues. Understanding CSOs' peacebuilding efforts is necessary to provide better insight into how they design their project evaluations. This may involve examining the nature of their peacebuilding and conflict resolution activities, how these came about, how these evolved over time, their innovations, continuing challenges and needs. It is important to understand how and why such peace initiatives developed within their particular conflict context, the peace traditions that may have influenced these efforts, as well as the type conflict it intended to address. In particular, having an awareness of the type or nature of conflict that a peace effort attempted to address—if these conflicts for instance are over negotiable interests (disputes) or over non-negotiable basic human needs (deep conflicts)—will be helpful in assessing possible mismatches in interventions and in designing evaluations.

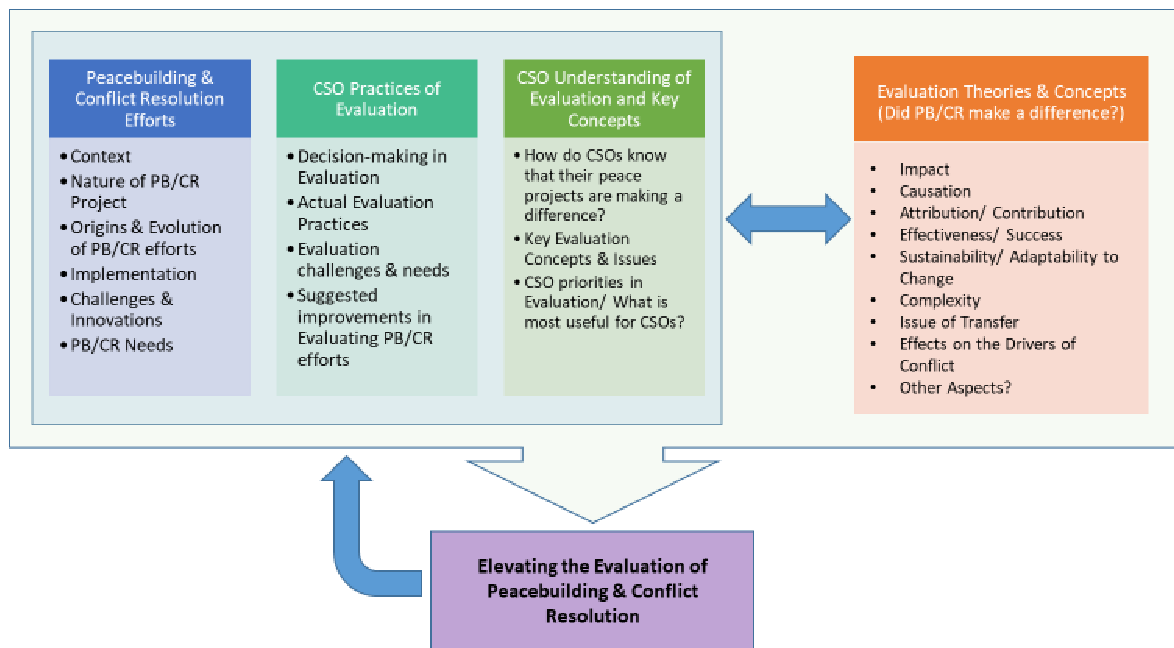


**Figure 3: Conceptual Framework**

CSO practices in evaluating peacebuilding activities will be the main focus of this study. This includes the decision-making processes behind their actual evaluation practices; their evaluation approaches and methods; how they utilize evaluation results; their evaluation challenges and needs; as well as their suggested ways to improve evaluation. The study will also delve deeper into how CSOs understand the key concepts/ dimensions of evaluation in relation their peace projects. These include concepts such as impact, causation, contribution and attribution, criteria for success or effectiveness, issue of transfer, sustainability, complexity, and the effects on drivers of conflict. Understanding these key concepts/ dimensions will help me gain a better grasp of how CSOs view the effects of their peace projects on a conflict. Keeping in mind

Patton's idea of a "sensitizing concept," the conversation with CSOs will mutually enrich our definitions and understanding of these key evaluation dimensions/ concepts. In the process, the study may also uncover other dimensions of evaluation being used by CSOs which might be useful in assessing peace projects.

Once these three areas of CSO endeavors are sufficiently probed, the learnings will be compared to the current state of theory in evaluation. This should help us gain insights towards improving the evaluation of peacebuilding efforts in the future. It is important to note that this research framework will continue to be refined as the evaluator engages with more stakeholders and project partners.

## Research Design

This study is qualitive in nature as it sought to understand the experiences of CSOs in running peacebuilding projects and conducting evaluations of such projects within a dynamic conflict context. The approach was used to elicit tacit knowledge of CSOs and their subjective understandings on how they think their peace projects are making a difference in addressing the conflicts in their respective contexts and how they conduct evaluation. In this process, this study has generated multiple meanings or definitions about key evaluation concepts from the CSOs' point of view. This study then utilized some cases or examples to highlight certain patterns, themes, concepts, and insights from the interviews. The unit of analysis for this study was CSOs with peacebuilding and evaluation activities in Mindanao.

## Limitations of the Study

During the pandemic, the Philippines experienced varying levels of lockdowns, with the harshest being the granular, community quarantines wherein people were not allowed to go out of their communities or villages. Mass gatherings were not allowed, public transportation was halted, and most of the business establishments were closed except for those classified as "essential" with a scaled-down operation. The economy plunged at an all-time low and people were suffering from unemployment and hunger that civil society took it upon themselves to provide "community pantries" to feed the poor. Government was criticized for being inept because it was slow to adapt to the situation and was plagued by corruption in the procurement of medical supplies such as personal protective equipment, COVID testing kits, and vaccines. As a result, medical staff and their patients greatly suffered and the term "plundermic" was coined.

It is in this context that this study was conducted. The onset of the pandemic limited travel and face-to-face communications, and our school discouraged face-to-face interviews. It became clear that I needed to have stable internet connection. It took me some time to make the necessary adjustments. Since I did not have a stable internet before, I applied for internet fiber connection which took some time to set up. The challenges of doing interviews online and over the phone included poor signal and garbled reception from interviews. Many of the CSOs I interviewed were on fieldwork where internet and cellphone communication were poor in some locations in Mindanao. My phone interviews had to be on intervals of 15 minutes because my phone plan was on promo which automatically ended the call every 15 minutes. It was also difficult to

gather informants for FGDs because of fluctuating schedules, so some informants were interviewed separately. It was also difficult to assess verbal and non-verbal cues during interviews online, because of the slight delay in communication, which made it difficult to insert follow up questions or probe deeper. Triangulation was also a challenge in terms of getting additional sources of information from the communities. But thankfully, the internet allowed me access to additional secondary data. In general, the hardships faced by everyone during the pandemic affected the quality of interactions and research.

## Research Site

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the study was conducted from Metro Manila, the capital of the Philippines. The researcher interacted with the CSO key informants online and over the cellular phone. Most of the CSO key informants for the study are located in their respected home bases in Mindanao in the southern Philippines. The researcher also engaged online with INGOs and donors based in Manila that have peacebuilding programs in Mindanao.

## Key Informants and Sampling Strategy

This study interviewed selected peacebuilding CSOs and evaluation professionals working in conflict-affected and fragile areas of Mindanao in the Philippines. The evaluators interviewed were selected because of their experience in evaluating peacebuilding and conflict resolution projects as well as other types of projects. The CSOs for interviews were selected according to the following criteria:

1. CSOs that are involved in peacebuilding and conflict resolution projects, which may be ongoing or completed;

2. CSOs that are interested in evaluating peace projects and/ or have been involved in evaluating peace projects in some capacity whether these are quick assessments, after activity surveys, or more standard evaluations.

The study initially cast a wide net in selecting CSOs that engage in peacebuilding and evaluation. The study utilized purposeful sampling[52] in the selection of CSOs which involves strategically selecting CSOs that can be considered information-rich cases that can illuminate the study questions (Patton 2015, 265). The selection considered the different types of CSOs according to certain characteristics such as geographic location, type of CSO formation, type of peace activities, type of conflict addressed, type of evaluation efforts, among others. This approach helped capture a wide variety of CSO types and their engagements to ensure diversity in responses to the research questions.

**Table 2** shows a matrix of a sampling strategy that aimed to capture maximum variation of CSOs based on known variations. The items in the matrix illustrates some characteristics which I considered in selecting key informants and possible cases.

This study conducted a total of 25 key informant interviews and one focus-group discussion with evaluators. The key informant interviews were conducted with 22 CSOs/ NGOs; two separate interviews for evaluators not able to join the FGD; and one interview with a representative from an international development organization. A total of five individual evaluators were interviewed for this study. The CSOs interviewed are variously located in the southern Philippine region of Mindanao, specifically in the

[52] Patton (2015: 264-65) distinguishes between purposeful sampling which prioritizes information-rich cases to illuminate the inquiry question being investigated, from purposive sampling which is to get a statistically representative sample of a population to capture diversity.

BARMM regions, the central, northern, and southwestern Mindanao, and the cities of Marawi, Iligan, Cagayan de Oro, Cotabato, Davao, and Zamboanga.

### Table 2: CSO Sampling Matrix (Maximum Variation Strategy)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Type of CSO Formation**<br>-People's Organizations<br>-Community-based Orgs.<br>-Coalitions & Networks<br>-NGOs/INGOs | **Geographic Location**<br>-Mainland Mindanao & Island Mindanao<br>-BARMM & non-BARMM<br>-Areas w/ incidents of violent conflict.<br>-Cities & towns with IDPs & residents interacting. | **Representation & Accountability**<br>-Women-focused/ women-led<br>-Church-based/ Faith-based (Muslim, Protestant, Catholic)<br>-MNLF/ MILF leaning CSOs<br>-Royal houses of Marawi |
| **Agenda/ Goals & Issues being addressed**<br>Humanitarian<br>Development<br>Governance<br>Violent Extremism<br>Conflict resolution<br>Environmental issues<br>Health issues | **Type of Peace Interventions**<br>Tracks 1, 2, 3 peacebuilding efforts. (Interfaith dialogues, spaces for peace, negotiations, peace constituency-building, conflict reduction, conflict settlement, peace research & training programs, social development work, psychosocial work, & indigenous & hybrid approaches to conflict. | **Type of Conflict Engaged**<br>(Feuds, rebellion, crime-related, resource conflicts, election-related, struggles between rival insurgents, violent extremism, etc.) |
| **Funding (Projects & Evaluations)**<br>-External/ Foreign donors<br>-INGOs<br>-Contractors<br>-Government<br>-Community donations<br>-membership | **Key Evaluation Theories & Issues Under investigation**<br>CSO understanding & experiences of Impact, Causation, Attribution/ Contribution, Effectiveness/ Success, Sustainability/ Adaptability to change, Complexity, Issue of Transfer, Effects on the Drivers of Conflict, & Other Aspects | **CSO Evaluation Practices**<br>-Type of evaluation/ approaches<br>-Arrangements (e.g., internal or external evaluation, combination, part of grant agreement, etc.)<br>-Skills/ Training on evaluation<br>-Decision-making (donor-driven or CSO-driven) |
| **Innovations**<br>-In Evaluation (Focus)<br>-In Peacebuilding<br>-In Development work<br>-Projects/ Approaches | **Marawi CSOs**<br>-Marawi as recent post-conflict area<br>-Meranao & Non-Meranao CSOs working in Marawi.<br>-Government-aligned vs. unaligned<br>-Coalitions competing for funding. | **Other Characteristics**<br>-Experience (veterans vs. new)<br>-Development activities (relief & rehabilitation, community organizing, livelihood, health & education, research, etc.) |

The key informants of this study are CSOs and evaluation professionals coming from both the mainland and island provinces of Mindanao. The CSOs interviewed mostly come from BARMM, which include the mainland Mindanao provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, and the island provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. There were some CSOs interviewed from Northern Mindanao in Cagayan de Oro City (Misamis Oriental province), and Iligan City (Lanao del Norte province); while others come from the Zamboanga Peninsula, specifically Zamboanga City. Another set of NGOs were also interviewed from Davao Region (Davao City). While most of these CSOs are based in the capital cities of their provinces, many of their projects can be found in BARMM and its adjacent areas such as Cotabato (North Cotabato), South Cotabato, Lanao del Norte, Misamis Oriental, Sultan Kudarat, and Bukidnon, all of which are in mainland Mindanao. Three other INGO and donor informants who were interviewed are based in Manila, but their programs/ projects are in Mindanao.

CSOs from BARMM and its adjacent areas were selected for this study because this area is considered the center of gravity of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) which is a Muslim liberation movement that recently signed a peace deal with the Philippine Government in March 27, 2014, better known as the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB). Cotabato City, which is geographically located in Maguindanao province, is the seat of the new BARMM government and the social hub for many Muslim CSOs involved in the peace process. Besides separatist violence, the region is also beset by the communist insurgency, endemic clan feuds, and more recently, the activities of ISIS-inspired militant groups.

Meanwhile, CSOs from the peninsular and island regions of Zamboanga, Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi (ZamBaSulTa) were selected because this is the home front of the secessionist Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) which signed a final peace agreement in 1996 but is recently at odds with the Philippine government after the Zamboanga siege of 2013. The region is also plagued by clan feuds, kidnap-for-ransom activities, and extremist violence from the notorious Abu Sayyaf Group, with the most recent attack occurring in Sulu with the 2019 bombing of the Jolo Cathedral.

## Data Collection Methods

The primary data collection techniques used in this study include semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), In-depth interviews (IDI), and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Key informant interviews were employed in general to gather the views of respondents in answering the questions of the study. This transitioned into more in-depth interviews to focus on a particular case of interest or when there was a need to deepen the understanding of a particular evaluation dimension. FGDs with evaluation professionals were conducted to discuss more their experiences in evaluation and their understanding of key evaluation concepts. Secondary data review of project documents and reports was also conducted to complement the primary data gathering efforts.

The research process was also an opportunity for me to do reflective practice, with the help of regular meetings with my adviser, and by reviewing past notes and works written. As part of doing reflective practice, I was also able to draw from my past experiences in running a conflict management project and in my engagements with donors and evaluators. Though experiential data derived from reflection has not been

popular as evidence, the knowledge generated by practitioners reflecting on their own experiences offers a complementary value to the knowledge derived by academics from empirical research (Cheldelin and Warfield 2004, 71).

**Table 3** below shows the possible data sets to be collected, their sources, and the data-gathering techniques to be used.

**Table 3: Data Topics, Sources, and Data Collection Techniques**

| Topic | Data sets | Data sources | Data-gathering techniques |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Context of the study** | General profile of the region under study to include conflict situation. | Secondary sources such reports, perception surveys, books, journals & news articles. | Secondary data review |
| **CSO Evaluation Efforts** | • PB/CR activities of CSOs (nature & type of interventions).<br>• Project Context<br>• Decision-making in evaluation<br>• Actual Evaluation Practices (approach & design)<br>• Evaluation experience & arrangements with funders<br>• Staff capacity, skills & training of staff in evaluation<br>• Evaluation challenges, gaps & needs<br>• Suggested improvements in Evaluating PB/CR | CSO/NGO leadership & staff<br>Donors & other INGOs<br><br>Evaluators and subject area experts<br><br>Reports & project documents | Key informant interviews<br><br>In-depth Interviews<br><br>Secondary data review |
| **Key Evaluation Issues** *(How do CSOs understand the key evaluation issues & concepts as applied in their context? How do CSOs know that their* | CSO Understanding of Evaluation<br>• Awareness & understanding of key evaluation concepts & Issues.<br>• CSO experiences in dealing with these evaluation issues. | NGO/ CSO leadership & staff<br><br>Evaluators | Key informant interviews<br><br>In-depth Interviews<br><br>Focus group discussions |

| *peace projects are making a difference?)* | • CSO priorities in Evaluation/ *What is most useful for CSOs?*<br>• Reasons behind these priorities. | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Illustrative cases or examples** | • Data that could elucidate or deepen our understanding of the 9 key challenges/ issues.<br>• Exemplars and/or teaching cases | All informants mentioned in this column that are pertinent to the cases will be utilized as data sources. | In-depth interviews |

## Personal Biography: Towards an Understanding of My Voice and Positionality

My first encounter with the concept of conflict resolution started as an anthropologist during my master's thesis fieldwork among the seafaring peoples of Sulu (Sama-Bajau). My ethnography with the Sama exposed me to the concept of "sea tenure" as they formed territories at sea and competed over marine resources which sparked conflicts between seaweed farmers and marine foragers. I soon learned that Sama-Bajau communities had their ways of solving such conflicts. Years later, my work as program officer for an INGO, led me to deeper involvement in the field when I organized a group of experts to study clan feuding (*rido*) in Mindanao. The result of this study made me realize the multiplicity of conflict types and the plethora of peacebuilding efforts that responded to these conflicts. This deepened my confusion as most of us did not understand the different typologies in the peace and conflict field.

Meanwhile, my interest in the field of evaluation was borne out of my frustration with donors, experts, evaluators and my principals on how to respond to their critiques regarding the effectiveness or impact of the conflict resolution efforts of my partner NGOs. My frustration would come each time there is an external evaluation of our

projects. Our conflict resolution efforts have regularly been criticized by experts for being too piecemeal, scattered, biased, unsustainable, and not replicable, and the evidence they always consider as "merely anecdotal." In the course of my studies, I soon found out how to better organize and frame these interrelated issues which are now the subject of my investigation.

Articulating my background and profile forces me to be aware of the possible "blinders" as a result of the reflexive screens that I have which could color my data gathering and analysis (Marshall & Rossman 2016, 118). These reflexive screens may include aspects of my background and predispositions such as: culture, age, gender, class, social status, education, family, political praxis, language, values, etc. (ibid.).

## Access, Role, Reciprocity, and Ethical Considerations

Given this background as an anthropologist and more than a decade-long experience in working in the mainland and island regions of Mindanao, my access to the study site and rapport with possible respondents are easily facilitated by my existing relationships with many of these CSOs, INGOs, and donors. I have been involved with several of these CSOs in my previous capacity as program officer and more recently as evaluator for some of these entities. Prior to the pandemic, I have recently visited some of the study sites in Marawi, Iligan, and Cagayan de Oro City as an evaluation consultant and I have regular communication with some of the key people in the areas.

In this light, I acknowledge that the shift in roles from being a program officer of a grant-giving INGO that supports CSOs, to currently being a "starving grad student" doing dissertation research could pose some challenges and dilemmas for both me and

my CSO informants. For instance, some CSOs may have felt uncomfortable that I studied their CSO activities more closely. My attention could also have created expectations of financial support with the CSOs and IDP communities owing to my previous work with a grant-giving organization. Related to this, CSO respondents might not have been as transparent with me in answering some questions in the hope of maintaining their relationship with a perceived funder (Blum's 2011 accountability chain problem).

**Table 4** below shows a summary of the possible ethical challenges or dilemmas which I was prepared to encounter during the study and some ways I addressed these.

**Table 4: Possible Ethical Challenges and How I Addressed These**

| Ethical Challenges/ Dilemmas | How I addressed these issues |
|---|---|
| My presence could create expectations of monetary support for CSOs/ NGOs/ IDPs. | I was consistent in communicating the purpose of my study and my role as researcher. I emphasized to respondents that I was a student doing dissertation research and that I do not bring any support or aid. |
| -CSO respondents may feel uncomfortable with my focus on evaluation.<br>-CSOs may be uneasy that I will be studying their project activities closely. | I endeavored to ease staff anxiety by stating that my study can also help their own organizations better prepare for evaluations of their projects. I also stated that my study can help them how to engage with evaluators and discuss evaluation issues. I also assured them that I am available to do some volunteer work in project design and evaluation design. |
| Respondents may not be as transparent with me in answering some questions because I am still perceived as a funder. | I emphasized the purpose of my study and my current role as researcher. I also triangulated with other sources of information to validate the data from CSOs. |
| -NGOs/CSOs could raise questions about my partiality towards my previous institution and my fairness in presenting the study results. | I have endeavored to remind informants that I am no longer connected with my previous office.<br>I also assured them that I will interview and get the views of all stakeholders. |

| | |
|---|---|
| -NGOs/CSOs might also associate me with a particular coalition or faction or with government. | I will always think about whom I am not interviewing. |
| My anthropologist mindset and training could lead to biases for my study areas and CSO respondents which could jeopardize the trustworthiness of my study. E.g., taking up their causes. | I have strived to consciously reflect on my actions and heavily consult with my committee and objective third parties for guidance. Peer debriefing with my adviser was essential. |
| Study participants may feel "research fatigue." | I was mindful of such situations. I did my best to schedule interviews in the most convenient time for respondents and inform them what the data will be used for and what will happen next in the research. |

To reduce any uncertainty and unnecessary expectations, I emphasized from the outset the purpose of my study and that I was no longer affiliated with my previous organization or with any grant-giving organization. I also stressed that I have no monetary support to give as I was then a doctoral student doing research. I found that participants easily understood this situation. To validate my data, I also did some triangulation by cross-checking with other respondents, and reviewed some project documents to ensure that I have a correct understanding of my data, in case some respondents were not transparent. Finally, I also endeavored to ease staff anxiety regarding my research focus, by stating that my study can also help their own organizations in better preparing for evaluations of their projects, as well as in engaging with evaluators to discuss evaluation issues. I have also empathized with CSOs, as similar evaluation challenges have stumped me in the past.

To dispel suspicions, I have endeavored to remind informants that I am no longer connected with my previous office. I have constantly communicated with my respondents the purpose of my study, and I have explicitly stated my intention to

interview all of them and strive to get all their views. In addition, I always thought about whom I am not interviewing, by asking my informants other possible people I can interview or who am I missing. Hopefully, this demonstrated that I am consciously aware of being fair in getting multiple perspectives in order to get a complete picture of the situation.

In the course of my research, I have also encountered respondents that are experiencing "research fatigue" or fatigue in general because of their hectic schedules. This has been documented in my last evaluation in Marawi where many IDPs have complained about so many researchers coming to their communities, doing assessments and leaving them without knowing what the data will be used for and what happens next. While IDPs are not really the focus of this study, this experience made me mindful of similar situations where respondents could be tired or exhausted from their work or similar research engagements. I did my best to schedule interviews at the most convenient time for respondents and endeavored to inform them what I will do with the data and what will happen next in the research.

Finally, I was aware that my mindset and training as an anthropologist may also create biases towards my CSO respondents. Owing to our tendency to do ethnographies and immerse intensely in our study areas, anthropologists are known to develop an affiliation for their community of study or "their tribe." I was consciously aware of this tendency and was constantly mindful in taking up the causes of my CSO respondents or blindly defending their views which could jeopardize the trustworthiness of my study.

To protect against this tendency, I strived to consciously reflect on my actions and consulted with my adviser for guidance. Constant peer debriefing was essential.

## Reflexivity and Reflective Practice

Constantly being alert to my own biases and subjectivity requires a lot of reflexivity. Reflexivity reminds the researcher "to observe himself or herself so as to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins of one's own perspective and voice as well as, and often in contrast to, the perspectives and voices of those one observes and talks to during fieldwork." (Patton 2015, 381). In order to ensure constant reflexivity in my research, I employed the techniques of reflective practice. In this study, reflective practice was utilized to attain three objectives: to support learning from the research process, enhance the study's rigor, and ensure ethical practice.

Reflective practice is a process whereby practitioners reflect on their own experiences to learn and generate knowledge and improve practice (Cheldelin and Warfield 2004, 71). In my experience in working with NGOs and the aid industry, too often, practitioners do not have enough time to reflect and learn from their experiences in implementing projects. While reflection is said to be intuitive, reflective practice advances a more critical reflection that involves a conscious effort to account for double ontological loops, the interrogation of assumptions, values, and beliefs behind what we do, and becoming aware of one's position in society (Cheldelin & Warfield 2004; Marsick & Sauquet 2000). Reflective practice was especially apt for this endeavor because this study also attempts to understand the relationship between theory, research,

and practice. Theory in this study are the evaluation theories under investigation as well as the peace and conflict theories that underlie peacebuilding projects. It can also include the middle-range theories, or local theories about how peace can be achieved at the community level. Meanwhile, practice in the context of my study are the evaluation and peacebuilding practices of CSOs, as well as the research practices of this researcher. Reflective practice ties theory, research, and practice together, as understanding their relationship is at the heart of reflective practice itself (Cheldelin & Warfield 2004, 65).

To effectively learn from the research process, the study draws on Kolb's Theory of Adult Learning (**Figure 4**). Taking inspiration from John Dewey, David Kolb and his colleagues theorizes four stages of adult learning: experience, reflection, generalization, and application (Cheldelin & Warfield 2004). Most practitioners are well-grounded on experience. However, this is not enough for effective learning. Processing the experience through reflection ensures that the experience is translated into knowledge (Church and Rogers 2006, 7). Once lessons are extracted from experiences through reflection, the process of generalization takes place by making these learnings available to other practitioners (ibid.). The application stage is where new learning and knowledge are used to modify practices for more effective project interventions. Kolb's Theory of Adult learning has been suggested for use in evaluations by Church and Rogers (ibid.).

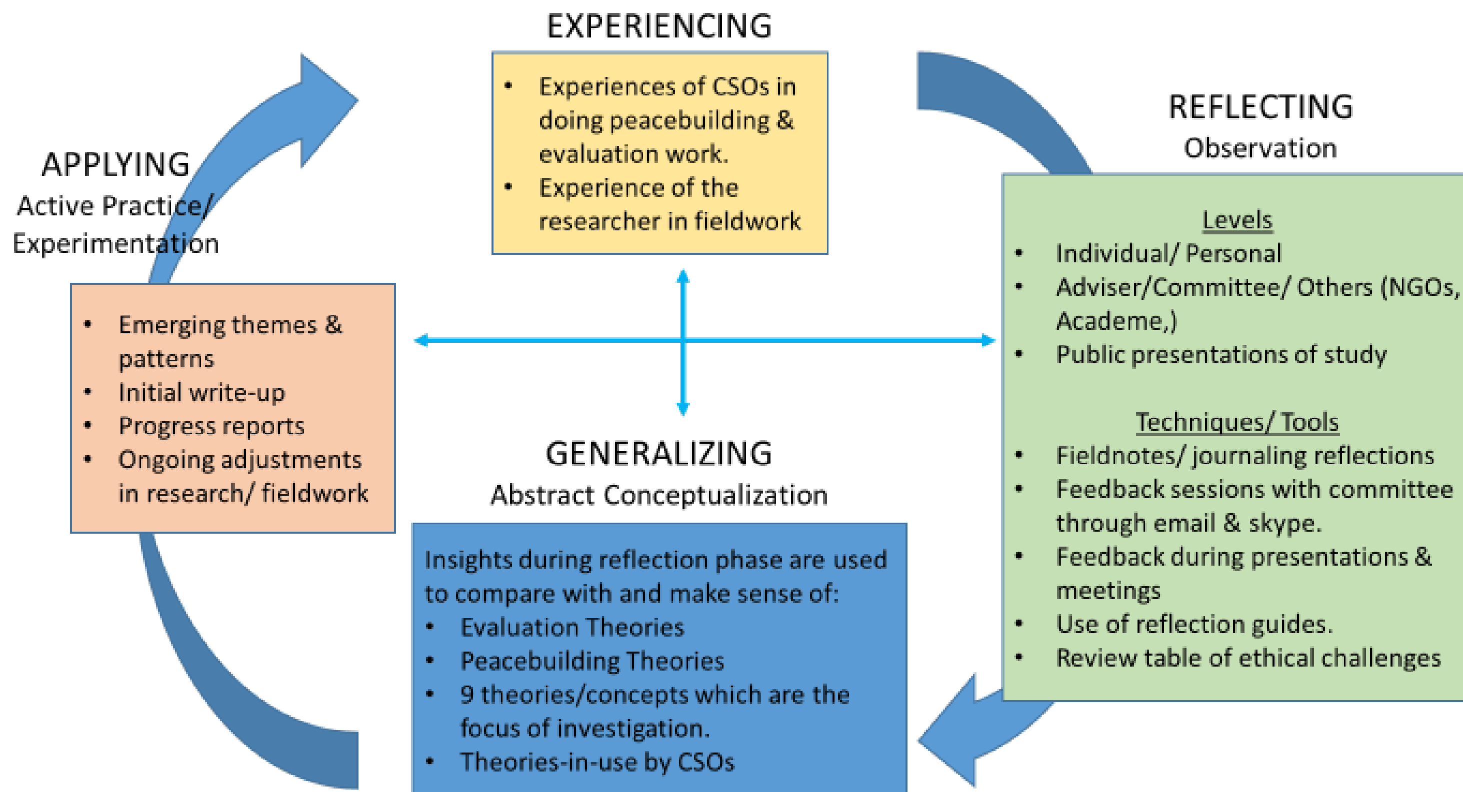


**Figure 4: Kolb's Theory of Adult Learning Adapted for the Study**

Reflexivity also ensures rigor in research (Guillemin & Gillam 2004, 275). The traditional criteria for sound research design which are derived from quantitative approaches are validity, reliability, objectivity, and generalizability (Marshall & Rossman 2016, 43). These criteria have their modernized counterparts in qualitative research namely: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (ibid.). Taken altogether, the combination of these elements is now what we call trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba in Patton 2015, 684). Ensuring trustworthiness (or goodness) in research can be aided by a number of procedures such as triangulation, searching for disconfirming evidence, peer debriefing, member checking,[53] prolonged engagement in the field, and engaging in reflexivity (Creswell & Miller cited in Marshall & Rossman 2016). Reflexivity in the service of research involves a process of critical reflection both on the kind of knowledge produced from research and how that knowledge is generated (Guillemin & Gilliam 2004, 274). In a similar argument, Patton argues that attaining rigor (which parallels trustworthiness) requires "rigorous thinking," which combines critical thinking, creative thinking, evaluative thinking, inferential thinking and practical thinking (2015, 684, 702). It is especially in this aspect of critical thinking where reflective practice can help in questioning assumptions, acknowledging preconceptions and biases, seeking diverse perspectives, and interrogating how you think, why you think that way and the implications of your inquiry (ibid.).

[53] Member checking simply asks other participants whether "I got it right." (Marshall & Rossman 2016, 230).

“Reflective practice encourages cognition and engagement of issues that are problematic at their core.” (Cheldelin and Warfield 2004, 69). In this sense, reflective practice was leveraged in this study to increase my own awareness and prevent what Guillemin and Gillam calls “ethically important moments.” (2004, 265). Such moments can be dilemma-type issues or even everyday issues that may seem unimportant but may have ethical ramifications depending on the actions or decisions made by the researcher (ibid.). In contrast to “procedural ethics” which commonly deals with approval-seeking from a research ethics committee and providing an ethics “checklists,” micro ethics or “ethics in practice” deals with the day-to-day ethical issues that may arise (Guillemin & Gillam 2004). Reflective practice techniques can certainly help me recognize and consciously consider ethically important situations in my day-to-day research activities and provide guidance in deciding the proper avenues to take.

In this study, reflective practice was be done in at least three levels. It was done after each interview using a section of my Key Informant Interview (KII) tool dedicated for reflecting on my interview. This section has guide questions that helped me reflect on each interview, and where I wrote down my thoughts immediately after each interview. This tool functioned like fieldnotes dedicated to reflections of my experiences.[54] I also used a separate notebook where I could quickly jot down notes and my realizations and insights about my interviews and their relation to my review of literature. Reflective practice was also done through regular peer debriefing with my adviser over WhatsApp. Reflective practice guides that inspired my own tool included After-Action Reviews and

[54] Marshall and Rossman (2016) shows a format on Figure 6.2, page 149.

Critical Reflection Questions found in Marsick and Sauquet (2000), as well as Patton's Reflective Practice Guides, and Reflexive Questions for Triangulated Inquiry (2015). Lisa Schirch's (2013, 59) methods of self-assessment provides a helpful series of guide questions that can aid in reflective practice, which eventually links to conflict-assessment, theory of change, and the design, monitoring, and evaluation of peacebuilding efforts.

## Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data in this study utilized qualitative analysis using the conceptual framework of the study. The data gathered was tabulated on a results matrix in Appendix D. The matrix specified the following fields:

- CSO Name;
- their peacebuilding approach;
- their evaluation approach and experiences with evaluation;
- how they view the different evaluation criteria/ issue/ dimension;
- the challenges they faced and/ or weaknesses of their approach;
- Their suggestions to improve evaluation and needs of the CSOs;
- CSO thoughts on the relationship of evaluation and peacebuilding; and
- Insights, thoughts, or notes.

The data was then analyzed for emerging patterns, themes, and concepts. Some examples and quotes from CSOs were used to highlight important themes or lessons from the study. The emerging answers to the study questions was then connected to the broader evaluation theories and issues to draw more learnings and insights. Analysis was also purpose-driven towards understanding the concerns and problems of CSOs in evaluating their peacebuilding projects within in their context and searching for ways to improve their evaluation efforts.

In the next chapter, I plunge into the setting, where I describe the conflict context of Mindanao touching on the various conflicts that have plagued the region and explore the rich diversity peacebuilding efforts that have blossomed amid the adversity.

# CHAPTER FOUR: MINDANAO CONFLICT AND PEACEBUILDING

This chapter describes the complex and multifaceted nature of conflict in Mindanao and the plethora of peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts that have blossomed in response to this adversity. It explains the external threats that have shaped peoples of Mindanao and details the decades of turmoil that culminated to the all-out-war in Mindanao which instigated the mobilization of civil society groups to respond to the deteriorating situation. The section also touches on the turning points for peace and the sources of continuing instability, then discusses the range of peacebuilding efforts by civil society in Mindanao.

## The Mindanao Conflict

Mindanao is an island cluster in the southern Philippines comprised of six administrative regions and 27 provinces covering mainland Mindanao, the Sulu Archipelago to the southwest, and a number of adjacent islands in its vicinity. Despite being geographically and culturally fragmented, the peoples of Mindanao were historically integrated by trade, which connected them to a broader network that linked the Malay world to China, India, and the Middle East. This vibrant trading network allowed various indigenous communities to flourish since the pre-colonial times and continues to shape Mindanao's history.

The emergence of Islam in Mindanao in the 14$^{th}$ century and its spread throughout the Philippine Islands was brought about by trade, and was a part of a larger process of Islamization that swept the broader Malay Archipelago in Southeast Asia, which led to

the rise of new political orders such as the sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao, and the *pangampongs* (lake-side principalities) in Ranao (or Lanao) (Rodil 2003). The spread of Islam throughout the Philippine archipelago was interrupted by the colonial expansion of Spain in 1565 that lasted nearly four centuries and incited various indigenous revolts.

The American Regime (1899-1946) that replaced Spain also incurred heavy resistance in Muslim Mindanao which was brutally put down. The early part of the American military campaigns in Mindanao resulted to the infamous battles of Bud Bagsak and Bud Dajo in Sulu, and the Battle of Bayan in Lanao where thousands of Moros (indigenous Muslim ethnic groups) lost their lives (Che Man 1990). Similarly, the Japanese occupation during the second World War encountered a web of resistance throughout the country, including Mindanao. These military incursions and prolonged period of colonization by foreign powers have all contributed to the formation of the present Philippine Republic. The legacy of colonial exclusionary policies that resulted in the dispossession of lands, resettlement of populations, and injustices have led to local uprisings, the effects of which still reverberates in contemporary conflicts in the Philippines.

**Brief Contemporary Events in the History of the Mindanao Conflict**

The turbulent history of colonization, resistance, and accommodation, coupled with the process of state formation, rising nationalism, and patronage politics across a multi-ethnic spectrum, has resulted to deeply divided societies in many areas of Mindanao. Decades of government neglect and perceived injustices have accentuated these societal divides as some of these subnational areas remain underdeveloped and

continue to experience protracted cycles of violence. The sources of conflict in these areas are quite complex, which sometimes overlap and interact. The region has had multiple armed insurgent movements such as the Muslim or Moro liberation movements and the communist insurgency. These are further complicated by localized conflicts stemming from *rido* (clan feuds), political rivalries, criminality, and intercommunal tensions. Some parts of Mindanao also struggle with resource conflicts especially in areas considered by indigenous peoples (*lumads*) their ancestral domain.

The long-running Muslim separatist[55] conflict has been a major source of instability for the Philippines, as a resolution to the conflict continues to elude the government with other Moro breakaway groups. The separatist conflicts in Mindanao were fueled by a number of perceived grievances and injustices among the Muslim minority population. Over the past century, the internal migration of Filipino Christians from the Visayas and Luzon into Mindanao, combined with discriminatory policies from Manila that favored the settlers, resulted to the gradual marginalization of the Muslim population in their ancestral lands on Mindanao. These conditions led to several uprisings after the second World War such as the Kamlon rebellion in Sulu in the 1950s, and the mobilization of armed kin groups in the 1960s called the "Blackshirts" in Cotabato, the "Barracudas" in Lanao, and the "Magic Eight" in Sulu in response to communal violence due to land conflicts (Canuday 2021). This period saw the increasing

[55] It must be noted that from the *emic* perspective of the MNLF/MILF, they are liberation movements struggling for their right to self-determination. Hence, recent writings have also begun to reflect this thinking and they are now frequently referred to as liberation movements instead of separatists or secessionists.

incidence of sectarian violence as frequent clashes among Christian, Muslim, and indigenous people's paramilitary groups occurred. The bottom line for the Moro liberation movements is that they are fighting for their right to self-determination (Jubair 2007, 11).

The end of the 1960s saw the onset of "a decade of turmoil" with rising Moro nationalism and an increasingly authoritarian Marcos regime (McKenna 1998). Mass movements became prevalent, and these were further galvanized by the Jabidah massacre[56] of March 1968 which spurred the formation of several Muslim liberation movements, chief among them was the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The situation was further exacerbated when President Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law in 1972, resulting in state forces employing heavily militarized and often heavy-handed approach in dealing with the emerging insurgent movements in Mindanao. This eventually cascaded into a full-blown war by the MNLF in Mindanao in 1974 which devastated the country-side, and also paved the way for the fledgling communist insurgency to consolidate (Abinales 2000). Marcos was deposed during the peaceful EDSA People Power Revolution of 1986. The end of the Marcos regime and the restoration of democracy raised the hopes of Filipino Muslims in Mindanao that a peaceful settlement could be attained between the Philippine government and the Muslim liberation forces.

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[56] The Jabidah Massacre involved the alleged killing of young Muslim army recruits who mutinied upon finding out the real purpose of their training was to infiltrate and destabilize neighboring Sabah (Vitug & Gloria 2000, 2-23).

As a step towards peace, the administration of President Corazon Aquino paved the way for the ratification of a charter that created of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). A decade later, the Philippine Government under President Fidel Ramos signed a Final Peace Agreement (FPA) with the MNLF in 1996 which led to several MNLF leaders winning elective positions in the ARMM government. Despite this, there were continued hostilities between government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) which broke away from the MNLF back in 1977 and was not included in the FPA.

The term of President Joseph Estrada was marked for the spate of bombings and kidnappings in Mindanao, and his declaration of an All-Out-War against the MILF in 2000 that resulted in 750,000 civilians displaced and more than 1,000 dead (Gaspar et. al. 2002; TAF 2017, 142). President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo moved the peace process forward with the MILF but this was punctuated by the treacherous Buliok War against the MILF in 2003 and the all-out-war against the communist in 2006 (Jubair 2007, 38; Conde 2006). Progress on the MILF peace process was eventually halted in 2008 by a Supreme Court injunction suspending the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) which was a product of the negotiations of the peace panels. This resulted to a resurgence of violence in Mindanao led by frustrated MILF commanders.

When Benigno Aquino III (son of Cory Aquino) assumed the presidency in 2010, he initiated peace talks with the MILF which was already the largest armed group at that time. President Aquino's peace overtures resulted to the signing of a Framework

Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) in 2012, paving the way for the creation of a new autonomous political entity called the Bangsamoro to replace the ARMM.[57] After a few more years of negotiations, the MILF and the Philippine Government finally signed a final peace agreement, the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) in 2014. The Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) was ratified through a plebiscite in 2019 under the term of President Duterte, leading to the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) that eventually replaced ARMM.

**Major Armed Actors in Mindanao and the Rise of Violent Extremism**

Prior to the signing of peace agreements with government, the major insurgent groups operating in Mindanao were the Moro National Liberation front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and the communist New People's Army (NPA) and their various breakaway groups. The presence of these insurgent groups has led to a heavy military presence in subnational conflict areas. The state security forces present in these areas include the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP), which are complemented by local force multipliers such as the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGUs), Special Civilian Active Auxiliaries (SCAA), and at the barangay (village) level, the Civilian Volunteer Organizations (CVOs) (Canuday 2007, 255). Meanwhile, local politicians and clans also have their own private armies.

The presence of these insurgent groups and state forces is further complicated by the activities of armed criminal elements operating in the same areas, taking advantage of

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[57] See Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro, 15th October 2012.

the volatile security environment. Many of these criminal groups are involved in illicit *shadow economy* activities such as smuggling, drug trafficking, extortion, kidnap for ransom, illegal logging and arms trade (Lara and Schoofs 2013). For instance, the ISIS-inspired Dawlah Islamiyah have exploited the chaotic social and political situation in Marawi, which had a high level of violent crime and a reputation as the center of the Mindanao drug trade (Crisis Group 2019, 5).[58]

Underlying this problem of criminality is the unseen process of radicalization which slowly drives desperate individuals into criminal activities and eventually extremist violence. For instance, there have been reports of individuals joining Moro separatist movements and violent extremist groups when they are involved in a *rido* (feud). Extremist groups not only sow terror, but hijack the dominant, moderate, and progressive teachings of peaceful religions, to recruit vulnerable individuals into criminal activities, all of which further deepens misconceptions, prejudice, and hatred among communities.

As is often the case, separatist movements fracture into smaller groups when disagreements arise in peace negotiations. More radical groups have since emerged such as the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the 1990s. Originally disgruntled members of the MNLF, the ASG is considered a terrorist and criminal organization that operates in Basilan and Sulu. They are responsible for a series of bombings, beheadings, and kidnappings in the Sulu Archipelago and the Zamboanga Peninsula. The Bangsamoro

[58] https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/philippines/301-philippines-militancy-and-new-bangsamoro

Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) splintered from the MILF to continue their struggle for an independent Muslim Mindanao, and are operating in the borders of Maguindanao and Cotabato provinces engaging security forces and conducting bombings. In 2015 an armed group identified as the Dawla Islamiya emerged and pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (Institute for Autonomy and Governance 2017). Their core leadership come from members of the Maute clan, and were mainly responsible for the attack on the town of Butig in Lanao del Sur, and later the offensives that spiraled into the destructive Marawi Siege in 2017 (ibid.). This tendency for criminal activities to radicalize individuals, and interact with other violent conflicts and armed actors can have serious consequences to the hard-won peace, and the newly-formed Bangsamoro Government. Fortunately, there are a number of civil society groups and their donors with a growing interest in addressing this problem of radicalization and violent extremism. It is in this sense that the Mindanao conflict is multifaceted and always evolving.

## CSO Peacebuilding Approaches

The emergence of peace efforts in Mindanao is a response to this colorful and textured background of conflict in the region. This observation is affirmed by the informative volume of Gaspar, Lapad and Maravillas, which tells the story of the early peace efforts of civil society in Mindanao (2002). This section mainly talks about the peacebuilding experiences of CSOs interviewed in this study, though effort is also exerted to place their initiatives within the broader constellation of peacebuilding in Mindanao. Although it must be noted that not all CSOs interviewed consider their efforts

as peacebuilding in the broader sense of the word. Some informants view their efforts as a specific approach within the broader spectrum of conflict resolution responses: peacekeeping, peacemaking, structural peacebuilding, and cultural peacebuilding (See Ramsbotham et. al. 2011, 14). The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) for instance prefers to see themselves as a peacemaking organization; while Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) see their focus as civilian protection rather than direct peacebuilding. Integrated Resource Development for Tri-people (IRDT) primarily sees their organization as a humanitarian and development organization using a peace lens. International Alert (Alert) in the meantime consider themselves as a peacebuilding organization and something more—doing development with a peace lens, and in the direction of state building. My own study's approach to peacebuilding is the broader umbrella of peacebuilding and conflict resolution that considers the entire range of responses to conflict and addressing the consequences of conflict.

The peacebuilding efforts of CSOs documented in this study seem to be mainly driven by momentous events of conflict and adversity in their respective areas. Such momentous or critical events that have influenced their peace efforts are the following:

- The 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution and subsequent social transformations happening during this transition period.
- The emergence in the 1990s of the radical Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) which terrorized the communities in Zamboanga, Basilan and Sulu.
- The signing of the 1996 MNLF-GPH Final peace Agreement and the flood of donor support that came with it.
- The perceived corruption and inefficiencies in the autonomous regional government after its establishment.
- The 9-11 attacks and the wave of donor funding that followed.

- The 2000 All-Out-War policy by the government and the subsequent fighting such as the 2003 Buliok War, that resulted to a period of instability in the region as seen in the spate of bombings, kidnappings and the rise communal violence.
- The 2009 Maguindanao Massacre
- 2013 Zamboanga City siege by the MNLF Misuari faction.
- 2017 Marawi City siege, the rise of violent extremism, and increased donor support for Prevention/ Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) initiatives.

The peacebuilding approaches of civil society in Mindanao are well-documented.[59] Starting with democratic transition after the 1986 People Power Revolution which opened the space for civil society to flourish, and the adversity brought about by the 2000 war in Mindanao which led to the rise of peace CSOs and their networks and the blossoming of a multitude of peace and conflict resolution efforts in response to local conflicts and the broader fighting between government and rebel groups. Most of the CSO peace efforts documented in my own study fall within many of the peace initiatives described by Rudy and Leguro (2010) and Trajano (2020). Rudy and Leguro (2010, 15) described the various peace efforts in Mindanao along the classic pyramid model of track 1 (national leadership efforts), track 2 (regional and local leaders, academe, NGOs), and track 3 (grassroots efforts). Meanwhile Trajano (2020, 358) described the peacebuilding mechanisms in track 2 and 3 efforts that support track 1 peace efforts which are: (1) combating violent extremism, (2) broadening peacebuilding by local women's organizations, (3) solving local conflicts and clan wars, and (4) ceasefire monitoring and civilian protection.

My own classification of CSO peacebuilding efforts categorizes CSOs initiatives along 10 areas of focus based on my own observation of their activities. These efforts

[59] See Rudy and Leguro 2010; Trajano 2020; Ferrer 2005; Rood 2005; Gaspar, Lapad and Maravillas 2002.

may belong to peacebuilding tracks 1, 2, or 3. The CSOs interviewed for this study have multiple overlapping initiatives. But my classification of their work may depend on the most prominent roles and services they rendered; the thrust and identity of their organizations; and even my experience of working with them at some point in time. Below are the categories of CSO peacebuilding efforts:

- Humanitarian efforts as responses to effects of armed conflict and natural disasters.
- Network and coalition-building in support of peace advocacies.
- Accompaniment and support to the peace process
- Actual conflict resolution efforts focusing on communal conflicts such as rido, resource conflicts, and other rivalries.
- "All-around" integrated peace and development initiatives.
- Initiatives that integrate peace and governance.[60]
- Psychosocial interventions
- Preventing and countering violent extremism
- Peace research and policy work
- Interreligious/ Interfaith dialogues, Culture of Peace, and Peace Education

**Humanitarian efforts as responses to effects of armed conflict and natural disasters**

The prevalence of armed conflict and natural calamities in Mindanao demands the necessity of humanitarian assistance to populations affected by man-made and natural disasters. Nearly all CSOs interviewed in this study have had some involvement in humanitarian response. Many civil society groups started out as volunteers in providing humanitarian assistance to IDPs and affected communities especially during the government's destructive 2000 all-out-war against the MILF and subsequent hostilities. These volunteers now comprise many of the Moro-led CSOs interviewed in this study

[60] It should be noted that peace, governance, and development can be integrated as one category. But for the purpose of distinguishing the different time lines of what CSOs actually engaged in first, I separated the initiatives that focused on "peace and development" and "peace and governance."

which include CBCS, BWSC (formerly BWSF), Kalimudan, MARADECA, and the youth members that now constitute UNYPAD. Some of these civil society groups started out with different goals but was drawn into humanitarian efforts due to the worsening conflict during the 2000 all-out-war in Mindanao and its aftermath.

Where there are military operations to quell uprisings or root out criminal elements, you can be sure there will be civilian displacements. This is evidenced in the 2013 Zamboanga siege, when a faction of the MNLF attacked Zamboanga City and held civilian hostages. The ensuing firefight with government forces resulted to more than 10,000 homes destroyed, over 100,000 people displaced and more than 200 killed. This crisis drew in humanitarian response from government and various sectors including the ones interviewed in this study—the ZABIDA alliance and IRDT. Similarly, the Marawi siege of 2017 also precipitated into the worst humanitarian crisis of the decade which devasted 95% of the city and surrounding areas, killing more than a thousand and displacing more than 350,000 people. During this crisis, several CSOs from neighboring Iligan and Cagayan de Oro City, such as those interviewed for this study (Balay Mindanaw and ECOWEB), provided their own responses to the humanitarian crisis.

**Network and coalition-building in support of peace advocacies**

Networks and coalitions play important roles in peacebuilding as they embody solidarity and consensus amidst situations of difference and conflict (Dionisio 2005, 9). As the fighting intensified between security forces and the MILF as a result of the government's All-Out-War policy, civil society groups began to form loose coalitions and networks that advocated for an end to the armed conflict. This was part of the second

wave of national peace coalitions in the Philippines after the People Power Revolution (Dionisio 2005).

In Mindanao, many of the CSOs had their beginnings during this period of adversity. This includes the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society, which was originally a solidarity network of 29 NGOs; and several grassroots women's groups such as the movement of MNLF and MILF women that would later become the Bangsamoro Women Solidarity Forum (precursor to Bangsamoro Women Services Center or BWSC). Civil society groups in central Mindanao would eventually be supported by CSOs from other parts of Mindanao, like some CSO members that comprise now the ZABIDA network from western Mindanao, and the Davao-based Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID) which specialized in network and coalition building.

IID had their beginnings much earlier, post EDSA People Power Revolution in 1988. They started their south-to-south solidarity as an effort to share with other countries the Philippine experience of the people's struggle by way of animating the peaceful struggles of others. Originally established with an outward looking perspective of sharing the Philippine experience of democratization with other countries, IID suddenly found themselves looking back into Mindanao to organize networks and coalitions to counter the "all-out-war" narrative of the government with their "all-out-peace" campaigns. They would eventually establish their Mindanao program called Mindanao People's Caucus (MPC) in 2001 which engaged the peace process by getting the people's voices to the peace table and later catalyze the formation of a super coalition of peace advocates called Mindanao Peace Weavers.

Established in 2003, the Mindanao Peace Weavers (MPW) was a coalition of seven peace networks representing around 300 peace advocates from across Mindanao. MPW was comprised of Agong Network, Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS), Inter-Religious Solidarity Movement for Peace (IRSMP), Mindanao Peace Advocates (MPAC), Mindanao Peoples' Caucus (MPC), Mindanao Peoples Peace Movement (MPPM), and the Mindanao Solidarity Network (MSN). This movement launched joint coordinated campaigns, peace advocacy, and lobby work, bringing in a host of issues that revolved around conflict prevention, peace-building, culture of peace and conflict resolution/management (Initiatives for International Dialogues 2010, 1).

**Accompaniment and support to the peace process**

The activities that fall under this includes ceasefire monitoring, monitoring of compliance of parties to agreements, conducting impartial investigations to ceasefire breaches, and support to peace panels. The aforementioned network and coalition of civil society advocates eventually helped push the Arroyo government to declare a cessation of hostilities with the MILF in 2001, and the 2003 cessation of hostilities after the government's attack against the MILF in the Buliok complex. The result of the August 2001 agreement between the MILF and Government was the creation of ceasefire monitoring mechanisms called Local Monitoring Teams (LMTs) (Bantay Ceasefire 2003). However, the LMTs were later found to be deficient due to the infirmities in its composition, funding, and the lack of political and administrative guidance given to the LMTs. (ibid.).

This deficiency was quickly filled up by Bantay Ceasefire, an independent grassroots ceasefire mechanism which was an offshoot of IID and MPC. Bantay Ceasefire was recognized by both the government and the MILF, though it did not have a mandate from both parties so it can claim independence and impartiality in its undertakings (ibid.). Bantay Ceasefire quickly gained a reputation for being fearless in "inter-positioning" themselves nonviolently to defuse tensions between armed groups and for their impartial investigations on breaches in ceasefires. This started the accompanying efforts of CSOs in the peace process, that by the latter part of the decade, more CSOs, NGOs, and INGOs became involved in accompaniment and in monitoring mechanisms that observe the compliance of parties to agreements (ibid.). This includes the web of conflict monitoring and peace process monitoring approaches of CSO/ NGO partners such as CBCS, NP, UNYPAD, and International Alert.

Other INGOs were also supporting the peace process and peace panels such as the members of the International Contact Group (ICG). The ICG acted as allies to the peace process, and helped push the process forward after the breakdown of peace talks during the 2008 MOA-AD debacle. They engaged both the MILF and the government and provided aid, advice, and technical support to both parties in specific points in the talks (Rudy & Leguro 2010, 17). Members of the ICG included the countries UK, Turkey, and Japan; and INGOs such as Swiss-based Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, US-based The Asia Foundation, UK-based Conciliation Resources, and Indonesia-based Muhammadiyah (ibid.).

**Actual conflict resolution efforts focusing on communal conflicts such as rido, resource conflicts, and other rivalries**

The 9-11 attacks in 2001 sparked a new era of peacebuilding and conflict resolution work in the Philippines, which also coincided with the troubles in Mindanao in the new millennium. During this time, new funding came in the context of the terrorist attack in the U.S., to help address grievances that could also result to terrorism.[61] Through USAID support, The Asia Foundation began to expand its local governance programming to conflict affected areas of Mindanao and Sulu.

The Asia Foundation also started its Conflict Management in the Philippines portfolio which initially attempted to better understand and address the conflict in Mindanao. Funding under this program supported research on clan violence (*rido*)[62] and began addressing clan conflicts and community conflicts over natural resources. This expanded to addressing other types of conflict such as, election-related conflicts, rivalries among commanders of Moro fronts; conflicts caused by criminality such as kidnap-for-ransom which was prevalent in Mindanao at that time; and supporting fact-finding missions to flare-ups. The program also expanded to supporting the peace negotiations between government and rebel groups. This includes peace process support for the talks between government and the MILF as a member of the International Contact Group; and the talks between government and the breakaway group of the NPA—the

[61] https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdabw256.pdf

[62] See Wilfredo M. Torres III. (ed.). *Rido: Clan Feuding and Conflict Management in Mindanao*. 2007.

*Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa sa Mindanao* (RPM-M) or the Revolutionary Workers' Party in Mindanao.

A new generation of CSOs were supported to address these rivalries, and other communal conflicts. Among those CSOs interviewed in this study are the Marawi-based Reconciliatory Initiative for Development Opportunities (RIDO Inc.), the Cotabato-based Untied Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD), its Lanao wing, UNYPAD RANAO. With the growing instability in the region, more INGOs established in Mindanao to provide new approaches and techniques for conflict resolution and prevention which helped local CSOs and communities. Among these INGOs are Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) which specialized in civilian protection, and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) which focused on conflict mediation.

HD's approach to peace programing is targeting a specific niche of hard to reach groups and hard to resolve issues. They established their Sulu mediation program, *Tumikang Sama Sama* (TSS), which later became an independent CSO. TSS is heavily involved in the mediation of *rido* conflicts and other flareups in Sulu. Both the Asia Foundation partners and TSS/HD also became involved in addressing election-related violence in election hotspots in Mindanao. International Alert also established in Mindanao in 2010, and became heavily involved in shadow economies conflict studies, conflict monitoring, conflict sensitive economic governance, and peace process support.

It must be emphasized that civil society groups and local communities also have their own home-grown efforts in conflict resolution. These efforts may use a variety of

indigenous systems, a mix of customary laws (*adat*) and Shariah[63] which are based on Islamic traditions, as well as more contemporary conflict resolution approaches. One of these local resources that is traditionally harnessed by Meranao[64] in resolving clan feuds (*rido*) is the knowledge of who is related to whom. Locally known as *salsilah* or *tarsila*, genealogies or accounts of relationships of descent are important tools in resolving *rido* especially in communities where kinship ties are strong. This approach allows the Meranao to assess the lines of descent of warring factions to find neutral common relatives (*zukudan*) who can act as mediators (Torres 2010, 52).[65]

Mixed or hybrid conflict resolution approaches are also prevalent. This is evident in UNYPAD's use of The Asia Foundation's rido study to analyze the shortcomings of many traditional conflict resolution processes and come up with a more mixed approach. UNYPAD uses the innovative concept of *gagas sa pusong*, which literally means "cleansing of the heart."[66] UNYPAD had the innovative idea of drawing from traditional Maguindanao wedding practice of giving money in recognition of the dignity (*maratabat*) of the woman's family. The bride price is more symbolic and negotiable, and does not reach exorbitant amounts unlike the payment of blood money.[67] The usual

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[63] Sharia literally means "the way to a watering source" in Arabic. It came to denote the unique legal system based on the sources of Islam (Rappler August 26, 2021). https://www.rappler.com/world/south-central-asia/what-shariah-law-version-taliban-likely-implement/

[64] The terms *Meranao*, *Maranao*, or *Maranaw* refer to the same Muslim ethnolinguistic group in Marawi City and the Lanao provinces. The differences in spelling is only a reflection of preferences in usage.

[65] https://gisf.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/0151-Mendoza-et-al-2010-Human-Security-Philippines.pdf

[66] *Gagas sa pusong* literally means "to wash the heart." It connotes washing the *maratabat* (pride or dignity) or washing of hurts. Take note that maratabat has a universe of meanings which can refer to pride (somewhat negative) or refer to dignity (more positive). This is part of the evaluation which I conducted for The Asia Foundation's Program Partnership Arrangement with DFID (February 7, 2017).

[67] Blood money is a form of indemnification for serious crimes like murder. This is usually monetary.

practice of *gagas sa logu* (washing of blood) through the payment of blood money as indemnification for serious crimes does not assuage hurts or facilitate healing. Unlike *gagas sa logu* which can be a provocative term since it connotes "payment for the dead," and can be painful and insulting to the victims, *gagas sa pusong* or "cleansing of the heart" is more of a symbolic offering that acknowledges hurts, recognize the dignity of families, and asks for forgiveness. In adopting the positive aspects of traditional wedding practice to serve a rido settlement, the usual practice of *gagas sa logu* (washing of blood), is creatively reframed into the more positive *gagas sa pusong* or "cleansing of the heart," which they believe is crucial in catalyzing change within the warring clans, as the process is able to remove hurts of the parties and facilitate a healing of relationships. This conflict resolution process was developed by UNYPAD through their study of rido and refined through years of practice.

There are many more examples of hybrid and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. This includes IID's documentation of indigenous ways of conflict resolution (Miclat & Prieto 2001, 20-42); Islamic Relief's (2021) case study on combining traditional, formal, and NGO peacebuilding approaches to rido in Maguindanao;[68] and four case studies on traditional dispute resolution mechanisms among Muslims and indigenous people (Datumanong et. al. 2013).[69]

**"All-around" integrated peace and development initiatives**.

[68] https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/combining-traditional-formal-and-ngo-peacebuilding-resolve-violent-rido

[69] http://www.centrepeaceconflictstudies.org/publications/browse/resolving-conflict-in-muslim-mindanao-showcasing-four-traditional-methods/

A commonality observed among CSOs is the wide range of programs and projects they have in their portfolios. These efforts can be described as “integrated” peace and development programs, as they combine elements of peace and with the usual development work, making these CSOs veritable Swiss Army knives that offer an impressive menu of projects and services. For instance, many CSO development initiatives usually have community organizing, socio-economic and livelihood programs, education, health, good governance, and humanitarian components in their range of services. Other CSOs have research, human rights and transitional justice, disaster-risk reduction and management, environment and natural resource management in their repertoire of programs.

Meanwhile, the peacebuilding aspect of their programs may be described as a “peace lens” that transcends their development efforts, or having actual peace projects that can range from mediation, conflict transformation, culture of peace, interreligious dialogues, and the newer social cohesion and resilience projects. Some observers may criticize CSOs for branding anything under the sun as peacebuilding. But some may also argue that if an initiative attempts to address the structural and cultural sources of conflict, then it must be peacebuilding. Whatever the verdict is, the reality is, in practice, many CSOs combine peacebuilding with their more traditional development initiatives.

**Initiatives that integrate peace and governance**

Much like the integration of peace and development efforts mentioned above, CSO have recently attempted to integrate peace and governance initiatives. The lack of good governance is a major problem in the now defunct ARMM as seen in its failure to

promote socioeconomic development and peace in the region. Poor governance has always been cited by CSOs as a major contributory factor to armed conflict in the region. For instance, the founders of MARADECA initially organized after the 1998 elections to tackle what they observed as rampant corruption in government; while the Institute of Autonomy and Governance (IAG), a home-grown public policy center, was crystalized with the idea of finding political and governance solutions to the conflict. ZABIDA's programs that integrate development and governance approaches to peacebuilding are grounded on principles of human security where there is freedom from want, freedom from fear, and freedom from humiliation.

According to Rudy and Leguro (2010), the MOA-AD debacle of 2008 forced NGOs to take a hard look at the seeming ineffectiveness of peacebuilding in this context. Some quarters even criticized peace efforts as merely "nicey-nicey" peacebuilding that does not have any impact when dealing with the intricacies of politics and governance (ibid.). The backlash because of this incident and the resumption of hostilities seriously demoralized MPC members.[70] Consequently, CSOs have been retooling peacebuilding efforts to intentionally have more impact in the political front and improve the capacities of local governments. One such effort can be seen in the modification in the conduct of the mandated Barangay (village) Development Planning process (BDP). The BDP is a planning and budgeting process that helps ensure the development needs of communities are accounted for, and budgeted in a municipality's internal revenue allotment. The Asia Foundation started supporting CSO initiatives that integrate peace and security plans in

[70] https://mindanaopeoplescaucus.org/2021/03/03/who-are-we/

the barangay development planning process of local governments. Similarly, Nonviolent Peaceforce has been facilitating the participation of various sectors in Barangay Peace and Development Plans. CRS started integrating governance with their own peace efforts in 2010, while Nagdilaab Foundation in Basilan calls their efforts "holistic peacebuilding" which includes governance. Many NGOs are now engaged in barangay peace and development planning process as part of their menu of services.

**Psychosocial interventions**

During this tumultuous period, a young doctoral student was exposed to the conflict and hardships of IDPs in North Cotabato. Gail Ilagan was inspired by the work of Fr. Bert Layson, OMI, in his parish in Pikit, who cared for the IDPs and helped establish spaces for peace. When she finished her Ph.D. in 2008, she used her learnings in the field to improve her *torya-torya* (story-story) approach to mental health management which is founded on the precepts of narrative psychology. She currently uses this approach in her work at the Center of Psychological Extension and Research Services (COPERS) of Ateneo de Davao, to look into the mental health of community workers, soldiers and war-wounded, and IDPs. Her work in COPERS gained more prominence during the 2017 Marawi siege. Prior to this, efforts at looking at mental health and trauma healing were often dismissed even by donors. This observation comes from my nearly 10 years of experience of in reviewing proposals of NGOs/ CSOs, wherein many proposals for psychosocial support were not funded due to the perceived "squishiness" of such projects. But times seems to be changing as there are more people

who are speaking up on the importance of mental health concerns especially for IDPs during the Marawi siege, and during the outbreak of the pandemic.

**Preventing and countering violent extremism**

The concept of radicalization leading to violent extremism, is as old as the history of Moro resistance to the expanding colonial powers in the Philippines. The Spanish word "juramentado" which literally means "a person who had taken an oath," is used to refer to Muslim warriors, who, after receiving religious rites and prayers with *panditas*,[71] would seek out Christian invaders and kill as many as they can before being martyred themselves (Majul 1999, 419). Such dedicated warriors were called *mujahids* by the *panditas*, although they are commonly called "fil sabil-ullah" (literally in the way of Allah) or "sabil" for short (ibid., 424). The persistent attacks of the *juramentado* are well-documented during the Spanish, American, and Japanese occupations in the southern Philippines (Majul 1999, 424; Kolb 2002). This phenomenon is even romanticized in Tausug folk literature as *parang sabil* which is a traditional Tausug institution that pertains to defending Islam by attacking the infidel (Rixhon 2010, 283). It comes from the word "parang" meaning "war" or "sword" and "sabil" which means to be "killed in the way of God." (Rixhon 2010 citing Kiefer 1972).

Some observers have drawn similarities to the *juramentado* or *sabil* to the contemporary suicide attacks by radicalized groups.[72] In contemporary Philippines,

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[71] A traditional religious leader.

[72] https://web.archive.org/web/20120621224454/http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/sword.htm

radicalized groups like the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) are not predisposed to using suicide attacks, but rather have terrorized communities in western Mindanao with a series of extortions, hostage takings, kidnappings, and bombings. In 2000, there was a resurgence of ASG activity most notably, the abduction of foreign hostages from a Malaysian resort, which also coincided the series of bombings in central Mindanao leading to the 2000 all-out-war in Mindanao (Gaspar & others 2002). Violent extremism has long been a problem in many areas, but it was largely treated as a security matter and not really tackled in the realm of peacebuilding initiatives until recently.

The revival of interest in violent extremism in Mindanao is largely due to Marawi siege wherein radicalized youths from the Maute Group, with support of the ASG and BIFF, overtook Marawi City leading to its destruction. This tragedy has led people to realize the serious problem of violent extremism existing in fragile and conflict-affected areas of Mindanao. The eruption of the Marawi crisis was a wake-up call for government, security forces, development practitioners, and the international community. As a consequence, some of the CSOs interviewed for this study have program components on preventing or countering violent extremism (P/CVE) which are usually framed as resilience and social cohesion projects.

**Peace research and policy work**

Part and parcel of supporting the peace process is the foray into research and policy work. Some of the CSOs interviewed for this study have been involved in research at one time or another as sub-researchers for think-tanks and INGOs. Only a handful have been involved in peace research related to policy work. The two CSOs I

like to mention are the Institute for Autonomy and Governance and International Alert. The Institute for Autonomy and Governance (IAG) is based in Notre Dame University in Cotabato, and has been conducting research, training and technical assistance to support the development of genuine autonomy and good governance as a way to peace and development in Mindanao. IAG comes out with regular semi-annual reviews, policy briefs, monographs and discussion proceedings which are widely acknowledged as primary resource materials on Mindanao. Meanwhile, International Alert became established in the Philippines when they conducted a study on shadow economies and its relation to conflict in Mindanao. This initial study led to an expansion of their work in developing a real-time conflict monitoring system, and a valuable conflict database which they use in their regular analysis and publications to influence policies in support of the peace process.

The evaluators interviewed for this study also highlighted the important contribution of the academe during the breakdown of the peace process between the government and MILF in 2008 because of the MOA-AD controversy. Several universities and peace centers supported the Konsult Mindanaw which was an ambitious peace consultation process that involved over 5,000 respondents and more than 300 FGDs, across eight regional centers.[73] The consultations elicited people's visions of peace and their recommendations for the peace process, which also created a wider

[73] https://www.mindanews.com/peace-process/2009/11/konsult-mindanaw-presents-findings-to-milf-milf-says-%E2%80%9Cwe-want-agreement-acceptable-to-all%E2%80%9D/

collective consciousness about the question of peace in Mindanao. The informants cite this initiative as one of the factors that helped restart the peace process from its deadlock.

**Interfaith dialogues, Culture of Peace, and Peace Education: Legacies of Peace Research**

Much has been said about the importance of peacebuilding approaches such as interfaith or interreligious dialogues, culture of peace trainings, and peace education in transforming mindsets. A precursor to all of these were the pioneering work of American Protestant missionaries in literacy and in understanding Muslim-Christian relations. Interviews with old-time Meranao civil society actors often mention the important contribution of American Protestant missionaries in establishing a literacy program and library in Lanao which paved the way for research in understanding Filipino Muslims in Mindanao and Sulu.[74]

American Protestant missionaries led by Dr. Frank Laubach came to the Philippines in 1915 and later established a base in Lanao in the 1940s.[75] They established a high school Madrasah in 1941 and a library, and later pioneered literacy work in Lanao province after World War II. This eventually led to the founding of Dansalan Junior College in the 1950s, which fostered a long tradition of interfaith relations and interfaith dialogues between Muslims and Christians in the province. In 1967, Rev Lloyd and Maisie Van Vactor joined Dansalan Junior College and set up a research center with programs in publication, documentation, education and social research on Muslim

[74] Separate interviews with Dr. Moctar Matuan and Ding Cali of Kalimudan.
[75] https://www.vemission.org/fileadmin/redakteure/Dokumente/Dansalan_News.pdf

Filipinos.[76] Maisie Van Vactor also collected documents, materials, and resources on Islam and Filipino Muslims, which contributed significantly to the setting up of the Dansalan Research Center (ibid.).

The founding of the Dansalan Research Center in 1972 (later renamed Peter Gowing Memorial Research Center) continued Dansalan's spirit of interfaith engagement. Its founding was premised on the assumption that the tension among the Philippine cultural communities is partly the result of inadequate knowledge, misunderstanding, and insensitivity.[77] The Center had the goal of contributing to ease the tensions and promote justice and peace between Filipino Christians by expanding knowledge, improving understanding, and heightening sensitivity in relations between the two communities of faith.[78] Under the leadership of its founding director, Peter Gowing, the Research Center became a hub of studies on Filipino Muslims, religion, cultures and society. The Center also housed the Maise Van Vactor Collection of Islamic and Philippine Muslim Materials, and it boasts of having the largest collection of written heritage on Filipino Muslims. This focus on scholarship paved the way for the Dansalan Center to become one of the leading institutions in Southeast Asia that deals with Muslim-Christian relations. Unfortunately, parts of this library and the college was burned down by elements of the Maute Group during the 2017 Marawi siege.

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[76] https://www.globalministries.org/wp-content/uploads/nb/pages/13485/attachments/original/1510414805/dcfi.historical_overview.pdf?1510414805

[77] See https://www.dcfi.edu.ph/peter-gowing-research-center/

[78] Obituary of Robert Gowing by Van Vactor in JSTOR (1983).

Peter Gowing established an annual summer program on Mindanao and Sulu cultures in 1974, which fostered a better understanding of Islam and Muslim Filipinos.[79] The program was attended by religious and lay participants, teachers, students, church workers, and foreigners, from various faiths, which totaled over 177 participants in nine years until the death of Gowing in 1983 (ibid.). The resource speakers of the program included Muslim professionals and experts and had encounter and dialogue sessions between Muslims and Christians. According to Dr. Moctar Matuan who became the head of the Dansalan Research Center after the demise of Gowing, the summer sessions were highly recommended by the late Bishop Bienvenido Tudtud of the Prelature of Marawi. The course became sort of a required course for seminarians and priests who wanted to be assigned in Mindanao. He remembers that some of the priests who attended the summer program are already bishops now. One of those priests who attended a summer course was Fr. D'Ambra who later founded the Silsilah Dialogue Center in Zamboanga using the same principles.[80] Dr. Matuan states that the summer programs' encounter and dialogue sessions between Muslims and Christians, provided an important template for interfaith dialogues that laid the foundations for addressing conflict in communities.

A decade later, Dr. Matuan recalls that the Easter bombing of St. Michael's Cathedral in 1992, and the ensuing massacre of a Muslim family resulted to heightened tensions between Muslim and Christian communities, which put to the test the principles taught at the Dansalan Center. To prevent an escalation of violence, concerned citizens

[79] https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/nfile/3331

[80] Fr. Sebastiano D'Ambra, PIME, mentioned in his article that he arrived in the Philippines in 1977, and later became close with Bishop Tudtud who encouraged him to "go on with Silsilah." (2002, 9 & 12).

who experienced the trainings in Dansalan engaged in interfaith meetings and succeeded in diffusing tensions. According to Matuan, members of this grassroot movement was later called Ranao Muslim-Christian Movement for Dialogue and Peace (RMCMDP). Members of this movement played important roles in consolidating the Bishops-Ulama Forum (BUF) that evolved into the Bishops-Ulama Conference (BUC), and inspired similar formations in other areas. While the history of the BUF/ BUC and other peace movements are often written from the viewpoint of organizations and programs, which are sometimes appropriated by government agencies, it is primarily the story of the generational efforts of countless, uncredited individuals who made possible the legacy of interreligious dialogues in the country.

Meanwhile, in the Zamboanga Peninsula and the Sulu Archipelago, the emergence of the Abu Sayyaf Group in the 1990s threatened communities in Zamboanga, Basilan, and Sulu. In this chaos emerged civil society efforts that pioneered interfaith nonviolence approaches. ZABIDA alliance president and former WMSU president Dr. Grace Rebollos played a leading role in formulating "Culture of Peace" trainings, while Fr. Angel Calvo, the co-founder of Peace Advocates Zamboanga (PAZ) pioneered the Mindanao Week of Peace celebrations which became an institution in Mindanao (Gaspar et. al. 2022, 51). Within this backdrop are the silent efforts of universities like Notre Dame University in Cotabato, Ateneo de Zamboanga University, and Western Mindanao State University (WMSU), in starting their respective peace education programs.

A prime mover in the spread of peace education in Mindanao is Dr. Ofelia Durante, who was originally the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences of Notre Dame

University (NDU). Under the guidance of Toh Swee-Hin and Virginia Cawagas, Dr. Durante established a peace education center and started a graduate program offering peace education (Durante 2017, 30). Despite the initial struggles, NDU became a catalyst of peace education in Mindanao as well as in the Luzon and the Visayas (ibid.). NDU's Peace Education Center successfully guided more than 100 schools in Mindanao in a three-year program supported by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) (ibid.). In 2000, Dr. Durante joined the Ateneo de Zamboanga University Research Center as its director and opened new avenues for peace education research. Through her leadership, several conferences on peace education were conducted as well as notable researches on "Recycling War Trash for Peace," "Peace Education for Women in the Lives of Mindanao Combatants," and the study on "*Rido*: Clan Feuding and Conflict Management." She was also a part of the research team behind the aforementioned Konsult Mindanaw study which contributed to the peace process between the MILF and the Philippine Government (ibid.).

This chapter has described the multiplicity of conflict situations and the emergence of various peace initiatives in response to these challenges in Mindanao. The presence of numerous peacebuilding activities and their increasing complexity may also reflect a learning process enhanced by evaluation. The next chapter explores how CSOs evaluate their peacebuilding interventions, the evaluation approaches they use, and what drives their decision to evaluate.

# CHAPTER FIVE: CSO APPROACHES TO EVALUATION

This chapter answers the first specific question: *How do CSOs in Mindanao evaluate their peacebuilding and conflict resolution projects?* It presents their evaluation approaches, frameworks, methods, and tools, and examines the decisions they make when doing an evaluation. This chapter also relates some of the experiences of CSOs with evaluations. The data presented in this section are drawn directly from my interviews with research participants and complemented by secondary data review of their evaluation approaches. In some parts, links are provided to more detailed descriptions of particular approaches, frameworks, methods, or tools. A total of 25 key informant interviews and one focus-group discussion (FGD) with evaluators were conducted in this study. Of this total, 22 interviews were conducted with CSOs/ NGOs, two separate interviews with evaluators who were not able to join the FGD, and one interview was conducted with a representative of an international developmental organization that is a major donor of projects in Mindanao. The CSOs interviewed come from various regions of Mindanao, specifically from the BARMM and non-BARMM regions, covering the central, northern, and southwestern Mindanao, which includes the cities of Marawi, Iligan, Cagayan de Oro, Cotabato, Davao, and Zamboanga.

The question of evaluation has always been a struggle for many of the CSOs interviewed in this study. Often, the question would elicit responses like measuring peace projects is difficult because it is “intangible.” Compared to a livelihood project for instance, a peacebuilding project is often described as nebulous, vague, and broad, etc.

Indeed, the concept of peacebuilding itself is broad, with so many categories, and the way it is used by local CSOs commonly overlaps with other types of development themes and interventions which is a challenge to disentangle and evaluate. Nevertheless, all the CSOs interviewed acknowledge the importance and necessity of doing evaluations especially for peacebuilding efforts. A common theme among the key informants on the purpose of evaluation is that it serves to facilitate learning about their projects, help improve their interventions, and eventually helps them determine future projects.

In this study, the researcher considers evaluation as an overarching category that broadly describes both monitoring and evaluation activities. Hence, when answering questions on evaluation, the key informants may refer to specific monitoring activities, or the broader evaluation process.

Most of the CSOs state that their decision to evaluate is internally driven. Often, this is a reflection of the CSOs' espoused values such as transparency, accountability, and learning, which is sometimes articulated in their vision-mission statements and operations manual as part of internal check-and-balance. This also comes from the unanimous belief on the importance of using evaluation for learning and improving their peacebuilding efforts. But there are times that the decision to evaluate also comes from the funding agency itself especially if the CSO receives funding from international development agencies that require them to do an evaluation.

In general, evaluations as practiced by CSOs occurs as part of their regular project management and ongoing assessments of projects, to provide their staff with regular feedbacks and to help troubleshoot with emerging issues and improve interventions.

Such activities are often what is classified as monitoring activities. This forms part of their internal evaluation processes which they often describe as “informal” evaluation approaches. These are conducted through regular staff meetings, project management meetings, and community meetings. Sometimes, opportunities for assessments also occur during mid-year and year-end assessments and planning; and strategic planning.

The more formal evaluations that happen are usually project-based or initiated by their funders. Consequently, for some CSOs, evaluation is embedded in their grant agreements. In other cases, funders separately commission external evaluators or consultants to look into a specific aspect of their project, support an evaluation initiative, or conduct separate research on an issue of interest.

In both internal and external evaluation processes, the general approaches and commonly used frameworks, methods, and tools by CSOs and their evaluators are the following:

- The conventional approach of using log frames and results frameworks
- Theory of change
- Surveys, key informant interviews, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observations
- Simple meetings, community meetings, clustered meetings, forums, and workshops for CSOs to gain project feedback
- Various assessments such as stakeholder analysis, community assessments, needs assessment, conflict analysis, and conflict mapping
- The use of terms “baselining” and “end-lines” are also often mentioned by CSOs in conjunction with assessments.
- Documentation of narratives, the collection of stories, and “success” stories.

There are a variety of commonly used approaches, frameworks, methods and tools used by CSOs in monitoring and evaluating their peacebuilding efforts. In general, all

CSOs use the conventional approaches of using **log frames and results frameworks** for project planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Logical frameworks or log frames are the most common tools for planning and performance assessments of social development projects (Garbutt & Simister 2017, 1). There can be many types of log frames, but the most commonly used as basis for M&E are results frameworks. Results frameworks are diagrams of cause-and-effect logic for a achieving a development objective over a defined timeframe (USAID Technical Note 2013, 2). USAID results frameworks are also accompanied by a development hypothesis and performance indicators (ibid., 2-3). These tools are often used by CSOs in conjunction with project management activities which includes regular meetings and reporting activities.

The use of **theory of change** has become widespread among NGOs to articulate how and why intended changes will happen in their project interventions. A common approach among evaluators is to use a project's theory of change to explain the connection between interventions and expected or observed results. It is also common for INGOs and NGOs to conduct learning or reflection sessions to interrogate the assumptions in theory of change of their projects and to update these based on emerging dynamics in their contexts. These are all discussed below.

In general, the common data-gathering procedures used by evaluators are also the standard methods used in social research: surveys, key informant interviews, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and simple meetings, community meetings, forums, and workshops. At the community level, CSO informal feedbacking sessions usually take the form of simple meetings, community meetings, clustered

meetings, workshops, and forums for CSOs to get feedback of communities regarding their projects. The role of CSOs during formal evaluations are often limited to arranging the interviews and FGDs of the evaluator as well as organizing communities in preparation for evaluations.

Related to this are the various assessments that are standard fare in social development work. These assessments are basically information gathering activities to understand the situation in a context. These are usually done in the preparatory stages of the project, but can also be conducted towards the end of the project cycle. These can take the form of baseline surveys, needs assessment, community assessments, stakeholder analysis, conflict assessment, conflict analysis, and the use of tools such as conflict mapping, community resource mapping, rapid rural appraisal (RRA), and participatory rapid appraisal (PRA). CSOs often mention the terms “baselining” and “end-lines” in conjunction with these assessments, which refer to establishing a reference point before any project treatment, which will be used in later end-of-project assessments to measure changes.

Finally, CSOs interviewed place a premium on the documentation of stories, narratives, and testimonials. Capturing stories helps understand people’s perspectives and experiences (Patton 2015, 13). Depending on its purpose, such stories are variously known as “success” or learning stories; “best” or “good” practices, contribution stories, and most significant change stories. Development projects often require a lot of documentation such as program reports, evaluation reports, and assessment reports, etc.

“Success” stories are special among these, as they describe the positive changes and how these have benefitted people (Srivastava 2017, 18).

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) confides that internally, they lean towards stories rather than numbers. They are more appreciative of narratives when looking at impact. They consider documented stories as results which they submit to their Geneva Headquarters where they have a database to track results. Nagdilaab of Basilan similarly puts more emphasis on testimonies of people when evaluating. In reporting the stories of different sectors, they use testimonies of individuals of how the program made a difference in their lives. But they admit that the documentation of processes which are the basis of their “success” stories is very challenging for them and not all are captured.

Aside from these general approaches used in evaluation, there are other frameworks being used by CSOs depending on their project needs. Below are some of the M&E approaches, frameworks, methods, and tools that some CSOs use for their specific project needs. These approaches, frameworks, and tools are also discussed throughout the chapter, the descriptions of which, are drawn from the review of secondary data.

- Outcome-Impact Orientation
- Bogardus social distance scale
- Action Research/ Participative Action Research
- A variety of peer review and learning processes
- Reflecting on Peace Practice Participant Training Manual
- Reflective Peacebuilding Toolkit
- Conflict Transformation Framework
- Peace Education framework

- PCIA, Most Significant Change, Outcome Harvesting/ Mapping and Contribution Analysis and Complexity-Aware Monitoring approaches.
- More localized M&E and reflection approaches that are modifications of the more mainstream approaches.
- Do No Harm Principles and Do No Harm Framework
- Use of conflict incidence database

One of the evaluation frameworks used by Balay Mindanaw is the **Outcome-Impact Orientation** (OIO) which they said was preferred by their donor, Misereor. OIO is a framework that focuses on answering two questions that are asked repeatedly throughout the project cycle: *what should be achieved* and *what is actually achieved?* (Welthungerhilfe 2008a, 5). It places greater emphasis on the use of the outputs by target beneficiaries and the outcomes for the target groups, as projects may achieve all the planned outputs without being actually being useful for target groups or having positive outcomes/ impact for the latter (Welthungerhilfe 2008b, 9). Another interesting thing about this approach is their use of *impact hypothesis* which is much like theories of change, but also describes the assumptions about the causal relationships between the different levels of a results chain (ibid.).

In trying to measure "trust" in their interreligious dialogue projects, ZABIDA used the **Bogardus social distance scale** in their surveys.[81] They do this to get a sense of how much trust or distrust there is among Muslims and Christians in their project communities. Meanwhile, **action research** was mentioned by Kalimudan as something they do, or commission externally by hiring locals if they want to understand the situation

[81] Bogardus is best known for his classic studies on social distance in the US since the 1920s (Weaver 2008, 780).

in a particular context. The FGDs with evaluators also mentioned **participatory action research** (PAR), which centers on the participants or beneficiaries evaluating their projects themselves. While there are many shades of action research that is centered on action or cycles of action, its most important feature is perhaps its shift in the degree of locus of control from professional/ academic researchers to what has been traditionally considered as the subjects of research (Herr & Anderson 2005, 6).

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) utilizes what they call a "**Peer Review**" process, to test the theories and assumptions in their projects. Usually facilitated by someone from their Geneva headquarters, they do this to check if the assumptions they have at the beginning of their project still holds true, and to determine the changes or adaptations needed. During the pandemic, they also conducted a **strategic review**, which focuses more on process. HD describes it as "getting therapy for your program," as it is a very internal and inward-looking process, done with trusted peers. HD considers these approaches as part of their adaptive M&E framework.

Similar to this, is ECOWEB's "**Learning Review**" process, which they consider as their approach to monitoring and evaluation. They do a learning review process to get regular feedback on the learnings of project recipients, solidarity groups, as well as those that have not yet received projects. They also do this process at the community level which they conduct by clustering groups of people and engaging in dialogues. It is a regular, ongoing process that is highly participatory. ECOWEB considers learning review as their community's tool rather than their own tool. Nanette Antequisa,

executive director of ECOWEB, asserts that "any evaluation has more value if people see that it is helping them and it is based on their perspectives."

An external evaluation of Nonviolent Peaceforce Project utilized a "**learning-focused evaluation process**" which specifically sought out answers to the *how* and *why* questions behind project successes and challenges (Gunduz & Torralba 2014, 11). Their methodology looked into the standard results framework as well as considered the various lenses of RPP Criteria of Effectiveness in Peacebuilding, conflict sensitivity, gender, and the OECD criteria for evaluating conflict prevention and peacebuilding (ibid., 13).

In evaluating their peace projects, CSOs that are more advanced in peacebuilding practice, utilize frameworks that are familiar in the peacebuilding field. Balay Mindanaw uses the CDA Collaborative Learnings' **Reflecting on Peace Practice Participant Training Manual** (2009) and **Reflection on Peace Practice Handbook** (2004). Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) is an experience-based learning process with the purpose of analyzing experiences at the individual program level across a broad range of agencies and contexts, with the goal of improving the effectiveness of international peacebuilding efforts (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2009).

CRS which was mentored and accompanied by Lederach uses the Reflective Peacebuilding Toolkit (among a variety of toolkits they have). The **Reflective Peacebuilding Toolkit** is intended to improve peacebuilders' ability to be reflective practitioners, at the same time enhance their capacity to design and impact transformative change (Lederach & others 2007, iii). The toolkit's overarching theme is learning before,

during, and after implementation of peacebuilding programs (ibid.). Nagdilaab's executive director, Dedette Suacito, is influenced by the teachings of Eastern Mennonite University on peacebuilding, and also uses the **conflict transformation** framework which also draws form the teachings of Lederach (See Lederach 1997). Dedette also shared that she also uses the **six-petal metaphor framework of peace education** as general guide to evaluating projects. This is based on a multi-dimensional framework co-developed by Toh Swee-Hin and Jean Cawagas which include: (1) dismantling a culture of war; (2) living with justice and compassion; (3) promoting human rights; (4) building intercultural respect, reconciliation, and solidarity; (5) living in harmony with the earth; and (6) cultivating/ nurturing inner peace (Toh Swee-Hin 2017, 18).

The other evaluation approaches mentioned by CSOs that they have used or considered are Most Significant Change, Outcome Harvesting, Outcome Mapping and Contribution Analysis. **Most Significant Change** (MSC) is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation that involves the collection of significant change stories (Davies & Dart 2005, 8). **Outcome Harvesting** is an evaluation approach that collects evidence of what has been achieved and then works backward to determine whether and how the efforts of social innovators and their interventions contributed to observed and documented changes (Patton 2016, 193). This approach was inspired and informed by outcome mapping (ibid., 198).[82] **Outcome mapping** is an approach to planning, monitoring, and evaluation that looks at particular types of outcomes which are changes

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[82] See Sarah Earl, Fred Carden, and Terry Smutylo. *Outcome Mapping: Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs*. 2001. See also Ricardo Wilson-Grau and Heather Britt. *Outcome Harvesting*. 2012.

in behavior, relations, and actions (Earl & others 2001). Outcome mapping was used by The Asia Foundation in their workshops with their partners to properly assess the results of their conflict management projects. All of these approaches share some similarities in the use of change or contribution stories, which are ways doing contribution analysis. Contribution analysis is a way of assessing causal questions and inferring causality in real-world program evaluations (Better Evaluation website).[83] Key to conducting contribution analysis is establishing a credible theory of change which is embedded in the context of the intervention and is developed by incorporating the perspectives of key stakeholders, beneficiaries and existing relevant research (Mayne 2012, 273). An external evaluation of HD's work in the Philippines utilized contribution analysis approach through the use of contribution stories (CHD 2020).[84]

Some evaluators interviewed mentioned being trained by Dr. Kenneth Bush in using PCIA in their evaluation of the Canadian-funded projects in Mindanao. **Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment** (PCIA) is defined as "a means of anticipating, monitoring, and evaluating the ways in which an intervention may affect or has affected the dynamics of peace or conflict in a conflict-prone region" (Bush 2003, 4). PCIA is a highly participatory approach can be used to assess peace and conflict impact at different phases of a project (e.g., pre-project, in-project, post-project). What is innovative in this approach is the way that Bush treats peacebuilding not as an activity but as an impact (Hoffman 2003, 19). In the Philippines, Dr. Bush gave PCIA trainings for some NGOs in

[83] https://www.betterevaluation.org/it/node/382
[84] See External Evaluation of HD's work in the Philippines (2020).

2002, and it was subsequently appropriated by development practitioners and Mindanao-based NGOs with support from CIDA-funded Local Governance Support Program-LGSP (Gardiola 2014).

The concept of "**Do No Harm**" often comes up when CSOs talk about their approach to project implementation and also in doing evaluation. Though it is not clear from the interviews if they use the Do No Harm as a framework or simply consider it as a guiding principle in their work. The concept of "Do no harm" is borrowed from medical practice and traces its origins to the Hippocratic Oath, which was then developed for working effectively in conflict-affected areas by Mary Anderson in the 1990s (Charancle & Lucchi 2018, 5). Anderson's (1999) book was groundbreaking in its reflections on the role of aid in conflict contexts and on the need to be more circumspect about aid's impact on violent conflict. CDA Collective Learning distinguishes between *do no harm* as a principle and Do No Harm the framework (CDA 2016, 5). As a principle, *do no harm* can be an important basis for organizational policies and visions, though this this is not enough (ibid.). CDA argues that Do No Harm (DNH) as a framework provides an analytical tool and practical approach for implementing conflict sensitivity (ibid.). Conflict sensitivity involves the need to consider the context, and the unintended consequences of programs on the relationships between groups of people within that context, as well as acting on those consequences (ibid. 5-6).[85] The framework is built on six key lessons which were derived from original DNH case studies. Below are the six key lessons derived from the Do No Harm Workshop Participant's Manual (2016, 5-6):

[85] See also *Do No Harm: A Brief Introduction from CDA* (no date).

- When an intervention of any kind enters a context, it becomes part of that context.
- All contexts are characterized by Dividers and Connectors.
- All interventions will interact with both Dividers and Connectors, making them better or worse.
- Interventions interact with Dividers and Connectors through their organizational Actions and the Behavior of staff.
- The details of an intervention are the source of its impacts.
- There are always Options.

Some of the more established CSOs that receive U.S. Government funding are also guided by USAID's **Complexity-Aware Monitoring Approaches**. Complexity-aware monitoring involves "approaches that take into account the inherently unpredictable, uncertain, and changing nature of complex situations" (MOMENTUM 2020, 5).[86] Some examples of complexity-aware approaches discussed in MOMENTUM's guidance paper are social network analysis, causal link monitoring, outcome mapping, sentinel indicators, pause and reflect, outcome harvesting, most significant change, ripple effects mapping, and contribution analysis (ibid., 7).

CSOs interviewed like THUMA and ECOWEB said that they were not required to use evaluation and monitoring approaches introduced by their partner contractors and donors. However, they still draw from existing frameworks and modify these to develop their own approaches that is useful for their situation. For instance, THUMA modifies and enhances the violent extremism knowledge framework of their partner IAG to make it more suitable to their communities. ECOWEB, one of the subgrantees of USAID's Marawi Response Project, made their own modifications in complexity-aware monitoring

[86] https://usaidmomentum.org/resource/a-guide-to-complexity-aware-monitoring-approaches-for-momentum-projects/

which they call a Learning Review, as discussed previously. COPERS of the Ateneo de Davao Psychology Department adopted the precepts of narrative psychology to their *torya-torya* approach in both research and evaluation. *Torya-torya,* which literally translates as “stories-stories”, is used in their psychosocial interventions and also evaluation. As an example, please refer to the link below for her journal article on *Piloting the Torya-torya Module for Mental Health Management in the Frontlines* (Ilagan 2011).[87]

Localized approaches to evaluation have also been encountered. Whenever they encounter obstacles in the conflict resolution process, Marawi-based NGO, RIDO Inc. has a reflective approach called *Kaprogorogod* which is a local Meranao term that means sitting down, reflecting, deep dive, and sensing. Meanwhile, CRS longtime director, Myla Leguro and her colleagues, are drawing from their work on interreligious peacebuilding[88] to further conduct research on understanding the spiritual dimensions in the peacebuilding work of their Christian, Muslim, and Indigenous women partners, which can have implications for evaluating spirituality and interfaith dialogue projects.

Globally, CRS has been separately developing their own approach to M&E which they call Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL).[89] This is also accompanied by the development of systems and practices for M&E, to help with accountability and learning, which they co-developed with the help of their local partners.

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[87] https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=262
[88] https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/advancing-interreligious-peacebuilding
[89] https://www.crs.org/research-publications/solr-search?sort_by=created&sort_order=DESC&f[0]=field_program_area:6711

This ensures they have feedback mechanisms with their community partners. Relevant for their current programming in the Philippines, is the use of their own social cohesion barometer and social cohesion indicators bank, which was developed in their other country offices.[90] CRS' Mini-Social Cohesion Barometer is a tool intended for practitioners who desire to strengthen social cohesion in their relief and development contexts (CRS 2019a, v).[91] At its heart is a simple perception survey consisting of 18 indicators grouped into three categories of "socio-cultural," "political," and "economic" spheres of activities (ibid.). When aggregated, these indicators provide a snapshot of a group's perception on the strengths and weaknesses of the social fabric in a given demographic or geographic unit (ibid.). CRS partners can then act on this knowledge to design activities based on their signature approach to cohesion of *binding*, *bonding*, and *bridging* (ibid.). The mini-social cohesion barometer can be used in conjunction with the Social Cohesion Indicators Bank, which is a collection of illustrative indicators generated from literature on social cohesion and relevant CRS projects (CRS 2019b, iv).[92]

Unique among INGOs that operate in Mindanao is International Alert (Alert). They have internally developed their own real-time Critical Events Monitoring System (CEMS), containing interoperable datasets and tools which can be used for a variety of purposes by interested organizations. Alert uses these same tools and datasets for evaluating their own initiatives. For instance, when they want to assess the effects of

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[90] https://www.crs.org/research-publications/solr-search?sort_by=created&sort_order=DESC&f%5B0%5D=field_program_area%3A575&page=1
[91] https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/mini-social-cohesion-barometer
[92] https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/social-cohesion-indicators-bank

their land use projects, they analyze their datasets gathered from CEMS if there is an overall change in the conflict situation in their project sites. They can for instance posit that "there is reduced violence relating to land" in areas where their projects are. While causation cannot be determined, targeted evaluations can later be conducted to help establish links or the contribution of their initiatives to the overall reduction in violence. International Alert's methodology for their CEMS can be found in their Conflict Alert publication which regularly comes out, and their conflict monitoring system and data can be accessed through their conflict alert website.[93]

This study has also documented several software or digital platforms used by CSOs to help them in evaluations. These are: Shura, CommCare, and KoBo. CRS has attempted to use SenseMaker but halted due to the expensive software.

Finally, I have sensed that some CSOs can be apologetic when it comes to talking about evaluation. Some CSOs have mentioned terms like "**not scientific**" or "**ouido-ouido"** to characterize their evaluations. Ouido-ouido, pronounced as "widow-widow" is a localized term for "ouido" which pertains to playing music by ear, which is how they sometimes see their approach to evaluation. A couple of CSOs have also mentioned that their data is "anecdotal" to characterize the stories or narratives that they have collected, which seem to have negative connotations. Many of these misconceptions that persist about qualitative approaches to inquiry may have been inherited from past evaluation experiences. A lot of work needs to be done to correct these misconceptions.

[93] https://conflictalert.info/

This chapter has shown the various ways INGO/NGOs/CSOs have approached peacebuilding evaluation. The next chapter delves deeper into the different evaluation criteria or dimensions used by CSOs in assessing the quality of their peacebuilding efforts, and what CSOs think are important evidence in their own contexts.

# CHAPTER SIX: EVALUATION DIMENSIONS

Chapter Six, answers the question: *What key evaluation criteria, issues, dimensions, or concepts do CSOs in Mindanao often use or find important in evaluating their peacebuilding initiatives and why?* This study started with an assumption that a robust evaluation of peacebuilding projects should consider addressing the key evaluation dimensions of impact, causation, attribution and/ or contribution, criteria for success or effectiveness, issue of transfer, sustainability and/ or adaptability of change, complexity, and the effects on drivers of conflict. I started with these established concepts assuming that CSOs have their own way of understanding and dealing with these when they evaluate their own peacebuilding efforts. Indeed, there were some of these established concepts that surfaced in my interviews. When evaluating projects, many CSOs attempt to address questions of impact, sustainability, success/ effectiveness, contribution/ attribution, and complexity. But in talking about these main concepts, CSOs would also refer to other concepts which are not in my original lists. These emerging concepts are somehow related to the established concepts that I am investigating, and are often referred to by CSOs when talking about evaluation. These are: changes in relationships and mindset, resilience, relevance, as well as innovation, flexibility, and creativity. But why are these emerging concepts important and how are they related to the more established concepts being investigated in this study? Keeping in mind Patton's dictum of "sensitizing concepts," below is a discussion of the established evaluation concepts and some emerging ideas as understood and used by CSOs.

## The Established Evaluation Concepts

### Impact

When asked about his concept of impact, one key informant joked: *Impakto marami!* (Evil spirits, there's lots!). CSOs have a conventional understanding of impact as an overall result or the highest tier in the results chain. Impact as described by informants has an enduring quality that takes time to establish and measure. All of the CSOs understand this textbook definition. But curiously, on a day-to-day parlance, the term "impact" as used by CSOs when talking about the results of their project, more accurately pertains to the "changes" or outcomes of their projects, such as how an intervention impacted the lives of the people. And like the spirits in the joke, these changes can be numerous. So, when talking informally with CSOs about impact, one should remember that what they are actually referring to are outcomes. Nevertheless, they also understand that these small outcome level changes which they informally call "impact" can contribute to the bigger impact or the larger peace. One CSO describes impact as an overarching concept wherein all the qualities and criteria of projects come together to be considered to give us an idea of overall merit.

Impact, for many CSOs interviewed, is notoriously difficult to measure especially for peacebuilding projects. First, it is difficult to measure because they believe it requires the passage of a certain amount of time before one can evaluate for impact. The key informants' opinions on the amount of time required before a project can be evaluated for impact, greatly varies from at least two years, to six years, to eight years, and to a longer period of 10 years. One evaluator interviewed, Dr. Norma Gomez, avoids using the term

"impact," and instead prefers using the terms "effects" or "changes" to refer to it more accurately. Because for her, impact, strictly speaking, requires some passage of time, like in a time series.

Second, the belief that impact should be something lasting or durable, makes impact evaluation impractical, as the effects of peacebuilding projects are oftentimes subject to the uncertainties of a conflict-prone and fragile region. In a region rife with flareups and communal conflicts, the status peacebuilding efforts and projects in general are often precarious. For instance, election season in some parts of Mindanao are precarious times for peacebuilding efforts as election violence often halts project activities. More recently, the Marawi siege of 2017 effectively changed the landscape of projects in the Lanao provinces. Just when you think all things are going well with your project, unforeseen circumstances in conflict-prone areas can sometimes derail progress. Hence, the durability of peacebuilding projects or its effects are often in question, which has implications for impact.

Third, CSOs also understand that impact level change is already a result of a confluence of many factors, many of which are too far detached from their original interventions, which are all-in-all difficult to disentangle, analyze, and attribute back to your project. For Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), they can only account for project effects up until the outcome levels. Impact level changes are considered too distant from their peacebuilding projects and uncontrollable as other factors already come in to produce an impact.

Fourth, many CSOs also think that peacebuilding efforts and results are too intangible, nebulous, and broad which makes it too difficult to measure in the first place. This is a common struggle for many CSOs. There's a wealth of peacebuilding concepts and approaches in Mindanao, and the vocabulary keeps growing: from conflict management to peacebuilding; from conflict transformation to transitional justice; from deradicalization to preventing and countering violent extremism. One would have a difficult time distinguishing the typologies and its effects, much less pinning these down for a proper evaluation.

This being the case, some CSOs confided that they no longer look at impact when evaluating their projects. "We don't pretend anymore," says Myla Leguro, a longtime CRS program director.

> "The difficulty of evaluating for impact is that peacebuilding deals with very complex conflict issues especially if it touches on historical and structural issues. If you say that you resolved an X number of conflicts, but the land tenure systems are still messed up, conflict will still sprout out of it. Your documentation will still be the same. You have government agencies that have competing policies on land. So, your impact is still questionable because systems change is difficult to attain."

It is important here to note that systems change is part of how CRS conceptualizes impact as it ensures the enduring effects of peacebuilding efforts. Hence, CRS no longer includes impact in their terms of reference during evaluations. At the end of their three-year projects, they only evaluate for outcomes, unless they purposely evaluate for impact, three years after a project has ended. CRS instead evaluates for effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability, all of which, are based on the OECD criteria for evaluation.

In terms of its usefulness, the conduct of impact evaluations by the bigger NGOs are too far in between. In the 17 years of the existence of The Asia Foundation's conflict management portfolio, only once was an impact evaluation done, and this was only part of a bigger portfolio evaluation on governance for its donor. Even for CRS, they still have to do a cumulative impact study of their work since their inception in the Philippines in 1996. Ultimately, it seems that impact evaluations are something unreachable for most CSOs. If it is not frequently done by bigger NGOs, how much more for the smaller CSOs? Impact and impact evaluation remains an ideal, a pie in the sky for most, as CSOs are more concerned with the present and daily grind of project implementation and development of new projects.

**Causality**

A discussion of impact necessitates a discussion of causality or cause-and-effect relationships. Dr. Howie Mañego, one of the evaluators interviewed, says that their approach to causality in evaluations is to refer to the project document on how it defines the cause-and-effect relationships in the project components. This can usually be seen in the program theory and logic, and in the theory of change of a particular intervention. Dr. Mañego explains:

> "If the courses of action and expected outcomes or effects are already defined in the document, then it is easy to validate when we evaluate in the field and we're seeing some results. But if these are not well-defined, when it comes to analyzing the data, it's going to be the call of the evaluators on how to establish that link."

During the FGD, there was an animated discussion about the role of statistics in determining causality. One evaluator raised the issue that since it is a relationship, then

there needs to be a tool to measure the nature of the cause-and-effect relationship. It is then subject to statistics. But Dr. Durante countered by saying that you do not need statistics to determine cause and effect as you can determine this better with qualitative approaches. The evaluators recalled their experience with a particular donor who wanted to conduct a statistical analysis to establish a link between violent extremism and the madrasah. The evaluators were unanimous in saying that this was a bad example. Nevertheless, there was the impression in the group that somehow qualitative methods are not taken seriously by donors compared to quantitative methods in proving causality.

**Contribution/ Attribution**

Just as causality can be posited in a program theory or in a project's theory of change, it can also be manifested in the issue of attribution and contribution which are considered aspects of causality. Attribution and contribution are both challenging evaluation concepts for CSOs doing peacebuilding work. Attribution is problematic because many CSOs think that it is mostly unfeasible and at times, even arrogant to attribute one's efforts as the sole reason for certain peace outcomes in a context especially when there are numerous actors and efforts in the same area. The exception to this is when a peace effort is isolated enough from other initiatives or when there are no other efforts in the locale that can provide an alternative explanation for the results. For the issue of contribution, CSOs similarly find it difficult to disentangle or untwine their initiatives from the mix of efforts that produce the overall peace outcomes, but not impossible. In a region where conflict context is complex, fluid, dynamic, and overlapping, the plethora of peacebuilding and development efforts also interact with

numerous factors, making it difficult for a CSO to lay sole claim on overall outcomes or distinguish their efforts from the rest.

It is very clear for most of the CSOs interviewed that the results or the impact of their peacebuilding initiatives can never be attributed to only one actor. This is especially true for CSOs that work on supporting the peace process between the government and the MILF. The Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS), is a network of Muslim-led CSOs that accompanies the peace process. One of their activities is organizing community-based groups to monitor the ceasefire. For Guiamel Alim, head of CBCS, one of the most difficult evaluation questions he has encountered is related to attribution: *Is your intervention the reason for the ceasefire to happen?* They had trouble answering this question, simply because they are aware of the existence of many other groups that are also working for the same goals. Some even have the same initiative as theirs. So, if there is a ceasefire, they cannot exactly attribute it to only their efforts, but a combination of efforts from others. Guiamel further adds:

> "For the past years we have been accompanying the peace negotiations between the MILF and government. And they have now reached this stage where they agreed on key settlement, and there is now an emerging autonomous government—the BARMM. If you ask me, I cannot see how many percent our contribution is to the current outcome since there are a lot of us helping. It would be easier to evaluate if we're talking about health, like assistance to COVID. But this peace process has been going on for a long time and a lot has happened since."

This same sentiment is echoed by Rexall Kaalim, the country director of Nonviolent Peaceforce about their projects:

> "In general, when you say reduction of violence, it's difficult to see your contribution to the whole, if there is an overall reduction. How can

> you directly attribute that some percentage of the impact was contributed by NP, unless you become subjective? You can see that there are a lot of peacebuilding organizations: CRS, Pakigdait, CBCS. Everybody is contributing to that kind of impact."

There are exceptions to this however. Among the CSOs interviewed, Nagdilaab in Basilan and THUMA from Lanao have no trouble attributing results to their peacebuilding projects. The reason for this is that both CSOs' peace projects are the only active projects in their respective localities so attributing project results to their efforts is not really a problem for them. THUMA in particular, stresses that they purposely targeted localities and women and youth that have not yet received any support which are based on their surveys and profiling of potential beneficiaries.

Since attribution is difficult to do in complex and dynamic conflict environments of Mindanao, many CSOs have already shifted to the more feasible concept of simply accounting their contributions to the overall peace effort. However, finding how specific peacebuilding efforts actually connect to certain overall outcomes is still a challenge. Many of the CSOs interviewed still do not go beyond to problematize the linkages except through the Theory of Change in their projects. Rexall Kaalim of NP likens the concept of contribution to gardening:

> "My real hobby at home is gardening. When you garden, you do land preparation, you prepare your seeds, you plant, and then you nurture it. Soon you will see the fruit. You can harvest the tomatoes, onions, etc. even just in your own backyard. You are already happy that you see that. In our peacebuilding work it's also the same. We see the fruits of our peacebuilding work. It may be difficult to measure our contribution to the impact or to know which work you did contribute the most, but you are nevertheless happy with the fruits you see."

In general, the idea of contribution is well-established among the CSO peacebuilding community in Mindanao. Contribution has largely replaced the issue of attribution among CSOs when thinking about the influence of their peacebuilding initiatives to the overall peace. But whether this satisfies their donors is another question.

**Sustainability**

Sustainability is a basic question in any project. It is often considered a standard that CSOs have to deal with on paper when writing project reports or project proposals. A common view of sustainability among the key informants is a "passing of the torch" moment, so that partners can carry on the work they do when they leave, or ensure that an initiative takes on a life of its own beyond the project. Sometimes it is also viewed of as a quality of a resource that the next generation should benefit in the case of environmental peace projects. Many CSOs believe that they will not be there forever, and that they should not be there forever. "If you are there forever, you're not doing your job," says Iona Jalijali, the country representative of HD. "It's not sustainability for our own organization, but for us to help other organizations to carry out the spirit of the work that we're trying to do."

The views on attaining sustainability are varied. Many of the CSOs interviewed view sustainability as the development of systems and structures to perpetuate certain practices, or the longevity of goals. Others see sustainability as a change of mindsets at the individual level. One CSO, IRDT, views sustainability as a result of hard work and appropriate development practices. Others, like Nagdilaab, argue that sustainability is the

most difficult to attain due to the unpredictable nature of politics and flareups in the region.

***Sustainability as institutionalization***. The most common description of CSOs when talking about sustainability is the development of structures and systems, such as a mechanism or a body, a piece of legislation, a local resolution or ordinance, etc., that will institutionalize a set of activities and practices. So, for instance, one of the most common ways for CSOs to ensure the sustainability of local conflict resolution mechanisms assisted by their peacebuilding projects is to institutionalize these practices by lobbying for these to be recognized by local governments through the passage of a formal council resolution. When this happens, the local conflict resolution mechanism is adopted as part of the local government process and can receive a budget to support its operations. UNYPAD's Community Security Working Group (CSWG) is an example of this. The CSWG is a grassroots-led mechanism that assists in conflict resolution in Pagalungan and South Upi in Maguindanao. The CSWG in Pagalungan was eventually institutionalized in the municipality through a formal council resolution. And because of these efforts, the mayor of Pagalungan was said to be recognized and awarded by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG).

To ensure sustainability, CRS has been consciously implementing sustainability planning, which involves working with partners to identify the sustainability aspects of their initiatives. For example, this may involve figuring out ways for the continuation of mediation as a conflict resolution approach through a mechanism; or how can traditional leaders continue their work on land conflict resolution and the ways that CRS can support

these. One of the things that came out from that sustainability conversation was for the partner and the traditional religious leaders to lobby with the barangay to come up with a barangay resolution or ordinance that recognize the role of traditional religious leaders in supporting land conflict resolution.

Another approach to institutionalization is CSO efforts to engage the Barangay Development Planning (BDP) process to ensure that locally planned peace and security efforts are institutionalized in local governments. For example, Nonviolent Peaceforce supports the development of barangay (village) peace and development plans, while TAF also has a similar BDP process in the past which they call Barangay Development and Security Plans (BDSP). Engaging in this planning and budgeting process helps ensure that the peace and development needs of communities are included and budgeted in a municipality's internal revenue allotment.

Meanwhile, International Alert has worked with the Mindanao Business Council in supporting the formulation of the Local Investment Incentive Code of Parang, Maguindanao which features a strong focus on the principles of conflict-sensitivity within multiple institutions and how this can be operationalized in the development of an investments and incentive code in high-risk and conflict areas.

On a broader level, a similar approach in ensuring sustainability of peacebuilding efforts is the institutionalization of certain conflict resolution practices through the passage of legislation in the regional parliament of Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). These can be seen in RIDO's active support during the consultations for the prospective passage of an Alternative Dispute Resolution Law

which recognizes indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms and efforts; TAF's support of local CSO MOSEP for the prospective passage of the Magna Carta for PWDs; and the IAG's various policy papers with regard to the possible extension of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority in BARMM. At the national level, International Alert and its partner coalition, the Marawi Reconstruction Conflict Watch (MRCW), has been instrumental in paving the way for the passage of the Marawi Compensation Bill in both houses of Congress, which was recently signed into law by the president this April 27, 2022.

However, institutionalization, which ensures sustainability, is not without its challenges. CSOs do not often get a formal resolution from local councils and a community-based planning and budgeting process is not always supported by a local government. CRS partners for instance are still working to attain a resolution for a local conflict resolution body which they supported. In lieu of a formal resolution, some CSOs often just settle for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the local government.

Generally, the existence of special bodies like the CSWG, community-based processes like the BDPs, ongoing legislation work, council resolutions, MOUs and pending house bills are often used by CSOs as indicators or evidence that a peacebuilding initiative is at least on the path to sustainability.

***Sustainability at the Individual Level***. Compared to the more evident structures of institutionalization, sustainability at the individual level is often more difficult to ascertain. A common question raised by CSOs is: "How do you assess the sustainability of capacity building efforts or trainings?" The common answers to this are:

sustainability happens when a change in the mindset occurs in people; and sustainability is seen when there is an application of these trainings or the knowledge from these trainings. Hence, it is often not enough to say that sustainability is attained when there are changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes of people. Often what counts for CSOs is the application of these newly-acquired skills through the actions taken by people. An example of this is when community stakeholders overcome their fear and prejudices to actually reach out and start dialoguing among themselves or with another group to discuss or resolve certain issues and jointly plan to address problems in their community.

When the St. Michael's Cathedral in Iligan was bombed in 1992, it was immediately followed by a massacre of a Muslim family. Citizens became concerned that Muslims and Christians were being pitted against each other which could lead to a repeat of the 1972 war in Mindanao. The concerned citizens organized a multi-stakeholder meeting that includes both lay and religious Muslim and Christian leaders, to prevent an escalation of violence. Leaders from both sides of the religious divide were able to overcome their fear and biases to help defuse tensions. This gathering of leaders eventually inspired the creation the Bishops-Ulama Forum and several dialogue movements in Mindanao.

A key mover during these events attributes their initiative to the legacy of Dansalan College's thrust of promoting Muslim-Christian dialogue through various seminars on culture sensitivity and their summer programs on Mindanao and Sulu. There have been similar instances like this when community leaders that received prior peace training were able to mobilize across societal divides to defuse rising tensions. Such as

when community leaders from Lanao and Misamis provinces mobilized to dialogue with government and the MILF forces to prevent a repeat of a war that was threating to happen during the breakdown of the MOA-AD[94] in 2008. Or more recently, the series of dialogues between host communities and internally displaced peoples (IDPs) affected by the Marawi siege to defuse tensions. Many of the stakeholders involved in these events underwent some sort of organizing and prior trainings on peacebuilding themes. But while the connection between prior trainings and the actual conduct of peace dialogues are always in question, such instances still provide good insights on what sustainability looks like at the individual level.

Dedette Suacito of Nagdilaab in Basilan, cites a powerful testimonial of a woman who attended peace trainings. When the woman's husband was murdered, this naturally enraged her sons who started to mobilize and buy firearms for revenge. She cited how the woman talked to her sons, saying that this is not what we learned from our training. She eventually prevailed over her sons to stand down. According to the woman's testimonial, her actions can be attributed to the fundamental shift in mindset that she had because of the trainings given to her. Dedette further emphasized that if not for this one woman's change of heart, a rido (feud) would have erupted in their village which would have devastated the whole community. Dedette adds:

> "Sometimes we forget the importance of personal changes happening to people, and how this can have ripple effects throughout the community. If institutionalization fails because of the changing political landscape, it is still the individuals that carry the torch."

[94] Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domain.

***Sustainability for networks and coalitions***. CSOs that work on building networks and coalitions offer another interesting glimpse of the dimension of sustainability. Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID), is focused building networks and coalitions to provide CSOs with solidarity and support in conflict prevention, democracy building, and peaceful self-determination struggles. For IID, the sustainability of networks and coalitions are manifested in the following instances:

- If the coalitions and networks are still existing and if people attend meetings called.
- If they seek the support and solidarity of each other's networks for their respective issues.
- If their networks have a common agenda that is sustained and embedded in their respected networks, actions, or projects.
- If they are able to conduct joint activities and brainstorm on certain common issues and do common studies.

It seems that the sustainability of networks and coalitions is due to their flexible and adaptive nature. IID for instance can form tactical networks that are issue-based coalitions such as what they did in 2001 during the All-Out-War, the Buliok War of 2003, and the Mamasapano clash in 2015. For example, they had to expand to a broader platform such as the Mindanao Peace Weavers (MPW) to counter the government's all-out-war call against the MILF and the Moro people in the national discourse. This same MPW network was reactivated during the Marawi Siege and then it was transformed into the Kaakbay Bangsamoro in support of the Bangsamoro transition. This versatile quality of CSO networks and coalitions is another manifestation of sustainability that is further explored under the sustainability section of the Analysis Chapter (Chapter Eight).

***Sustainability as a result of good practices***. Some CSOs also view sustainability as a result of appropriate development practices and the hard work you invested in your project. As Kalma Isnain of IRDT puts it:

> "Sustainability is important because it is here that you will see if a project has really achieved something or not. You cannot just tell people or write down something about your project unless it comes from actual work done. Because if your effort in a project is subpar, you cannot hope to say that its results will be sustainable."

And indeed, when talking about sustainability, CSOs would often discuss the principles and processes in ensuring the sustainability of peacebuilding projects. These include ensuring the broad participation of stakeholders, inclusive and genuine consultations, fostering a sense of ownership and co-creation, continuous communication, and providing constant guidance to local partners. Interestingly, all of these are the same qualities that also make a good development project. The head of the Bangsamoro Women Service Center (BWSC) laments that so many of the development projects provided in BARMM have been wasted due to improper implementation. Most projects were just given without proper consultation with community stakeholders. Hence there is no sense of ownership among communities for the project which affected their sustainability.

***Sustainability as replication***. Often, when CSOs say that a peace project is sustainable, it also means that a particular effort is replicated in other contexts or when there is a flowering of similar efforts. This is the case with IRDT's PeaceConnect project which was designed to improve and strengthen interfaith and intercultural relations between the peoples of Zamboanga peninsula and Sulu archipelago. Through the project,

IRDT was able to convene a multi-stakeholder technical working group (TWG) composed of representatives from the local government, CSO, academe, religious, and security sector to help address pressing peace and security issues especially relating to violent extremism. The model of the TWG was so successful that it was replicated in areas of the Zamboanga Peninsula and the island provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. One member of the TWG in Zamboanga City who was a military officer even requested from IRDT the process used in the project in the hopes of replicating the TWG model of partnership in the next province he will be assigned in.

In the case of the Easter Sunday bombing of St. Michael's Cathedral in 1992, which saw the creation of a multisectoral effort to defuse the rising tension between Muslim and Christians, the Ranao Muslim-Christian Movement for Dialogue and Peace was born to continue such initiatives. But the number of participants in this movement dwindled as the months passed by. So, it was suggested that they focus on gathering the Muslim and Christian religious leaders instead to become a religious group of the movement. This eventually saw the emergence of the Bishops-Ulama Forum that became the Bishops-Ulama Conference. There were other grassroots movements that emerged during that time which was said to be inspired by the general movement towards interfaith dialogues for peace. These include civil society groups like Pakigdait, the Philippine Muslim Welfare Society, Baloi Muslim-Christian Movement, and Panday Kalinaw. The flowering of these interreligious dialogue movements after the 1992 cathedral bombing and the first multisectoral meetings, can be viewed as a manifestation

of sustainability and even impact as these clearly reflect the continuity of the original goal of reducing distrust among faith communities to keep the peace in Lanao.

Prof. Rufa Guiam poetically sums up the idea behind sustainability: "How will we ensure whether the footprints that we created are indelible enough that will stand the test of time?"

**Issue of Transfer**

Closely related with the concept of sustainability is the issue of transfer. I say this because the examples given by key informants on sustainability seem to imply attempts to move individual level trainings and local level dialogues into the wider arena of application in society such as in the aforementioned St. Michael Cathedral case and the peace process. However, only a very few CSOs are familiar with the concept of transfer. The evaluation professionals interviewed during the focus-group discussions said that they have not heard of the issue of transfer as a concept or criteria used in evaluation. Their initial thought about transfer was the transfer of skills such as during trainings. But as they better understood my definition of transfer, they see it as something like a replication, or an expansion. Dr. Norma Gomez cited the example of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) model of education which was replicated in Mindanao/ BARMM. The key informants also added that interventions contributing to the bigger picture is a requirement of any project.

In the meantime, CRS is more familiar with the concept of transfer. They cited ideas similar in my review of literature, such as viewing transfer as scaling up from individual to group to societal; key people to more people; personal to sociopolitical.

More concretely, CRS projects intentionally connect their initiatives from the barangay (village) level, up to the regional level. They hope to use the experience from the communities from the barangay and the municipal levels to lobby and advocate for policies around conflict resolution in the BARMM. Although they admitted that while their partners resolve conflict, documentation is still lacking especially on land issues where there are lots of concerns. Documentation is really a bottleneck for them.

**Success and Effectiveness**

Of all the criteria mentioned in this study, the concepts of success and effectiveness seem to be the most interchangeable with each other and with other evaluation criteria. This is not surprising since my own review of literature treats both concepts as interchangeable. When CSOs assess the quality of their peacebuilding work, much of their indicators for effectiveness can also be applied when talking about outcomes, impact, and sustainability. For instance, the ultimate measure of success in a particular TAF project is getting legislation on policies approved and the budget to back it up. Notice how this measure also applies for both sustainability and impact.

Success and effectiveness can also be thought of as different levels of analysis such as from general to a specific focus. It can also be conceptualized as a sense of scale or magnitude from a narrow result to or a wider impact. When the evaluators interviewed weigh in, success and effectiveness are not synonymous all the time. They see success as a broad and highly subjective concept, whereas effectiveness is more manageable and specific to a set criterion. For Dr. Mañego, a project is effective if it meets its objectives,

but this does not necessarily mean that a project is successful. Although he adds that effectiveness can be one of the indicators of success.

According to evaluators, Dr. Durante and Dr. Gomez, they usually see CSOs using effectiveness as a criterion when evaluating, as they focus more on processes such as project delivery, how it was accepted in the community, and how it worked. It is easier to use effectiveness in evaluating the result or outcome of a program. Accordingly, they always use effectiveness with Theory of Change.

Success can be defined broadly that shows the overall merit of a project or it can also be conceptualized as a contribution to the wider community or region. For instance, Dr. Durante suggests that success can be defined in terms of how a project contributed to addressing the larger concerns of a community or region. Effectiveness is used when you focus on something specific, like what you are doing in a project. While success can have other implications, like when results are unintentional. According to Dr. Durante, "It is quite different if a project is effective in itself, or when viewed in relation to the other variables around." Here we get a sense of scale or magnitude in terms of usage. While effectiveness often pertains to a specific, individual project, the term "success" is used to describe projects that have a wider impact or contribution.

Nevertheless, success can also be narrowly defined. One evaluator cites how a CSO project defined their success in terms of formulating an ordinance to make a local community peace working group become part of the formal barangay governance. But whether or not this community peace working group is really effective, still remains to be

seen. Whatever mental calisthenics these two concepts present, it is clear for CSOs that it is the community that determines if their peacebuilding projects are successful or not.

**Complexity**

When asked about how they account for complexity in their peacebuilding and evaluation efforts, some informants initially doubted if they even consciously really think about it. This is understandable since most of the CSOs are homegrown, making them very attuned to what is happening in their own areas. For the evaluators interviewed, accounting for complexity involves really understanding the context through studies, research, and consultations with key people, leading to a thorough analysis of the situation. For them, this is really part of the process of background study in any of their initiatives. They also recommend to regularly keep tabs on what is happening in the communities and make a conscious effort to document these complexities which would lead to a better analysis.

But this is easier said than done. Prof. Rufa Guiam cautions that while accounting for complexity seems easy on paper, the reality in Mindanao is even more complicated: "This is because there are lots of interfaces that have layers upon layers of factors both enabling and disabling. Then you add the potent mix of illegal economies. As you do [your interventions], you are also cognizant of the fact that you are not in an environment that is free of other intersecting and possibly even conflicting factors; [there are] even people who are out there to waylay you or spoil whatever you want to start." Hence, capturing the complexity of contexts, problems, and projects is closely related to the

principle of genuine inclusive participation of stakeholders to ensure the relevance of projects.

## Additional Evaluation Concepts that Surfaced in the Interviews

This section delves into the other relevant concepts used by CSOs when assessing the quality of their peace projects. These are: changes in relationships and mindsets, resilience, relevance, as well as innovation, flexibility, and creativity.

### Changes in Relationships and Mindsets

Change is the primary construct through which we assess the progress and quality of almost any development and peacebuilding project. As explained earlier, change or intermediate level outcomes is often what CSOs really mean when they say "impact." But the concept of change is very broad even in the peacebuilding realm alone. This section discusses the most frequently mentioned changes by CSOs when assessing their peacebuilding work: **change in relationships and change in mindsets**. These two concepts go hand-in-hand and are by far, the most consistently mentioned by CSOs. Most likely, these are the most important aspects that CSOs look for when assessing the quality of their peacebuilding projects.

#### Change in relationships

Change in relationships is premised on the observation that the underlying societal divides fuel much of the volatility in Mindanao. These societal cleavages can be sustained by deeply-rooted historical grievances, identity politics and the struggle for self-determination, the manipulation by political elites of their constituents, and a history of strained communal relations. There are a number of social schisms that can cause

tensions and sustain conflict. These can include among others, the divide between Muslim and Christians communities, the schisms among rival families and clans, among rival political factions, among rival revolutionary groups, and even between abusive state security forces and far-flung communities.

As an outcome, change in relationship usually comes after a series of peacebuilding initiatives such as capacity building, awareness raising, and actual problem-solving meetings and dialogues. Change in relationships are variously conceptualized by NGOs/ CSOs as a process of relationship building; the bridging of relations; the repair or restoration of relationships; and even a remembrance of past relationships.

RIDO Inc.'s clan organizing initiatives specifically utilizes the approach of reminiscing past relationships to restore and strengthen the bonds of families and clans, to prevent communication gaps, and misunderstandings that can result to clan feuds. This remembrance of past relationships is also used to restore trust even during a full-blown feud (*rido*). ECOWEB and MARADECA's efforts have been supporting the bridging of relations between IDPs and their host communities in Lanao and Iligan (relationships that were not there before) to reduce tensions after the Marawi siege. Many CSOs like NP, UNYPAD, IID, and CRS have implemented peacebuilding projects that support the networking of communities with agencies and local governments, and other stakeholders to enhance conflict prevention and disaster management.

There are also NGOs have been bridging relationships between the security sector (military and police), civil society, and the aggrieved communities that have had bad

experiences with security forces in the past. For instance, Balay Mindanaw, has for the longest time, been conducting peace trainings for tribal leaders and local government officials which they developed into a training module they call *Op Kors* (Operation Peace Course). Through a serendipitous turn of events, Balay was able to reach out to some members of the military who were open about a joint undertaking on peace trainings because of a realization that winning the war in Mindanao has not been a successful for decades (BMFI 2010, 3-4). Balay eventually tweaked their *Op Kors* to answer the needs of the military and provided peace and conflict management trainings for several units of the military (ibid.). *Op Kors* has been so successful that its concept has been replicated by other NGOs, such as TAF. Together with commanders of the Marine Battalion Landing Teams with support from HD staff, CSOs, and the academe, a series of Community Relations Training (CRT)[95] workshops were developed and conducted for the military assigned in Sulu which helped in bridging relations between the military and aggrieved communities.

The core of all of this relationship-building is establishing trust among social actors. This involves the gaining of trust where there was none before, or the restoration of trust, where it was lost. But we all know that trust is not something immediately gained. Trust has to be earned and is oftentimes considered a long-term result much like impact. One of the evaluators interviewed, shared an instance in one of the peacebuilding projects she was evaluating. One participant in a forum discretely approached her to

[95] CRT started as a project of Lt. Col. Romulo Quemado II for his course under the Mindanao Bridging Leaders Program of the Asian Institute of Management (AIM). The course was warmly received by locals.

clarify that they are not really friends yet with a rival group. They are just civil to each other. This goes to show that trust is something deeper.

Some common indicators of change in relationships cited by CSOs in their projects are the following:

- When there are no more grudges or serious conflict (violent conflict) in the community.
- When people are going about their normal way of life: socio-economic, politically, and religiously a peaceful community.
- When both sides of the social divide start talking. For example, when Muslims and Christians start talking whereas before they did not.
- When rival groups that once viewed each other negatively, see each other in a more positive light.
- When both Muslims and Christians proactively come together to report incidents to the barangay or get clarifications from authorities, especially when there are rumors of danger or sightings of criminal elements in their communities.
- When mechanisms or bodies that deal with conflict resolution and prevention or disaster management are established.
- When people start meeting and working together to address certain issues.

These indicators for change in relationships by CSOs gives us insight into how certain interventions do have an effect on the drivers of conflict as postulated by the RPP's criteria for effectiveness (RPP 2004: 15; RPP 2016, 62).

Dr. Gail Ilagan, the director of COPERS believes that change in relationships is one of the most difficult things to do. "You cannot do it overnight." She cautions peacebuilding efforts that immediately claim change in relationships by distinguishing it from a spur of the moment events. She says, this is commonly seen during reconciliation ceremonies wherein feuding clan members are overcome with emotion and suddenly reach out to hug each other and cry. This is also commonly witnessed in truth and reconciliation events when a military commander representing his troupe or battalion,

asks for forgiveness from an aggrieved community for past atrocities which his unit did not even do. During such emotional events, community leaders are usually driven to tears by intense emotion because of the sincerity of the commanding officer. Dr. Ilagan argues that such emotional reaction as the event unfolds is different from long-term processes that nurtures trust and restores relations.

**Change in mindsets**

Change in mindsets is another frequently mentioned type of change that CSOs often look for and is probably one of the most important. In the context of peacebuilding, some key informants would describe it as the shift "from a violent to a less violent, or more peaceful" frame of mind. ECOWEB sees change in mindset as when one actually experiences or realizes that he/she can do something about the situation, no matter how small it is; and when they don't forget about it. Kalimudan's Ding Cali describes change in mindsets as a consequence of peacebuilding, which can be anything that turns "a bad situation into a good situation." He problematizes however, that: "because peacebuilding is collective, it cannot be done by only one person. It should be done by the community. But changing collective mindsets is more difficult. *Suntok sa buwan* (like shooting for the moon)." This seems to imply that change in mindset usually starts from the individual, but the jump from individual change to collective change is more difficult.

Many of the interviews consider mindset as something that starts internally from the individual, personal level which gradually expands into the relational. This resonates with the experience of Balay Mindanaw as they also look for changes manifested in the way their partners think, the way they do, and the way they feel. In Balay's observation,

their community partners are commonly hesitant at first or fearful to engage with a perceived rival group. For instance, some members of the Christian communities are initially afraid to face a member of a Muslim community, or the MILF, especially if tensions are high between the two groups. After much ground work in their peacebuilding projects, they will see improvements in their relationships such as when they observe both groups visiting each other's communities. At the thinking level, both parties now consider themselves as partners, whereas before, they regarded themselves as parties to a conflict.

This is probably best exemplified in their experience with *Ops Kors* (Operation Peace Course). When Balay attempted to reach out to the military, it raised some eyebrows among civil society groups because the military was perceived to be antithetical to the idea of peace due to past atrocities against communities. But during Balay's engagements with the military, they realized that there were military officers who were willing to change and even help improve the situation of the people. But they have no skills in community organizing and mediating conflicts. Kaloy Manlupig, president of Balay, stressed that the military would have difficulty transforming itself using its own mindset, and needs outside help (Ilagan 2010, 5). This led to a joint undertaking between Balay Mindanaw and some commanders in the military for a series of peace trainings for their units. This resulted to military personnel becoming more culture sensitive, more respectful to villagers, and more cognizant of human rights and the importance of the rule of law. This shift represents the changing mindset that is happening in the military (ibid.). All of these serve to illustrate a mutual changing of mindsets because of their

mutual engagement with each other: the civil society and some communities changing their perspectives about the military, and the military shifting their paradigms from winning the war to winning the peace.

The journey from personal transformation of the mindset, to the bridging of relationships demonstrates how changing mindset and relationships are closely associated. CRS describes the transformation story of a *hijabi*[96] Muslim woman who attended their religious activities. For the first time in her life, the Muslim woman was able to interact with priests and other members of the religious. In the process, she gradually developed good relationships with other women of other faiths, and with her own community. Because of the empowerment she got, she was selected to become the head of the violence against women and children (VAWC) committee in the barangay. She is now the one who mediates on issues related to women and children. This gradation of change is what CSOs normally describe as milestones in their projects.

Both of the examples aptly fit with MARADECA's description of change in mindset. Salic Ibrahim, executive director of MARADECA, describes change of mindset as "going beyond their comfort zone," which somehow gives us a hint of this shift from the personal to the relational. But this can also be applied to the shift in knowledge and practices. MARADECA's example of change in mindset involves a datu's (local leader) shift in his understanding and practice of peacemaking. Because of the new knowledge he gained from peace trainings given by the CSO, the datu changed his usual approach to conflict resolution from being authoritative or arbitrational to being more of a mediator.

[96] Muslim woman wearing a veil.

The main evidence that MARADECA looks for is how the datu applied his new learnings to make their conflict resolution initiatives more effective and sustainable.

The Institute for Autonomy and Governance (IAG), which does a lot of policy work and political dialogues with leaders in the peace process, see change in mindset as being open to others' perspectives. According to Benedicto Bacani head of IAG, in their line of work, mindsets are changed along the lines of political inclusivity, when people are more willing to share power and resources. Change of mindset happens when:

> "They are able to listen to views that are not the same as theirs; which also opens up more options than what you originally envisioned. So, it's trying to broaden the lens. If you change mindsets, they're more open to dialogue, to inclusive institutions, and in the long run, that would be good for the peace process and the cause of peacebuilding. If you are able to influence mindsets, then that also affects the quality of your political institutions."

He cites the case of a prominent political leader in Mindanao who was vehemently opposed to the inclusion of his province in the Bangsamoro autonomous regional government. In the run up to the Bangsamoro Organic Law plebiscite, the leader was said to be demonizing the MILF, and actively campaigning for a "NO" to inclusion. As part of their project on engaging political dialogues, IAG conducted a series of dialogues with key leaders about this issue and gave an especially prominent role to the dissenting leader to voice his concerns. IAG made a conscious decision to make the politician's voice be heard and influence his agenda within the ambit of rule of law. The series of consultation dialogues eventually led the dissenting leader to file a petition challenging the constitutionality of the Bangsamoro Organic Law in the Supreme Court. For IAG,

this is the right arena to express their opinion or question laws or arrangements that have an impact on their constituents. The situation is ideal for IAG because the dissenting leader was given the proper forum to voice out his concerns within the rule of law, as opposed to continuing to be antagonistic against the MILF leaders or even using extra legal means. At least when the courts decide, leaders tend to accept the ruling.

**Resilience**

Many CSOs consider resilience as essential for the sustainability of projects. The CSOs interviewed often equate project resilience to sustainability. This is not surprising since the region is beset with multiple sources of violent conflict, which creates a lot of uncertainty for development and peacebuilding efforts. Even the broader political environment can sometimes generate uncertainties in the signed peace agreements. For instance, at the time of this study, some CSOs have voiced their concerns over the ongoing debate on the issue of the extension of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), as it raises the specter of continuing distrust that will eventually sow divisions within the fledgling BARMM government. Iona of HD shares:

> "Given the chaos in BARMM and in the higher ups, resilience is important. How do you make the ground resilient, regardless of what is happening at the national or regional political arena? How do you protect them from the violence that can be spurred because of what's happening on top? What if the national government reneges on the CAB? It will be chaos which will have an effect on the ground. So, for me, when I say resilience, how do we help the people on the ground, to protect themselves, or to avoid conflict, avoid violence regardless of what's happening on top. Especially when government has other priorities, such as handling a pandemic, as what is happening now. How do we protect the ground from these developments happening at the national level?"

Given these uncertainties, CSOs often ponder of how to make their projects more resilient to weather conflagrations and other insecurities created by national level politics. Some projects have demonstrated this adaptability to unforeseen events. Salic Ibrahim of MARADECA sees resilience as "conflict proofing." For instance, they make sure that the beneficiaries of their enterprise projects are prepared for the possibility of being displaced by conflict. They also make sure that conflicts are nipped at the bud even in their enterprise associations.

One evaluator pointed out how BRAC's Alternative Delivery Model (ADM) of basic education adapted to the realities of conflict in their project sites in Mindanao by making their education projects highly mobile. When fighting is already imminent in neighboring areas, the project packs up and transfers their education project to the evacuation centers, as opposed to the usual practice of suspending projects. They were able to do this by getting advance information about brewing conflicts in their vicinity. According to the key informant, this is also a good case of how to account for complexities when implementing projects.

Balay Mindanaw sees resilience as being able to deal with conflict constructively. They view it from different angles, such as sustainability at the personal level; the initiatives of community people themselves; institutionalized reforms or policies of change; instituted mechanisms for peace; constituency building; the vertical and horizontal linkages that are happening because of peacebuilding efforts; and all the individual and sociopolitical efforts that contribute to the peace infrastructure. All these, for them, are what comprise resilience. While Balay did not further elaborate, I can only

surmise that all these initiatives ranging from personal-individual level resilience to establishing community-level peace mechanisms, that connects to wider a multi-stakeholder network that addresses peace and security concerns, to regional and national level reforms that help address grievance forms a web that lessens instability, strengthens state-society relations, and provides safety nets for those most vulnerable.

In addition, Balay Mindanaw also emphasize the importance of studying the patterns and dynamics of conflict in their project areas, and distilling lessons from conflicts in other parts of the world. While this may not guarantee the sustainability of their projects, they believe that the added knowledge would benefit their partners by improving the resilience of their communities in dealing with conflicts.

Balay's broad view of resilience, contrasts with the more individual focus of COPERS. COPERS believes that a resilient community starts with individual resilience. For them, a healthy mental state is vital for the proper functioning and resilience of individuals in terms of coping with stresses because of war and disaster. This is the reason why COPERS focuses on initiatives that ensure the mental health of individuals and provide psychosocial support to people and communities in fragile situations. One objective of their initiatives is to connect the individual and strengthen the individual's support systems, such as families and communities, to ensure resilience, all of which, comprise their definition of social cohesion.

**Relevance**

The concept of relevance in evaluation was not initially included in the dimensions I wanted to explore, simply because of the assumption that locals in conflict

contexts would know what projects they need. But it turns out, relevance of projects can easily be overlooked by some project proponents for various reasons (like funding). The issue of relevance has been surfacing during my interviews as CSOs have questioned the appropriateness of certain peacebuilding concepts and approaches. Again, this is closely tied to the appeal of project stakeholders for genuine consultations and inclusive participation to projects. This is the reason I think relevance should be looked more into when it comes to project design and in evaluating peace efforts in Mindanao.

Relevance is one of the dimensions in the OECD Evaluation guidelines. They define it as "the extent to which the intervention's objectives and design respond to the beneficiaries' global, country and partner/ institution needs, policies and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change." (OECD 2021). Relevance asks the question: *Is the intervention doing the right thing?*

Relevance, or the appropriateness of projects to local settings, is important within the context of an ethnically and culturally diverse peoples in Mindanao. For CSOs, a question that reflects relevance is: *Is a particular idea, approach, or peacebuilding intervention appropriate for the local context?* The evaluation experts interviewed would say that the relevance of peacebuilding initiatives is dependent on how well conflict analysis was established from the beginning.

There are several themes that emerged from the interviews that touch on issues of relevance in peacebuilding. These include the importance of spirituality and the role of Islam and indigenous beliefs in peacebuilding; the use of indigenous conflict resolution

processes; and the importance of understanding gender and culture sensitivity in implementing peace projects.

In the realm of project implementation, issues of gender and women's empowerment have surfaced as areas of debate between CSOs and their funding partners. A common issue raised by CSOs is when their funding partners require them to have at least an equal or approximate number of male and female participants in their project activities. This requirement has been met with criticism by some CSOs for being insensitive to the local context or just plain impractical. Some CSOs would argue that women's roles in their community is to take care of the children and family, and it is usually impractical to get an equal number of women to participate in certain project activities. "Who else would take care of the children?" They argue instead for a more equitable approach to attendance such as having a smaller percentage of women participants instead of just plain equality.

Another condition that raises eyebrows is the requirement to have female mediators included in the negotiation table. Involving women as mediators in negotiations or conflict resolution activities can be a sensitive issue in some communities. Rosemain Abduraji of Tumikang Sama Sama (TSS) points out that while many CSOs recognize the important role of women in peace negotiations, they also emphasize that in places such as Marawi and Sulu, women are not usually brought forward in terms of mediating conflict. There might be some exceptions. But in general, among Muslim communities such as in Lanao, it is not ideal for women to be seen directly involved in negotiations. Sultan Pogi of RIDO Inc. argues that in practice, women usually exert their

influence in the "privacy of the bedroom." This happens when their wives, aunts, or respected elderly women would try to influence the mindset of men by providing inputs to the negotiations privately that can lead to conflict resolution. The sultan adds that women are also known to conduct shuttle diplomacy and act as alternative channels of communications between feuding parties. Though women's efforts are usually invisible in the conflict resolution process, CSOs highlight these as examples of the complementary relationship between men and women, which is more important and effective for them.

CSOs overcome these cultural barriers by finding creative ways to get inputs from women. TSS of Sulu for instance have separate conversations with women and youth which they call "Speak Out." In Speak Out sessions, they are able to get the valuable thoughts of women and youth on certain issues like how to solve the conflicts in their areas. A similar approach is being done by Kalimudan Foundation of Lanao in dealing with VAWC among families affected by conflict through their "family conversations" approach.

Big ideas like women's empowerment and violent extremism are also sometimes met with criticism and skepticism by locals. The concept of women's empowerment in particular, is criticized by some Muslim CSOs for being very western-centric in its view of empowerment, or for seemingly being an imposition of "UN standards" as it does not reflect the inherent agencies of Muslim women within their own communities. Veteran CSO head, Tata Maglangit explains:

> "Moro women are very community-oriented. They would rather facilitate than impose… There are many women who call themselves

‘empowered’—thinking for themselves; deciding for themselves. But I look at empowerment differently. I feel that all of us are empowered in the sense that we always look at our husbands as partners in the eyes of Allah. There is equality. But of course, it is the community that determines what is for males and females. The Bangsamoro women, I feel, are empowered, self-determining women. Even without these lectures and advocacies [on empowerment], this is still their positioning in the community, especially those that have experienced revolutionary life in the MNLF. The MNLF women are more active—not competing with the men—but very assertive. To sum it up, we all have the same experience in the eyes of Allah. There is equality when it comes to our faith.”

Given these criticisms, it seems that the complementarity of gender roles and the concept of gender equity are more relevant for Muslim CSOs and their communities, rather than gender equality and the seeming “western” view of women’s empowerment. Such contrasting views may reveal a deeper debate on how peacebuilding is conceptualized and implemented in our various faith communities.

Spirituality or faith plays a central role in many peace and reconciliation efforts among peoples of Mindanao. It is common to see community thanksgiving rituals in Muslim, Christian and Indigenous reconciliation ceremonies. These can involve a series of thanksgiving prayers such as the *duwa’a* and community celebrations such as *kandori* or *kanduli*. An ongoing study by Myla Leguro of CRS has shown the importance of the spiritual dimension as a source of energy, motivation, and commitment which is central in interreligious dialogues initiatives among the Muslim, Christian, and Indigenous groups. Similarly, my own documentation of *rido* resolutions have pointed to the ubiquitous presence of rituals and ceremonies that ask for forgiveness, blessing, and healing (Torres 2006; 2007; 2010).

Despite the vital role that spirituality plays in peacebuilding efforts, there seems to be a failure to transcend the values of spirituality to the convoluted and secular realm of governance. The disconnect between the role of spirituality and the various faith traditions in peacebuilding and governance has been a source of frustration for many CSOs. This has led some CSOs to question the effectiveness and continuing relevance of peacebuilding. Tata Maglangit laments the fact that many CSOs have been doing peacebuilding work for several decades now, but the question remains: *Are there really changes?*

> "Through all these years, for how many decades we always talk of peacebuilding. And yet, until now there are no changes despite the talk. Poverty incidence is still very high. There's still ongoing conflict in the communities; the threat of violence is still there. So much resources have been poured into our communities, but the situation remains the same. At the end of the day, we also get burned out. So, I don't know, unless we change our mindset and frameworks. For us, our basis has always been our Islamic ideology. Unless peacebuilding is anchored on Islam, nothing will change. I think that's the only way. My point is, maybe peacebuilding initiatives in Muslim communities should be anchored on the relevance of being Muslim. You should not set aside being a Muslim."

While the importance of Islam and other faith traditions are often acknowledged in peacebuilding efforts, there seems to be a lack of developed systems that bridge these values that have been so successful in peacebuilding into the secular realm of governance. Many CSOs have deplored the seeming bottomless greed and selfish interests of politicians and leaders which continue to derail peace and development in Mindanao. While politics and bad governance are challenging the peacebuilding efforts of CSOs, the constraints posed by donor requirements are also stifling CSO creativity and

innovation, which have made peacebuilding efforts initially successful in Mindanao. This leads us to the other salient feature that is surfacing in this study.

**Innovation, Flexibility, and Creativity**

These are probably the least explored criteria in this study, because questions on peacebuilding innovations were optional questions if there was still time in the interviews. But these still come out in some form or the other. There are so many stories and narratives from CSOs and their partners (often dismissed as anecdotes) that exhibit the flexibility, creativity, and innovations of CSOs in their peacebuilding efforts. In fact, I argue that the success of pioneering peacebuilding efforts in Mindanao has been because of the ability of CSOs to innovate, and be creative and flexible in implementing their projects.

In resolving conflicts for instance, CSOs have often leveraged indigenous resources such as local conflict resolution systems. RIDO Inc. for example has used clan genealogies (*salsilah*) to determine the *zukudan* or neutral common relatives between feuding families who can act as mediators, as well as Meranao indigenous conflict resolution systems in resolving *rido* (clan feuds). These include the tried and tested *taritib-ago-igma* (a set of customary laws and laws promulgated by the datu) and the *kokoman a kambhatabata'a* (law of kinsmen). Among indigenous peoples like the Menuvu and the Sama, they have peace gatherings called *kahimunan* and peace covenants like *dyandi/ janji* (promise) and *tampuda hu balagon* (cutting of the vine).

The innovation behind International Alert's real-time Critical Events Monitoring System (CEMS), is the use of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM)

officers embedded in a particular local government unit as early monitors and responders to conflict.[97] The executive director of Alert herself was pleased by the simplicity and brilliance of using DRRM officers as conflict monitors, because it is just an extension of their work in disaster and risk monitoring, especially in the Bangsamoro region of Mindanao. To add to this is Alert's use of the concept of conflict strings, which refer to episodes of violence arising from a discrete incident with one or multiple causes; or when the singular source of violence at the outset triggers other issues or causes of conflict (Conflict Alert 2020, 123).[98] Their innovative use and understanding of conflict strings helps them identify the combination of causes with the highest propensity to produce further episodes.

In terms of project management, the flexibility of both CSOs and their funding partners to find creative ways of meeting the stringent project management standards are important factors in the success of early peacebuilding efforts. In my personal experience as program manager, the auditors flagged my CSO partners for the purchase of cows and goats to be slaughtered during a *kandori* (ritual feasting). My partner CSOs and I would often make our case to the auditors that a *kandori* is equivalent to a public forum or conference that we normally fund, and that the cows and goats slaughtered for food are the catering services which we often support. In addition, the *kandori*, the cows, and goats, all serve a ritual function, that "washes away" the hurts between feuding families.

[97] R.A. 10121 or the "*Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010*" mandates the creation of Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Offices (LDRRMOs) in provinces, cities, municipalities, and Barangay DRRM Committees in barangays.
[98] Please refer to Nikki De la Rosa's 2014 paper "Disrupting Conflict Strings in Sub-National Contexts: Experience from Muslim Mindanao, Philippines."

Another issue often flagged by auditors in the projects I handle are the purchase of extra plane tickets for some spouses of Muslim women CSO heads who attend project meetings and conferences. My response to the auditors is that the husbands of women-led CSOs also need to know about the important work of their wives as CSO heads and project proponents in their communities. Giving them the option to take their husbands along lessens issues that might result to suspicions and jealousy by the husbands which would be an added burden to the women CSO heads. This is especially the case for new and upcoming CSOs. Funding a simple plane ticket greatly lessens the burden of women leaders and allows them to bond with their husbands on their trip, get to know their work, and ensure a more successful project. There are many experiences like these when CSOs converse with each other. Unfortunately, these are often relegated as "anecdotes" in the implementation of projects, which would have further enriched the implementation of peacebuilding efforts if these were collected and shared.

Flexibility, resourcefulness, and room for innovation was also raised by ZABIDA as important dimensions to look into during evaluation. Flexibility is important for them as it demonstrates the CSOs' ability to adapt to sudden changes, especially when something goes wrong in their projects. CSOs need to be able to come up with alternatives that allows them to pursue project objectives, such as the shift to pandemic response. Innovation and resourcefulness are also very important hallmarks of CSOs as these are signs that the organization is growing and adapting. They often see this when young people introduce new technologies or approaches in their projects. It also involves to being attuned to the emerging new dimensions or themes in peace such as their new

pursuits in health and environment. Meanwhile, HD advocates for more flexibility and innovation in doing evaluations as they believe that numbers do not often show the complete picture of what's going on in reality. They support this process by seeking help from universities in thinking about evaluating their conflict resolution projects, and being more open to flexible and adaptative M&E frameworks and methodologies.

The diminishing space for flexibility, creativity, and innovation in peacebuilding is a serious concern for CSOs. Veteran CSOs and evaluators often criticize donors for not going beyond the mandates of their funding to support innovations. They have observed that CSOs have been relegated to becoming service providers to big funders. Kalimudan in particular, misses jointly designing and developing their projects with partners, and experimenting with other approaches. For instance, Kalimudan, has been experimenting with local approaches to doing community assessments and conflict mapping through the use of a more Islamic approach of the *mashwarra*, which is a community-based consultative process. They are also trying out a more family-oriented approach to psychosocial interventions which they call "family conversations." This is a trust-building approach for families displaced and separated by conflict, and for those families experiencing stress due to VAWC, where Islamic leadership modeling may be more appropriate. Unfortunately, for Kalimudan, they said that they do not usually receive support for their experiments, as donors now do not think out of the box.

Seeing the potential of the principles and values embedded in Meranao Muslim culture, ECOWEB has often asked "How do we tap Meranao culture and Islamic values?" In their effort to answer this, they have innovatively channeled the richness of

Meranao Muslim culture into many of their interventions. One such intervention is their Survivor Community-Led Response (SCLR) approach to crises, which are rooted in the Islamic principles of *Khalifa* (trusteeship/ stewardship), *Ijma al-ummah* (community consensus); *Amanah* (accounting and transparency); and *Shura* (consultation).[99] The SCLR approach is also rooted in the Meranao values of *kapamagogopa* (volunteerism); *kapamagadata* (mutual respect); *kanggiginawae* (co-equality as human beings and recognition of different needs and capacities); *kathatabanga* (reciprocity and helping one another); *kasusulae* (respect the honor and dignity of others); *kapuporwae* (valuing self-esteem and appreciation for others); and *kathutonganaya* (kinship).[100]

The question that ECOWEB initially posed remains relevant as the local knowledge, wisdom, and practices of the various cultural communities in Mindanao largely remains untapped towards improving peacebuilding, development, and governance.

This chapter explored the dimensions of peacebuilding evaluation. It looked at how CSOs and evaluators understand each dimension or criteria, and how they applied these in their peacebuilding work. The discussions gave us some idea about what evaluation dimensions CSOs find more useful or relevant in the work they do. The next chapter delves into the evaluation challenges commonly faced by peacebuilding CSOs, and elicits some suggestions to overcoming some of these obstacles.

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[99] Survivor Community Led Response to Marawi Crisis: Approach to Localization (ECOWEB 2017).
[100] https://ecowebph.org/survivor-community-led-response-to-marawi-crisis/uncategorized/

# CHAPTER SEVEN: CHALLENGES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE EVALUATION OF PEACEBUILDING

Chapter Seven deals with the question: *What are the evaluation challenges encountered by CSOs and their suggestions on ways to improve the evaluation of their peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives?* It presents a discussion of the challenges experienced by CSOs in dealing with evaluations as well as their suggestions to improve the way evaluations are done for peacebuilding. All the findings presented here are drawn from the interviews.

## Challenges in the Evaluation of Peacebuilding Efforts

Evaluating peacebuilding initiatives is a challenge because of the various constraints often faced by evaluators when doing an evaluation in real-world contexts. This section discusses some the challenges faced by CSOs in the evaluation of peacebuilding efforts. These challenges are categorized according to the following emerging themes: typical constraints to evaluation; inadequate skills in evaluation; negative experiences with evaluators; evaluation mindset; and multiple perspectives on peace and peacebuilding.

### Typical Constraints

Similar to the usual obstacles cited in the review of literature, the study findings reveal that CSOs in Mindanao also experience the typical constraints when doing evaluations of peacebuilding projects. These typical constraints include the following: budget, time, political, and data constraints. An added constraint by experienced by evaluators in Mindanao is geography.

The most obvious constraint mentioned by CSOs is budget. The cost of doing a more formal evaluation is really a struggle for CSOs. This is the reason why many CSOs describe their evaluations as informal evaluations or internal evaluations, as these do not cost much. The more formal evaluations that utilize external evaluation consultants are usually conducted when donors support and require an independent evaluation process. While bigger INGOs have also expressed the need to have a more longitudinal view of their projects, or a portfolio level review, they doubt there are donors willing to fund it.

Timeframe constraint is another issue expressed by CSOs. Many CSOs have observed the recent trend of donors in supporting short-term projects (from six months to one year), rather than the past practice of funding long-term projects (at least 2-3 years). Accordingly, the short timeframe of projects often does not give CSOs enough time to establish more sustainable initiatives, which have more impact on their beneficiaries. This trend for shorter timeframes of grants is especially detrimental to the cause of peacebuilding since such efforts often require a longer period of time to build relationships and trust. In my own experience of grant-making, the preference of my office is a grant duration of one year, to maximize the number of projects and minimize the risk of having bad projects by not investing in long-term grants in one basket.

Geographical and related political constraints have also been cited by CSOs as affecting their evaluations because some of their project sites are difficult to reach. One evaluator's scheduled focus-group discussion (FGD) in a community in South Upi was cancelled because the rains made the dirt road hazardous for vehicles. In another

evaluation site, the existing grudges between two ethnic groups made it perilous for evaluators to continue. Another instance was when the scheduled evaluation of NP in the SPMS[101] box was cancelled due to the entry of elements of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in town, occupied the market resulting in a firefight between responding soldiers and BIFF.

Data constraints also affect CSOs especially those that use the survey method. According to one evaluator from UNYPAD, this sometimes happen when respondents do not answer questionnaires properly, or do not return questionnaires at all. Hence, they need to physically follow up respondents to get clarification regarding their responses.

Sometimes the way an evaluator conducts interviews compromises the data they get. One example mentioned was the failure to separate or cluster informants during community meetings, or to close FGDs from outsiders. This happened when community members are not separated from their leaders during FGDs. The result of this is the community members just deferred to the opinions of their more vocal leaders which skewed the results. Another example is when women were not separated from the men during meetings. Hence, the women tended not speak or did not raise certain issues important to them when other people were around.

Data constraints are also experienced when a project is not conducted properly, which messes up the design of the evaluation. This can also happen when a donor wants an evaluation done quickly for a short-term grant. Such is the case related by a key

[101] The 'SPMS' box is where deadly clashes often happen. It encompasses the municipalities of Datu Piang, Shariff Saydona Mustapha, Mamasapano, Datu Salibo, Shariff Aguak, Datu Unsay, Datu Saudi-Ampatuan, and Rajah Buayan (Conflict Alert 2020, 65).

informant who was asked to evaluate a project in some communities. During fieldwork, the evaluator discovered that the project had not even started yet in the communities. He describes the situation as "putting the carriage before the horse." Eventually, the evaluator just wrote a report of what he found out in the communities.

The evaluator FGD also surfaced the issue of big donors' propensity for requiring lots of paperwork (*ma-papel*) from NGOs. They relate the often-cited phrase that goes around development circles as an anecdote that pertains to donors' appetite for data: "feeding the beast." Ironically, in the process of "feeding the beast," the CSOs are often left starved for evaluative results and studies to nurture their own organizational growth.

This relates to the most telling data constraint revealed by several CSOs—that they are never given the results of research or evaluations of their projects. "We have no copies of all evaluations done by our (funding) partners. If we are not given the results of evaluations, what will be our basis for improvement?" says Dr. Anwar Saluwang of UNYPAD. He further laments that most of the time, their tasks during formal evaluations are limited to organizing communities and key informants for external evaluators to interview. But they never know about the results.

This state of affairs seems to persist because funders who commission evaluations often have confidentiality and proprietary clauses in their contracts which prevents evaluators or consultants from sharing details about the projects being evaluated. To some extent some sharing happens when there is an exit conference for a project and a presentation may happen. But written results are rarely shared to CSOs implementing the projects. Evaluators normally assume that it is the funding partner's responsibility to

share written evaluation results to their CSO partners. But this does not usually happen. This eventually has consequences on the CSOs' ability to learn from their own projects and certainly affects their chances for growth and improvement. This leads us now to one of the most common challenges expressed by CSOs.

**Inadequate Skills and Capacity in Evaluation**

CSOs frequently mention that there is a general lack of skills among their staff when it comes to evaluation. This includes documentation and writing skills. Philippine CSOs are generally known to have rich experience in community-based peace and development work. They are also very good in verbally relating their experiences to an audience. But being action-oriented individuals, CSO staff are often challenged when it comes to putting their ideas on paper. Many CSOs admit that writing is their main weakness, and this goes the same with evaluations. Simply, the action-oriented lifestyle of CSOs leaves little time for staff to actually reflect and write their experiences, much less keep abreast with the developments in peacebuilding and evaluation fields

Many CSOs have verbalized the need for more trainings on evaluation; more tools to help them evaluate; and more capacity building on writing. Some even broached the need of a refresher course on peacebuilding since there are now a lot of peacebuilding concepts and approaches out there that can be confusing. One CSO head mentioned her need to be updated on national level issues and policies in the national arena which can affect their work. Oftentimes, they only hear about new policies or new developments in the national arena that relate to their work when external consultants visit them. Another

CSO expressed the need for translators to help them translate local language reports and documentations into English.

One CSO in particular lamented the trend among INGOs of directly implementing projects and hiring local staff, which is causing a brain drain among local CSOs. While the CSO understands that this is a good opportunity for local staff, they also argue that they have spent years training these staff only to be recruited by INGOs. And because the INGOs are directly implementing projects, once the project ends, the technology and know-how does not remain with the local institution or CSO.

Meanwhile CRS and some evaluators interviewed have expressed the need for evaluators to have knowledge of both peacebuilding and evaluation. This is because there are only a few individuals that have skill sets in both fields. The key informants agree that in order to evaluate peacebuilding initiatives, an evaluator must not only be an expert in evaluation, but he or she must also have a good grasp of peacebuilding concepts and theories, and even better, a broad experience in doing peacebuilding work. For CRS, they often utilize a team that has a balanced skill set of evaluation and peacebuilding. Since not much is offered in terms of courses on evaluation and peacebuilding, the key informants are unanimous in saying that this is something that local universities and training institutes should explore.

**Negative Experience with Evaluators**

CSOs' negative experience with evaluators can sometimes present a challenge in evaluation. Some CSOs have shared that they have had a less than friendly interaction with some of the evaluators who visited them. A staff from Balay Mindanaw in

particular, took issue with the fault-finding attitude of one evaluator, and that experience gave her a "low morale." In another instance, MARADECA encountered an evaluator who seemed self-serving, because the evaluation report recommended trainings that the evaluator himself/ herself was the resource speaker.

CSOs have complained that sometimes evaluators immediately draw out conclusions from their observations even without evidence. For instance, there are certain problems faced by projects in communities that have puzzled CSOs. While the staff are still trying to investigate the issue, the evaluators had already hastily drawn their conclusions without investigating or having concrete evidence. CSOs have also observed that external evaluators who are not familiar with the local context usually require more handholding and background explanation from CSOs.

In Basilan, Nagdilaab experienced an evaluator that had a different worldview when it came to partnering with the military. Like many CSOs working in Mindanao, Nagdilaab has prided itself with good working relations with the military. But they had an experience with a Spanish-speaking foreign evaluator, who was incredulous about the partnership between Nagdilaab and the military. He was basically against the partnership. It was later explained by another Spanish missionary that the foreign evaluator had a different experience with the military in their own country.

CSOs have also raised the concern that some recommendations of evaluators or consultants are highly theoretical or impractical to use in the local context. There was a time when Nagdilaab's evaluator recommended that they use a gender mainstreaming framework for their project, but the evaluator could not even provide any guidance or

examples for their CSO to use or emulate. While such framework may be common now, back then, CSOs needed examples and trainings on it.

Another issue raised by CSOs working with Muslim communities is that sometimes, their funding partners have certain project requirements that they see as impractical or culturally insensitive. These requirements usually have something to do with the issue of gender and women's empowerment, specifically having women in the negotiation table. As noted in the previous discussions, the focus on gender equity and the complementarity of gender roles are often more relevant for Muslim CSOs than gender equality.

Overall, CSOs have generally positive experiences with evaluators. They just put more effort when it comes to making external evaluators understand the local culture and dynamics. But these negative experiences with evaluators, especially those that are focused more on fault-finding, may have fed into creating negative stereotypes and mindsets about evaluation.

**Developing the Right Evaluation Mindset**

A big challenge for CSOs is overcoming the negative mindset when it comes to evaluation. Drawing from images of the Lenten season, Dr. Grace Rebollos of ZABIDA, humorously compares the idea of evaluation for Filipinos as a process of self-flagellation.

> "For me it's really very cultural. Even the NGOs have to get out of that (mindset). That process, where people only want to be told, what they want to hear. So, when that happens, we keep repeating the same mistakes. But we don't want to paint a picture of evaluation as something that is esoteric. That it is a private, exclusive kingdom, or enclave of people who are experts. We would like evaluation to be seen as a process of improvement rather than a process of self-flagellation."

For CRS, overcoming this mindset is a practical challenge they always face. They have to consistently convince their partners that evaluations are important by increasing appreciation for M&E work. Their usual line is: “We do evaluation and monitoring because we want to learn. We want to learn about the work we do, so that we can improve our peacebuilding practices.”

Hence, in order to build the mindset and appreciation for evaluation, CRS really puts a lot of work into finding creative ways of encouraging the interest of their partners and increasing their knowledge. They do a lot of mentoring and coaching of their partners through their Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Officers (MELO). They also invest in capacity building and in developing the documentation and evaluation systems of their partners. Hence, they use a lot of technology and the aforementioned software.

**Multiple Perspectives on Peace and Peacebuilding**

The conceptualization of peace and peacebuilding is a mess in Mindanao. There are so many perspectives about peace, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution that it also complicates the work of evaluation and peacebuilding itself. There is no agreement on what constitutes a peacebuilding project. Some observers interviewed reveal that most CSOs just label anything they do under the sun as peacebuilding. So, whether these are livelihood projects, humanitarian efforts, transitional justice, P/CVE, and even infrastructure, all of these can be considered peacebuilding. Some consider this a sign that CSOs have already become too donor-driven or donor-dependent. More conservative evaluators are also not so sure if some of these projects can be considered peacebuilding.

One evaluator, Dr. Durante, argued for a more expansive view of peacebuilding and proposed to go back to the definitions of peace against violence. She argued that since we have physical violence and structural violence, and all these projects being talked about, alleviates poverty and addresses structural violence, these can therefore be considered part of peacebuilding work. This is similar to Schirch's conception of peacebuilding which includes a wide range of preventive efforts that address the potential sources of instability and violence (2013, 7).

Many CSOs think that peace is very abstract and that you cannot really quantify peace. The head of IID, Gus Miclat, has pondered over the challenge of evaluating their work which he considers in the realm of the abstract, and the evaluation questions that are also in the realm of the abstract. Things even become more complicated when CSOs bring down these big concepts of peace and peacebuilding to the level of communities. The head of Kalimudan says: "The problem in the community, is when you talk about peace, you talk about war. And in talking about war, you also talk about the MILF and government. It becomes dangerous." In the same manner, NP has shared that they have to be careful when talking about certain ideas with their project communities as they are aware of the presence of extremists like BIFF in the community.

Nagdilaab similarly, does not like to mention "violent extremism" when they engage with communities:

> "We don't like to only zero in on VE. We don't even want to use the term 'VE.' Because these are not our words. These are external words provided to us by international communities and not identified by our communities here. In short, we prefer to call this violent conflict." says Dedette.

The main challenge here for CSOs is finding ways to anchor the big ideas about peace and peacebuilding to the experiences of the local communities, and getting some clarity if their project initiatives can be considered part of peacebuilding in the first place.

The clashing perspectives on peace and peacebuilding that projects bring have led to many disagreements among CSOs and community stakeholders. Some ulama for instance, cannot agree on P/CVE concepts and interventions, primarily because the violent extremist concepts in the Philippines are state-driven and does not come from the people. Some Marawi CSOs disagree with each other about working on certain projects, specifically on working with the government because of the destruction brought about by the military and the glacial pace of rehabilitation by the government. While every CSO have their own assumptions of what peacebuilding is in their particular context, IAG which does peace process policy work, also struggles to understand what is peacebuilding in the political track, as they sometimes don't see eye-to-eye with other peacebuilding CSOs on issues related to the BARMM transition period.

These varying perspectives have also surfaced certain moral issues, dualities, or dilemmas in peacebuilding that I have only encountered in a conflict resolution class. Sultan Pogi Atar of RIDO Inc., whose community was affected by the 2017 Marawi War, has lamented the silence of peacebuilding partners on the injustices that the Meranao experienced. His frustrations made him realize certain dualities such as the preference for peace over justice; the focus on legality over morality; and the prioritization of security over human rights.

Sultan Pogi has chided some peacebuilding organizations and agencies that continue to mouth peace, unity, and social cohesion but are silent on the Meranao's clamor for justice. Many Meranao have been seeking justice as war victims, but government was slow in passing a compensation law, while donors have refused to fund proposals on projects that deal with seeking justice or projects that address the grievances of the Meranao as a result of the 2017 Marawi Siege.

RIDO has also highlighted dualities such as issues of legality and morality. These came about as IDPs are becoming increasingly worried of being permanently relocated from their ancestral lands, as government have refused the return IDPs to rebuild in their former areas and have begun sequestering properties for development. The government encroachment is premised on legalities as many residents' lack formal titles which is a common occurrence in the inheritance of lands among clans in Mindanao. The tragedy of the Marawi Siege and all of the resulting injustices experienced by the Meranao people, underscores government's prioritization of security over human rights, which has only caused much resentment among the populace and possibly create another breeding ground for violent extremism.

The recent popularity of P/CVE among donors and CSOs has further clouded the waters of peace efforts in Mindanao, and blurred the lines of peacebuilding and P/CVE initiatives. Gus Miclat of IID cynically calls P/CVE as the "flavor of the month," seemingly aware of the need to go with the flow of funds. Sam Chittick, the country representative of The Asia Foundation, has a very interesting take on peacebuilding and P/CVE:

> “My sense particularly for Mindanao, is that the peacebuilding agenda has been kind of swamped by P/CVE in the last 4-5 years. And I don’t think that’s healthy. I think the fundamentals of peacebuilding are still important. How do you work hand in hand with communities to identify the problems they’re facing, and how do you identify solutions with them? Coming in with a label like VE and calling some groups violent extremists and others not—I don’t think is particularly helpful to that process that communities need to go through.
>
> The issue of VE is relevant, as in, there are groups that take extremist positions and then choose to use violence to achieve their objectives. But the labeling and the primary focus on that, shifts the lens through which we make programing decisions and funding decisions away from the positive elements of how do you build peace communities. Whereas the more fundamental peacebuilding foundation which has been built up over 40-50 years, I think are the more effective ones, the most positive. But my sense is in the last 4 or 5 years, we’ve become, the funding particularly, has become consumed by the negative side of things.”

The influx of peacebuilding ideas in the country seem to come in waves starting from the post People Revolution of 1986; the signing of the Final peace Agreement between the MNLF and Government in 1996; the 2000 All-Out-War between the MILF and Government; the wave of funding that came after 9-11; and more recently, the rise of P/CVE after the Marawi siege. The increasing plethora of peacebuilding approaches have led some CSOs to broach the idea of revisiting peacebuilding concepts for them to get clarity on how does their work fit in the overall scheme of things, and how do they complement each other’s approaches.

## Suggestions to Improve the Evaluation of Peacebuilding Initiatives

Given these challenges to evaluation, CSOs have offered some suggestions to improve the evaluation of peacebuilding initiatives. The suggestions below are grouped according to the themes of challenges originally presented:

**Typical Constraints (budget, time, political, data, and geography)**

Donors should reassess the viability of providing more long-term funding for CSOs. Short-term funding does not encourage sustainability in projects especially for peacebuilding projects, as these need more time to develop relationships and trust.

Donors that only provide short-term funding should refrain from demanding too much paperwork from CSOs or ask for unrealistic requirements such as immediate evaluations. This is in response to the observation of evaluators that CSOs often have to "feed the beast" of donor compliance. In addition, requirements for sudden evaluations that are not well thought out only contributes to CSOs' negative mindset about evaluation as added work. This is to also prevent a repeat of the "putting the carriage before the horse" incident, wherein a donor demanded a quick evaluation without even realizing that the project has not even started. There needs to be a rethinking of what really counts as evidence of profound peacebuilding results versus the facade of paper work that donors often require.

Donors and INGOs should revisit their policies regarding confidentiality and proprietary clauses in their contracts, as well as nondisclosure agreements when commissioning studies or evaluations. Contracts specifying terms of confidentiality and ownership, as well as nondisclosure agreements often overlook the needs of CSOs for learning from evaluation and study results. If research or evaluation results are deemed sensitive, the funding partner should provide sanitized copies of the evaluation to the CSOs. Exit conference presentations of evaluation results are simply not enough to communicate lessons from projects. Written evaluation reports are also needed by CSOs.

Donors and their intermediaries can support the conduct of area-specific, regional evaluations for CSOs and their projects that operate in common areas, especially if these projects have similar peacebuilding goals and objectives. Such an evaluation can treat multiple CSO initiatives as one. Specific areas or regions in Sulu, Lanao del Sur (Marawi and adjacent areas), and Maguindanao (MILF barangays within former MILF camps) are conducive areas for such an experiment. This will foster mutual learning among CSOs operating in the same areas and enhance their collaborative efforts. This should also address the usual constraints of budget, skills, and other limitations posed by geography and local politics.

In conjunction with this is to use the datasets and conflict monitoring system of NGOs like International Alert to overlay violent incidences with the collective efforts of CSOs working in the same areas to see what changes can be discerned. Specialized evaluations can then be done to help link observed results to CSOs peacebuilding efforts. These can be done through contribution analysis and various theory-based approaches to evaluation.

**Inadequate Skills and Capacity in Evaluation**

Donor funding should consider the organizational development needs of CSOs, specifically on peacebuilding and evaluation capacity building. A portion of grants should be dedicated to helping CSOs meet their organizational development needs such as improving the evaluation capacities of their staff, and helping them keep abreast with new developments in the peacebuilding and evaluation fields. The continuous training for staff is important to consider in the light of the criticisms of some CSOs that INGOs

are increasingly recruiting local staff resulting in a brain-drain among local CSOs that have trained their staff for years.

There is a need to capacitate CSOs to do internal evaluations better. Since internal evaluations are the default practice of CSOs, then they need more training on this so that they do internal evaluations well. Trainings should enhance the evaluative mindset of CSO staff, which will inculcate in them the right amount of skepticism and inquisitiveness for them to "constantly ask probing questions and find data to answer those questions" (USIP 2015).

In light of the demand from CSOs to be updated on peacebuilding and evaluation concepts, universities and peace institutes should be encouraged to develop courses on peacebuilding evaluation. As Salic Ibrahim has observed, there are lots of "pockets of success" in Mindanao that CSOs can mutually learn from each other. He adds that universities and peace institutes could establish a course on peacebuilding evaluation that at same time talks about the learnings from evaluations of the various peace efforts. In addition, some CSOs and evaluators have emphasized the need for evaluators to be proficient in both evaluation and peacebuilding concepts and theories, when evaluating peacebuilding projects. Short courses on evaluation can help both evaluation and peacebuilding professionals to be more versed with each other's principles, theories, and practices. This also answers the concerns of Dr. Rebollos and Prof. Guiam on the need to train second-liners in peace evaluation as they are not getting any younger.

CSOs need all the help they can get especially in technical writing skills and documentations. Students and volunteers should be encouraged to be involved more in

community work. Tapping students and other volunteers to help CSOs in the documentation of their projects, and in translating local language documentations to English language would be a great start. Process documentations of peace and development projects helps draw lessons and insights from such projects, and provide useful material in making "success" and learning stories.

**Negative Experiences with Evaluators**

Retraining for evaluators is needed to review important guiding principles for evaluators and standards of excellence in evaluation. The American Evaluation Association has adopted several guiding principles for evaluators in view of the potential for evaluation to be misused and manipulated (Patton 2008, 24-29). These principles include: systematic inquiry, competence, integrity/ honesty, respect for people, and responsibilities for general and public welfare (ibid.). In addition, the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation engaged in a comprehensive effort to hammer out standards for evaluation with the following primary criteria: utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy (ibid.). Given that evaluators come from different disciplinal backgrounds, there is a need to go back to these guiding principles and standards to be more responsible and ethical in conducting evaluations.

Related to practicing the guiding principles and evaluation standards, there also needs to be some considerations of what locals are expecting from evaluators. The CSOs I have interviewed often describe peacebuilding as a journey, and they often mentioned their desire for evaluators to also journey with them in the evaluation of peacebuilding.

CSOs appreciate evaluators who sincerely want to help them improve their projects and make them understand the evaluation process.

**Developing the Right Evaluation Mindset**

INGOs/ NGOs/ CSOs should learn from the good practices of CRS when it comes to giving more attention to monitoring and evaluation for learning. Developing the right evaluation mindset needs a lot of investment in training, coaching, and mentoring to build staff and partner capacities in evaluation. It also helps if the leadership and management of NGOs/CSOs are supportive of the initiatives of their staff in studying and exploring issues of interest which they face in their own projects. This can be done by providing a more conducive and enabling environment for research and evaluation activities through the development of systems and policies that can aid staff in this endeavor. CRS has developed a cross-cutting peacebuilding and M&E ecosystem which can be replicated by other NGOs. They also have a comprehensive collection of M&E and peacebuilding tools which other CSOs can adopt and modify for their own evaluation and peacebuilding needs.

This highlights the importance of developing internal or home-grown evaluators. For this to happen, there has to be a fundamental shift in mindset in terms of looking at evaluation as everyone's responsibility. Developing the right mindset also involves erasing the legacy of an older generation of evaluators who have biases against qualitative forms of inquiry and qualitative data such as stories and narratives. There should be shift in terms of valuing and looking at stories and narratives, which are often considered as "merely anecdotal" data. Part of this training should be understanding the

various qualitative inquiry frameworks and the value they bring to research and evaluation.

**Multiple Perspectives on Peace and Peacebuilding**

There is a need to support a series of conferences, forums, and seminars that would revisit peacebuilding concepts and approaches in Mindanao. The series of forums should map out the different types of peacebuilding initiatives/ approaches, their provenance, their interactions, and problematize how they all complement and fit in the overall scheme of things. Such an endeavor will also help in writing a history of peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the country.

There is also a need to make Islam and other faiths like indigenous religions more relevant in peacebuilding. Tarhata Maglangit of BWSC has suggested to anchor the concept of peace and peacebuilding on Islam especially in Muslim communities, so that they will see its relevance within the Muslim faith. This requires more resource materials and guidelines inspired by Islamic thought that can actually be used by CSOs in peacebuilding. Along this line, a dialogue process among peer NGOs/ CSOs, donors, and scholars needs to happen to tackle the dilemmas or dualities of peacebuilding that are causing hurts among some CSOs. Peace stakeholders need to understand better the dilemmas and limitations of peacebuilding and donor support when it comes to engaging certain political processes in the country.

Given there are multiple perspectives of peace and peacebuilding, NGOs/CSOs should be given back the power to design their own peace programs and projects. The prevalence of donors with a ready set of programs have resulted in some CSOs

expressing a yearning for a return to a time when they designed their own projects. They even miss working together with donors and local partners to co-design projects. This comes in the light of criticisms that NGOs and CSOs do not have their own projects and have simply become contractors to donors and intermediary INGOs. There needs to be more support for demand-driven projects on issues that CSOs actually care about.

This chapter brings together the challenges and suggestions of CSOs in the evaluation of peacebuilding efforts which have emerged along the themes of typical constraints, inadequate skills in evaluation, negative experience with evaluators, evaluation mindset, and multiple perspectives on peace and peacebuilding. This, together with the findings on CSO evaluation approaches and their conceptualizations of evaluation dimensions, are weaved together in analysis and discussion in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER EIGHT: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

## Insights on Peacebuilding and Evaluation Theory and Practice

This chapter attempts to make sense of the findings in the previous chapters by comparing these with the current state of theory and practice in peacebuilding and evaluation. This chapter analyzes the peacebuilding and evaluation practices of CSOs, as well as how their various understanding of the different evaluation criteria or dimensions stack up to current theory and practice. This chapter also answers the last question on *what insights can be gained from the relationship of CSO peacebuilding efforts and their evaluation practices in Mindanao?* The discussion broadly considers the actual evaluation practices as experienced by CSOs and how this relates to evaluation and peacebuilding theory, while distilling some lessons in the process.

## Peacebuilding and their Streams of Influence: Towards An Inclusive History of Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution

The study has documented the various peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts of CSOs which are responses to the complex and multifaceted nature of conflict in Mindanao. These peace initiatives are continuously evolving, especially with the emergence of new issues such as violent extremism, the effects of climate change, and the challenges brought about by the pandemic. The ever-expanding list of approaches and typologies of peacebuilding has led to more confusion among CSOs, as peacebuilding interventions often overlap with other types of development initiatives which many see as a challenge to disentangle and evaluate. The rapid expansion of

peacebuilding has led some CSOs to call for forums and re-training for them to revisit peacebuilding concepts and approaches, and see how all of their initiatives complement and fit in the overall scheme of peace efforts in Mindanao. Such a call only highlights the paucity of writings on the overall history of peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the country. This is important because in order to understand the evaluation of peacebuilding, we also need to understand the evaluand itself—peacebuilding in Mindanao. This involves understanding the particular histories of seemingly disparate peacebuilding approaches in Mindanao, their purpose, provenance, interaction, and evolution, as well as their innovations over time.

Based on the interviews, the literature review, and observation of evaluation practices by CSOs, this study posits at least five streams of influence that have contributed to the overall picture of peacebuilding in Mindanao. Some of these were already discussed in Chapter Four. These influential streams are the following:

- peace research leading to interfaith or interreligious dialogues;
- the establishment of peace education towards a culture of peace;
- peacebuilding through conflict transformation;
- indigenous and hybrid approaches to conflict resolution; and
- donor agendas that drive peacebuilding activities

***Peace research/ studies leading to interfaith/ interreligious dialogues***. The first stream of influence is the pioneering work in the 1940s of American Protestant missionaries in Lanao that led to the establishment of the Dansalan College and research center, which fostered a long tradition of interfaith relations and dialogues between Muslims and Christians. The work of Peter Gowing in founding the Dansalan Research Center in 1972 and in conducting the annual summer program on Mindanao and Sulu

cultures since 1974, promoted a better understanding of Islam and Muslim Filipinos, which became the precursor of interfaith or interreligious dialogues in Mindanao. Dr. Moctar Matuan credits the ethos established by Dansalan College in the mobilization of concerned citizens to diffuse tensions between Muslims and Christians during the 1992 bombing of St. Michael's Cathedral. This movement inspired similar formations in other areas and catalyzed the consolidation of the Bishops-Ulama Forum (BUF) which later evolved into the Bishops-Ulama Conference (BUC).

***Peace education towards a culture of peace***. The second stream of influence is education toward a culture of peace, which had its beginnings after the 1986 People Power Revolution. Peace education was first established in the Cotabato area by Dr. Ofelia Durante of Notre Dame University under the guidance of Toh Swee-Hin and Virginia Cawagas. Peace education later spread throughout the network of Notre Dame schools in Mindanao and to Ateneo de Zamboanga University when Dr. Durante joined them in 2000, as well as to other universities in Luzon. Peace education is based on the **six-petal metaphor multi-dimensional framework** co-developed by Toh Swee-Hin and Jean Cawagas discussed in Chapter Five. Peace education has opened new avenues for peace research in Mindanao, notable of which is the *rido* study and the Konsult Mindanaw initiative which helped restart the stalled peace process between the government and the MILF. In his recent memoirs, Toh Swee-Hin (2017, 26) expressed his concern for the future peace education, as he hinted to obstacles in the sustainability of programs, such as changes in institutional priorities, leadership changes, and the shifting of interest from peace education, to peace advocacy, and to peacebuilding.

***Peacebuilding through conflict transformation***. The third stream is peacebuilding used in the broadest sense, which comes from the tradition of peace research and the conflict resolution tradition (Ramsbotham & others 2011, 199). It uses the conflict transformation framework which is essentially about overcoming structural and cultural violence (ibid.). The main proponent of this approach is CRS, under the guidance of John Paul Lederach. CRS has been in the Philippines since 1945, but they established their peacebuilding program only in 1996 right after the signing of the Final Peace Agreement between the government and MNLF. Ding Cali of Kalimudan has acknowledged the influence of Lederach's teachings in their own work in Lanao. He distinctly remembers before the 2000 All-Out-War, being part of those who were first trained by what he describes as the "followers" of Lederach, which included "Chris" and "Rac-Rac" Antequisa.[102] According to Myla Leguro of CRS, for the longest time, CRS has been focused on building relationships, which in the current language right now is the focus on social cohesion and reconciliation. In 2010, they shifted their focus to integrating governance with peacebuilding.

***Indigenous and hybrid approaches to conflict resolution***. The fourth stream of influence are the indigenous conflict resolution systems that have always been in use among indigenous peoples and the Muslim ethnolinguistic groups in the Philippines. My hypothesis is that the discourse on indigenous and hybrid approaches to conflict resolution only came into recent prominence when the rido study came out and distinguished the different ways of resolving clan feuds: indigenous ways (i.e., the use of

[102] This would become the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute. See https://www.mpiasia.net/aboutus.html

customary laws); the formal system of government (i.e., courts); the hybrid systems (mix of formal and informal approaches); and revolutionary courts used by the Moro liberation fronts. This can be observed in the various studies that came out to analyze the hybridity of conflict resolution approaches.[103] This can also mean that what is commonly thought of as indigenous approaches to conflict resolution may already be hybrid approaches, because they seem to be a reaction to liberal peacebuilding itself (Deinla 2018, 233). Hence, currently, indigenous and hybrid systems of conflict resolution are ever-present in the discourse on peace and conflict resolution in Mindanao.

***Donor agendas that drive peacebuilding activities***. It is no secret that donor agendas also determine the peace and development activities of CSOs. One of the earliest donor support mentioned by a couple of CSOs is the UN multi-donor programme which started out with aim of assisting the realization of the Final Peace Agreement between the Philippine Government and the MNLF (Relief Web 2002). Chapter Five's section on actual conflict resolution efforts, has detailed how the 9-11 terrorist attacks in 2001 sparked a new era of funding on peacebuilding and conflict resolution work in the Philippines which also coincided with the 2000 war in Mindanao. More recently, the Marawi Siege which wreaked havoc in Lanao Province also saw the advent of new funding from donors and foundations like the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) to address social cohesion and violent extremism. This new funding and focus has spawned a number of new projects that deals with resilience,

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[103] See Joanne Wallis and others. *Hybridity on the Ground in Peacebuilding and Development: Critical Conversations*. 2018; Jeroen Adam and others. *Hybrid Systems of Conflict Management and Community Level Efforts to Improve Local Security in Mindanao*. 2014.

cohesion, and preventing/ countering violent extremism, prompting one CSO head to wryly remark about it being "flavor of the month."

A better understanding of these five streams that influence the story of peace and conflict resolution in Mindanao and their interactions, are good starting points for the exploration other peace efforts that can contribute towards the writing of an inclusive history of peacebuilding in the country. This in turn will help provide clarity in the evaluation of peacebuilding initiatives.

## Peacebuilding and Evaluation Relationship

The CSOs interviewed in this study are unanimous in saying that evaluation is essential to peacebuilding. Despite the seeming uneasiness that evaluation may initially bring, CSOs commonly view it as an organic, necessary, and inseparable part of peacebuilding. Evaluation is widely understood by CSOs as a necessary process in order for them to learn from their peacebuilding efforts. For CBCS, Balay Mindanaw, CRS, and MARADECA this learning includes understanding their failures and successes on the ground, what worked and what did not, as well as the factors that have contributed to these. Learning from evaluations allows CSOs to improve their interventions and develop better projects that truly respond to the needs of their communities.

For CSOs, developing better projects not only means making projects more relevant and effective, but also making sure that their projects are sensitive and do no harm. "Peacebuilding affects and impacts people" says Khuzy Maranda, "thus, all the more that we need evaluation." CSOs have been doing this line of work for some time, and the daily grind can sometimes make them lose perspective. Evaluation makes them

question their assumptions. “Without evaluation, we are also blinded whether what we are doing is really what was originally intended. Evaluation serves to remind us,” says Dedette of Nagdilaab.

The process of evaluation is also a form of accountability. ECOWEB sees this as both an upward and downward accountability, wherein they are accountable to their donors who support their projects, and also accountable to their communities, whom they say are the reason that they source their funds. Nannette Antequisa of ECOWEB adds: “Even just ensuring that your projects do no harm, is already a contribution. But then, how can you ensure that, if you don’t include in your design or framework, getting feedback from the people? That’s actually accountability.”

One CSO from Zamboanga sees evaluation as necessary for imparting something to communities. For Kalma Isnain of IRDT, too often, projects are short-term, that when a project ends or when a funder leaves, communities are also left hanging. She further argues that there should be something left for the community when projects end—and these are the learnings that we should get from evaluations. This is why for COPERS, evaluation should not stop. “We should keep evaluating. Let’s not put an end to the story, because life goes on” says Dr. Gail Ilagan. “Community life goes on, and new things can happen.”

The relationship between peacebuilding and evaluation is nicely encapsulated by Dr. Grace Rebollos of ZABIDA:

> “For me evaluation must be part and parcel of peacebuilding. Because at the rate you are called to sensitivity; at the rate you are commanded to be careful about the different souls that you meet; you have to check yourself every part of the way. But the whole point really calls for

> us to be sensitive to the developments of the times. In fact, peacebuilding is like an evolving hypothesis. Meaning you have an initial assumption, because this is the picture that the baseline shows you. But you don't become dogmatic and you don't get stuck with that. Your theory of change has to be built on facts and information that were there before, are there now, and will be there in the future. That is why I think those two are not different entities—peacebuilding and evaluation. In fact, evaluation by itself is a peacebuilding tool because it allows you to be more respectful of the other. Because once you know where they are at certain points in time, you will be more understanding of why they are acting the way they do. For me they are not separate, but part of each other."

This statement of Dr. Rebollos, underscores the importance of evaluation as a tool for reflection (Elliot & others 2003, 2). Evaluation encourages practitioners to be explicit about their goals, as well as make explicit the often-implicit theories-in-use underlying the project implementation. This explicitness encourages reflective practice, especially on how to understand conflict, and how project interventions can hinder or help conflict resolution (ibid.).

It is quite ironic therefore, that while all CSOs value the importance of evaluation, many of them do not get to see the evaluation results of their projects. The researcher attributes this to the confidentiality and proprietary clauses in their contracts as evaluators. This may also be due to the timing of evaluations, since some of these evaluations are conducted near the end of a project's lifecycle, when contracting INGOs and their subcontractor CSOs are all hustling to wrap up their projects and finish paper work. The hectic nature of CSO work, does not give them pause to request for copies of evaluation results, much less study these. Consequently, CSOs just quickly jump from one project to another, without much reflection on completed projects. "I think there has to be an effort to do more about understanding the result of the activity" says Guiamel

Alim of CBCS. In my view, this is a clear call for help by CSOs on their need for guidance and mentoring on evaluations, and in helping them understand the results of evaluations.

## Dimensions of Peacebuilding Evaluation

This study started with some assumptions about certain evaluation criteria or dimensions that are needed to ensure a robust evaluation of peacebuilding initiatives. These key dimensions under investigation are the following: impact, causation, attribution and/ or contribution, criteria for success or effectiveness, issue of transfer, sustainability and/ or adaptability of change, complexity, and the effects on drivers of conflict. Among the evaluation dimensions mentioned, four come out regularly in the interviews. These are the more established concepts of impact, sustainability, success/ effectiveness, and contribution/ attribution. The discussions on impact generated discussions about changes as well. Frequently mentioned by CSOs when assessing outcomes are changes in relationships and mindsets. Discussions about sustainability also generated multiple understandings about this criterion, which includes resilience, adaptability to change, and the issue of transfer. The other concepts that surfaced were relevance, which is often overlooked in project design, as well as flexibility, creativity, and innovation.

### The Conceptions of Impact

For CSOs interviewed in this study, "impact" is a term they often use to loosely refer to outcome level changes. They use the term to denote changes that happened because of a project, even though CSOs are aware of the more orthodox definitions of

impact based on the OECD Evaluation Standards. Impact as understood in CSO peacebuilding efforts seem to comprise several elements or characteristics:

- outcome and impact level change;
- it is something comprehensive and enduring;
- requires the passage of time to establish and measure;
- the result of a confluence of factors which CSOs have little control of;
- something nebulous, intangible, and difficult to measure because of the nature of the evaluand (peacebuilding);
- impractical to evaluate for smaller CSOs; and
- something that bigger NGOs need to measure especially at the cumulative or portfolio level, but also difficult for them to do.

These conceptions of impact roughly correspond with the definitions of impact in my review of literature (White 2010; Bamberger et al. 2012; Stern et. al. 2012; Chigas, Church, and Corlazzoli 2014; OECD 2002 & 2021). But what is interesting is that according to the most recent OECD publication, impact is usually thought of within the political context as "results" broadly speaking (2021, 64). This is very similar to how CSOs in this study view impact as simply the "changes" or outcomes resulting from their projects. The OECD document also mentions about a "transformational" aspect of impact which are holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms (ibid.). This is consistent in my interview with NGOs such as International Alert and CRS, when they mentioned about the necessary structural changes that need to happen such as the harmonization of land tenure systems for interventions to have real impact on the situation of conflicts in Mindanao. CSOs like ECOWEB often mention the transformations that need to happen which hint to changes in norms. These involve transforming relationships and mindsets where a shift in values happen or a return to the

positive values that are epitomized in their cultural practices all along. Here, transformation is hinted as a realization of their potentials or capabilities as a people. A more thorough discussion of transformation is found in the sustainability section of this chapter.

Finally, the OECD document also cautions on confusing the concept of impact with impact evaluation, which refers to "specific methodologies for establishing statistically significant causal relationships between the intervention and observed effects" (ibid.). I must argue however, that a discussion of impact inevitably leads to a discussion of how to capture or measure it. Hence, a discussion of impact evaluation seems unavoidable when one talks about impact. CSOs' description of impact as highlighted above, really problematizes the challenges of capturing impact level changes and figuring out ways of making some sort of connection to their specific projects. However, the OECD (2021, 64) document still views impact evaluation as solely a methodology for establishing "statistically significant causal relationship." This is not encouraging as it ignores the diversity-oriented view of causation in favor of the conventional statistical perspective, thereby sidelining a range of possible design options for doing impact evaluation (see Byrne 2013, Stern 2012).

So, what does this mean for evaluation and peacebuilding in general? It is important for evaluators to clarify with stakeholders how they understand their peacebuilding interventions lead to changes; how they view causation; and how they conceptualize impact. It also incumbent upon the evaluators to help stakeholders see the

interconnections of impact to other evaluation dimensions or aspects such as sustainability, effectiveness, contribution, issue of transfer, among others.

### Change in Relationships and Mindsets

Given that many CSOs pragmatically view impact simply as "change," outcome level change is a good starting point for discussion on project effectiveness, as CSOs view this as the most immediate result of their projects. Change in relationships and mindsets are the most common changes that CSOs look for to assess if their peacebuilding projects are effective or made an impact. This is not surprising since in peacebuilding literature, relationships are central as it is the context in which violent cycles of conflict occurs and where generative energies of reconciliation may arise (Lederach 1997, 26; 2005, 34). Change in relationships involves understanding the effects of conflict on human interactions, minimizing poor communication, and maximizing mutual understanding by surfacing relational fears, hopes, and goals of the people (Lederach 1997, 82).

CSOs earlier gave some examples of indicators of change in relationship in their projects such as when grudges disappear; when rivals start reaching out to talk with each other; when they start seeing each other in a more positive light and start cooperating; when mechanisms to deal with conflict are formed; and when people start going about their normal way of life. Such indicators also give us some insight into how interventions can have an effect on the drivers of conflict, which also affirms the argument of Chigas, Church, and Corlazzoli that looking into how interventions affect the drivers of conflict can also be one way of assessing for impact (2014, 10).

Between the two concepts, change of mindset is particularly more challenging for CSOs to grapple as the mechanisms for the process is poorly understood in practice. In peacebuilding literature, change of mindset can be understood as a shift of consciousness (Allen 2011, 241-242). Consciousness "refers broadly to sensory and emotional perception, memory, volition, aversions and desires, cognition, and especially, to awareness within each of these areas and beyond." (Jung cited by Allen 2011: 240). Since conflict manifests as a consciousness of seemingly incompatible goals, needs, or interests, the process of conflict resolution involves the shifting of consciousness by increasing awareness of their own needs and the needs of others, and finding ways of meeting everyone's needs (ibid.). In their search for criteria in evaluating the success of conflict resolution, d'Estrée and others categorize various types of new or revised knowledge under Changes in Representation or thinking (2001, 105-106). These includes new learning, integrative framing, problem solving, better communication, and attitude change which also parallels with what CSOs understand as change in mindset (ibid.). Meanwhile, Rouhana (1995) elegantly outlines the connection between changes in personal mindset and the shift to changes at the relational level (cited in Fisher 2020, 458). This involves the shift from cognitive empathy, wherein the unilateral expression of one's own needs and concerns transition into the cognitive comprehension of the needs, concerns, and aspirations of both parties; to becoming responsive to each other's needs; and the shift to joint thinking and working together (ibid.).

CSOs generally understand that change in relationships and mindsets are often the outcome of a series of peacebuilding interventions such as capacity building, awareness

raising, dialogues and actual problem solving. While CSOs generally agree that personal level change (i.e., mindset) is more difficult, and then expands to the level of relationships, the peacebuilding literature has outlined a broader range of dimensions where these changes happen: personal, relational, structural, and cultural (Lederach 1997, 81-83). Often, it is at the structural and cultural dimensions where the sustainability of peace efforts is established. This particular discussion of theory only proves that it is crucial for evaluators of peacebuilding initiatives to be well-read on the theories underlying the processes commonly utilized in peacebuilding.

**The Duality of Success and Effectiveness**

Study informants view success and effectiveness as interrelated concepts. Success is seen as highly subjective and broad, while effectiveness is more manageable and tethered to the objectives of a specific project. On the one hand, a project can be considered effective if its objectives were attained during implementation, though this does not necessarily mean a project is successful. On the other hand, a project's effectiveness can be one of the criteria for success. Other informants view these two concepts as different levels of analysis such as from a broader perspective (success) to a specific focus (effectiveness). Both concepts are also viewed in terms of differences in the scale or magnitude of an effect such as from a narrow result (effectiveness) to a wider impact (success). Success can be broadly defined as an overall merit of project, or a narrowly defined success such as meeting a specific criterion (which is also effectiveness). At the end of the day, most CSOs believe that it is the beneficiaries themselves who will ultimately decide if a peacebuilding initiative is successful or not.

Much like in my review of literature, there is lack consensus in defining success, with scholars like Druckman (2005), Ross (2004), and d'Estrée and others (2001) using "effectiveness" and "success" interchangeably. Somewhat similar to the views of CSOs on the dual nature of success and effectiveness, the OECD 2021 paper also views effectiveness as both an aggregate measure of the extent to which an intervention has achieved sustainable and relevant impacts, but at the same time concerned with the most closely attributable results which is within the outcome level of the results chain (p. 52). In his discussion of effectiveness, Druckman (2005, 302) talks about the different goals of peacebuilding interventions and points out the various ways of thinking about the possible dimensions of their success: violence reduction, short-term/ long-term change; consideration of elite and other perspectives; and reasons for success or failure. This is echoed in the way Mindanao CSOs commonly think about their indicators for peacebuilding success which includes: a cessation of hostilities, conflicts resolved, change in mindsets and change in relationships among rival groups.

Finally, most CSOs firmly believe that the final arbiter for peacebuilding success rests with the beneficiaries and the stakeholders involved in the conflict. This view also finds a lot of resonance in the works of Church and Rogers (2006) on the importance of mutually agreed upon definitions of success by conflict stakeholders, and Autesserre's (2014) situation-specific definition of effectiveness.

In my own view, a project's success or effectiveness should not be only tethered to goals and objectives set by the project, but should also look beyond to other criteria, which may include achievements or outcomes that partner communities may consider as

life-changing. Drawing from my own experience, if a project's measure for effectiveness is merely tethered to attaining deliverables such as the number of conflicts resolved, this may indicate that the project is effective. But is it really successful? In another project which did not really resolve any conflicts, but was able to improve communication lines between clan members, through clan organizing and reunions, which helped lessen misunderstandings, does this mean that this project is less effective?

**Attribution and Contribution**

The attribution problem, or how to connect the intervention with the results of interest, has always been a problem for CSOs' peacebuilding interventions. Many CSOs recognize that their peacebuilding efforts do not exist in a vacuum. This is seen in the presence of multiple peacebuilding efforts by CSOs in Mindanao with many of them tackling the same conflict issues. The propensity for CSOs to also collaborate and form issue-based coalitions, also shows that peacebuilding is often a collective effort. Hence, many CSOs have come to accept that looking at contribution is a more feasible and realistic way of addressing the attribution problem.

In literature, John Mayne (2008; 2012) has long proposed doing contribution analysis which explores attribution by assessing the contribution of a program is making to the observed results. Key to conducting contribution analysis, according to Mayne (2012, 273), is establishing a credible theory of change which is embedded in the context of the intervention and developed by incorporating the perspectives of key stakeholders, the beneficiaries, and existing relevant research. This is the reason why theory of change has gained a lot of traction in peacebuilding programming through the years, because it

hypothesizes possible pathways to change which projects can stimulate. But more research needs to done on how Mindanao peacebuilding CSOs verify their theory of change and how they actually infer causality from their contribution claims.

An interesting observation is that CSOs can readily attribute certain changes as a result of their projects by providing evidence or markers at the outcome level. What they usually have trouble with is attributing at the level of impact. As mentioned by Rexall Kaalim, they can easily attribute results of projects at the outcome level. But with so many factors to consider, they have no control over what happens at the impact level. This shows that attribution can be done at any level in the results chain, but becomes more difficult the higher you go in the results chain. This experience of CSOs clearly resonates with the OECD 2021 paper in its discussion of impact and effectiveness, which calls for the importance of distinguishing between the outcome and impact levels when attributing results (2021, 52).

The CSO views on attribution and contribution provide us with important clues on how CSOs conceptualize causation. Since the interviews did not really touch on CSO views of causation as it is a complicated concept to discuss especially with the limited time frame, the concepts of attribution and contribution will have to suffice as proxy to causation. This is because attribution and contribution can be seen as important aspects of causation (Chigas, Church, and Corlazzoli 2014, 9).

**Understanding Sustainability, Resilience, Issue of Transfer, and Causal Mechanisms**

**Sustainability** is such broad concept that other evaluation dimensions and related ideas can fall under its ambit. This section discusses sustainability while touching on other concepts relevant to CSOs in the evaluation of their peacebuilding efforts.

The CSOs in this study generally understand sustainability as the enduring changes resulting from their peacebuilding interventions. They variously describe sustainability as a fundamental individual level change; the development of structures or systems to ensure the institutionalization of practices; the adaptability or malleability of networks and coalitions; the replication or multiplication of initiatives; a result of good development practices; resilience to conflict; and a continuation of the spirit of the peacebuilding work they do. These descriptions of sustainability by CSOs can be understood as ways of operationalizing the concept of sustainability within their own context. These descriptions can also be viewed as CSO characterizations of different parts of a system they work in, and that sustainability is achieved through a web of reinforcing factors running through subsystems and broader social systems.

These descriptions are all compatible with the evaluation literature, which defines sustainability in terms of the continuation of benefits from a development intervention and its resilience to risks overtime (OECD 2002). To better understand the concept of sustainability, the recent OECD evaluation document breaks down sustainability into the following elements: enabling environment; continuation of positive effects; and risks and trade-offs (2021, 72). The first element sees sustainability as a product of interventions that strengthens systems, develops institutions, or improves capacities that contribute to an enabling environment, thus ensuring sustainability (ibid.). The second element

involves the need to assess sustainability across different timeframes such for both actual and prospective sustainability, cognizant that higher-level changes may take years or even decades to fully realize (ibid.). Finally, the third element of risks versus trade-offs analysis, invites us to consider the factors that enhance or inhibit sustainability as well as examine the trade-offs between immediate impact and potential longer-term effects or costs to give us a more comprehensive view of sustainability (ibid.).

CSO conceptions of sustainability mostly fall within the first element of supporting an enabling environment such as the institutionalization of conflict resolution practices, institutional strengthening (i.e., systems for project monitoring, evaluation, and management), as well as capacity development for CSO staff. Based on the interviews, actual practice, and personal experience, the second and third elements of sustainability assessment across different timeframes and the risk versus trade-offs analysis are rarely considered by CSOs. There are a number of reasons for this which can include lack of expertise and resources. But one of the main reasons cited by CSOs is that their current projects are mostly short-term. In fact, CSOs have criticized the recent practice of some donors in providing short-term grants as opposed to the long-term grants in the past, which they say have contributed to the lack of sustainability planning in their projects.

Unless otherwise included in grant agreements, sustainability assessments are often not done at the end of the project cycle as CSOs would rather jump to the next project considering the competitive and short-term nature of grants. In lieu of sustainability assessment and risk versus trade-offs analysis, CSOs often conduct risk analysis and mitigation usually during the design and planning phases of the projects, as

these are often required in RFPs. CSOs also conduct regular risk assessment during project implementation phase.

Despite this, at least three evaluation professionals interviewed raised the importance of evaluating projects across different timeframes in general. Dr. Norma Gomez, who evaluates peacebuilding projects, prefers impact evaluations that use a time series design. As previously mentioned, Dr. Gail Ilagan of COPERS criticizes the usual one-shot conflict resolution interventions, and truth and reconciliation initiatives commonly conducted by military personnel with communities which are often spur of the moment emotional events for parties involved. She recommends returning to project communities to get updates on their situation long after such projects have concluded. Similarly, Dr. Grace Rebollos of ZABIDA encourages us to use evaluation as tool to gain an understanding of the situation of partners at certain points in time, so that we can understand what they are going through, and why they are acting the way they do.

***Resilience as an aspect of sustainability***. Many CSOs interviewed for this study consider resilience to conflict and political instability as an important criterion for sustainability. Some CSOs lament that the shifting political landscape, constant leadership change, poor governance, and intermittent flare-ups across the region are the main sources of instability which affect the sustainability of their projects. Thus, resilience is becoming an important consideration for project sustainability in many conflict and fragile settings like Mindanao.

A USIP study on resilience affirms this, as there is a growing sense that strengthening a society’s capacity to overcome violent shocks and community stressors

could play a key role in preventing conflict and achieving a more sustainable post-conflict recovery (Van Metre & Calder 2016, 5). Resilience, according to the study, "refers to a socioecological system's (community, society, state) response to violence and capacity to both maintain peace in event of a violent shock or long-term stressor and resist the pernicious impacts of violence on societal norms and relationships." (2016, 3). Resilience connotes flexibility and adaptability and is a concept used in various disciplines such as engineering, psychology, sociology and ecology (ibid., 5).

The field of ecology studies the resilience of complex adaptive systems, and this conceptualization holds a lot of promise for applicability in sociological systems and conflict because it captures the interaction among and between the structures of a system and the actors and communities within it (ibid., 5). The field is also shifting its perspective from controlling disturbance such as shocks and stressors, to shoring up the ability of an ecosystem for self-repair, which requires both species and response diversity (ibid., 6). Crucial for resilience is the concept of *response diversity* or the ability of different species to respond in different ways to a shock which increases the odds that a successful response or set of behaviors will emerge (ibid.). Hence, adaptation, transformation, and self-organization are considered the central attributes of a complex system's approach to resilience (ibid.).

Based on all these ideas, the USIP study defines a resilient system: "as one that is able to absorb, adapt, or transform itself through self-organization and learning to maintain its basic function (peace) in response to violent shocks and long-term stressors buffeting the system." (Van Metre & Calder 2016, 6). Absorption and adaptation pertain

to the ability of actors to resist and adapt to various threats to or within the ecosystem, while transformation involves the capacity of actors to bring about a regime shift in which the ecosystem moves from one regime to another (ibid.). It is useful to note that Church and Rogers' concept of *adaptability to change* fits nicely under this framework, as they have raised the issue of resilience and adaptability to change as a possible new frontier in evaluation way back in 2006.

Resilience as an aspect of complex adaptive systems finds a lot of resonance in the field of peacebuilding because many actors and communities in conflict and fragile settings also have diverse and creative responses to conflict and its effects, which is similar to ecology's idea of *response diversity*. Moreover, this useful conceptualization highlights the positive attributes and capacities of communities, thus helping outside actors become more aware of and driven by community-led efforts rather than their own institutional capacities and perspectives (ibid.).

The importance of resilience to ensure sustainability is something Mindanao CSOs can relate to, precisely because of the frequent challenges they face in doing peacebuilding and development within the volatile context they work in. As a response to this volatile context, many CSOs try to adapt to the conflict situation by "conflict proofing" their projects. As demonstrated by the examples in the previous section, this includes CSO efforts in making their projects more mobile; conducting conflict mapping to become aware of potential flareups in their in their areas of engagement; dialoguing with rival parties to get advance warning of conflict; and even nipping conflict at the bud.

The USIP study has criticized peacebuilding's primary focus on transformation, and less on system adaptation and absorption (Van Metre & Calder 2016, 25). It further argues that adaptation and absorption as an approach to conflict may be more realistic (ibid., 3). However, I also argue that in the Philippine experience, peacebuilding interventions are mostly about adaptation and absorption, while keeping in its sight the more long-term goal of transformation. This is simply because genuine transformation is more difficult to attain. While the overarching goal of most peace initiatives is conflict transformation, in reality most of these interventions catalyze responses that only absorb and adapt to the conflict, which often falls short of the more far-reaching goal of transformation.

Meanwhile, the resilience of CSO peace networks such as the IID-supported Mindanao Peace Weavers (MPW) super coalition composed of smaller networks can be attributed to their flexibility and adaptive nature. A study by Michelle Garred (2018, 20-22) shows that MPW's, multitiered networks allow them to have a shared understanding of the situation and to be nimble in responding to the demands of their contexts as they can quickly form issue-based coalitions as the need arises. Their internal interdependence and complementarity, also gives each member network the opportunity to contribute something unique to the collective, making them more self-sustaining and less beholden to external funding that might skew their original identity and purpose (ibid.). And finally, MPW's decision to remain informal as opposed to becoming more institutionalized which is normally thought of for attaining sustainability, gives them more flexibility, and prevents the collective from becoming a competitor to its network

members (ibid.). This vitality and dynamism of such networks has been described by Susan Allen Nan in a conflict resolution context (2008). According to Allen, such networks undergo cycles of inclusivity and exclusivity as they strive for clarity, allow flexibility, and then renewed clarity (2008, 125-127). Such cycles demonstrate a flexibility dynamic which allows network evolution and inclusivity of multiple diverse perspectives (ibid.). They also demonstrate a clarity dynamic that shape network decision-making through consensus building and transparency in their decision-making processes and activities implemented (ibid.).

***Nurturing innovation for resilience and systems change***. *Response diversity*, being the ability to respond in different ways to shock and stressors, is also a useful concept for capturing the themes of innovation, creativity, and flexibility mentioned by some the CSOs in this study. For the purpose of this study, innovation is used as a catch-all phrase that includes notions of creativity and flexibility.[104] Innovation as used by Michael Quinn Patton (2016, v) is "a broad framing that includes creating new approaches to intractable problems, adapting programs to changing conditions, applying effective principles to new contexts (scaling innovation), catalyzing systems change, and improvising rapid responses in crisis conditions."[105] Based on this broad framing, we can better appreciate CSO peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts as types of the

[104] Although Patton argues that the degree and nature of the change involved relative to the existing situation (and not the form), is what makes something a social innovation (2016, 303).
[105] Patton is not really keen on giving some standardized, universal, or operational definition of innovation as he believes that the developmental evaluation process should engage with social actors to bring out what innovation really means in their particular contexts (2016, 302).

innovation. Below are some examples of CSO interventions and the nature of innovation as elaborated by Patton (2016, 292):

- the various emergency warning and early response systems used by CSOs such as NP and CBCS local conflict monitoring networks, International Alert's real-time Critical Events Monitoring System (CEMS) and UNYPAD-RANAO's and others' Early Warning and Emergency Response projects (creating new approaches to intractable problems);
- IRDT's replication of the technical working group approach on P/CVE from Zamboanga City to other areas of the Zamboanga Peninsula (scaling innovation);
- ZABIDA's interfacing of health approaches to peacebuilding during the pandemic (improvising rapid responses in crisis conditions)
- Mainstreaming the resolution of clan feuds (catalyzing systems change)
- CSO efforts that support and accompany the peace process (catalyzing systems change)

Nurturing innovation is important because it contributes to the resilience of an ecosystem by adapting to changes, to new information, or to the persistent challenges within its context (ibid., 5). Innovation also involves changing the system itself to some extent, as dysfunctional systems are often the reason why projects fail. Patton (2016) considers the exploration and support for innovation as the niche of developmental evaluation. While it is easy to think that peacebuilding and conflict resolution responses are innovations to the challenging situation in Mindanao, I have yet to see evaluations being utilized to nurture these innovations. In my view this is the weakness of peacebuilding in Mindanao.

***Transfer as a path to sustainable transformation***. This section argues that understanding the process of transfer helps elucidate the process of transformation and its gradual expansion to shape the contours of a new regime, contributing to its sustainability (i.e., shifting from an authoritarian to a democratic regime, or from a *war* to a *peace-*

*system*)[106], while providing a useful heuristic for more creative and better nuanced evaluation to happen.

The question of transfer problematizes the ways in which efforts in a particular area can have more extensive effects on the course of the wider conflict. (Ross 2004, 3). In the context of Interactive Conflict Resolution (ICR), transfer is "the process by which individual changes (e.g., improved attitudes, new realizations) and group products (e.g., frameworks for negotiation, principles for resolution) are moved from the unofficial conflict resolution interventions to the official domain of negotiations, policy making, and the surrounding political culture." (Fisher 2020, 443). In 1997, Ronald Fisher initially developed a schematic model of transfer from ICR interventions which identifies various elements such as major constituencies, lines of communication, and interactions that influence policymaking in situations of international or communal conflict (ibid., 446). While this provides a helpful overview of the process of transfer, it only shows the general connections among groups, the constituencies involved, and the directions and destinations of potential transfer effects (ibid., 449).

Drawing from Kelman's idea of the two major elements of transfer—individual changes and political effects—Fisher improved on his initial ideas to come up with a more detailed process and outcome model of transfer that specifies its major components and illustrates some of the elements in each component that interact in order for a successful transfer to occur (2020, 449, 454). These major components include: identity and nature of participants; conditions of interactions; qualities of group and intergroup

[106] Using Lederach's reference to a transition from a *war-system* to *peace-system* (Lederach 1997, 84)

development; individual changes; products or outcomes; mechanisms of transfer; targets of transfer; and effects of transfer.

This more detailed view of the transfer process, allows us to better analyze the process of transformation and how sustainability can be attained while also touching on the other important aspects of evaluation such as such as contribution and impact, among others.

In peacebuilding literature, sustainability involves the creation of a proactive process that is capable of regenerating itself overtime—a spiral of peace and development, instead of a spiral of violence and destruction (Lederach 1997, 75). Conflict transformation meanwhile, is a comprehensive set of lenses that describes how conflict emerges, evolves, and brings about changes in the personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions, while developing creative responses that promote peaceful change within those dimensions through non-violent mechanisms (ibid., 83). At the most basic level, transformation represents a change from one status to another, and any intervention that drives and supports its progression toward a more long-term goal (Lederach 1997, 75).

Interestingly, the CSO descriptions of sustainability seem to coincide with the stages or dimensions of transformation in peacebuilding as outlined by Lederach (ibid.). Below are some CSO conceptions of sustainability and their corresponding stages or dimensions of transformation in peacebuilding:

- a fundamental individual change (personal dimension)
- development of networks and coalitions (relational dimension)
- strengthening and development of systems and structures/ institutionalization of good practices (structural dimension)

- resilience to conflict (cultural/ structural dimension)
- continuation of the spirit of peacebuilding (personal/ cultural dimension)
- a result of good or "best fit" practices (structural/ cultural dimension)

These descriptions of sustainability and their corresponding dimensions can be regarded as interrelated and integrated concepts that build on each other. These dimensions can also be viewed as a continuum where changes can ripple in any direction,[107] which is indicative of a movement, or a pathway for transformation.

Interestingly, this detailed way of thinking about the transfer process and transformation, allows us to draw parallels between the two concepts. Descriptively, transformation refers to the empirical impact of conflict, while at the prescriptive level, transformation also implies a deliberate intervention to effect change (Lederach 1997, 82). In the same manner, Fisher's process and outcome model of transfer aims to describe the conditions for successful transfer, which is grounded on empirically analyzing the current situation while keeping in mind the ideal conditions for long-term transfer to happen. And much like the prescriptive level of transformation, Fisher's framework also implies a prescriptive approach to expanding and sustaining the effects of transfer in that it also acts as guide for a variety of interventions leading toward desired outcomes.

Borrowing from ecology's study of resilience, transformation can also be conceptualized as a regime shift, wherein an ecosystem moves from one regime to another (Van Metre & Calder 2016, 6). Using the analogy of the ball and basin to

[107] See Simister and Smith's Ripple Model.

demonstrate resilience, the USIP study illustrated how any socioecological system (group, community, government) without deep or broad parameters can easily tip into another existing basin of attraction (regime) when experiencing a shock or a long-term stressor (ibid.). This new interaction of a community with a different set of structural factors (basin) represents a regime shift (ibid.).

In the same manner that long-term stressors gradually nudge a socioecological system into tipping points, peacebuilding and development initiatives also act like long-term stressors that gradually nudge an ecosystem into a new basin of attraction (regime), as well as help create and constitute the basin itself. Shaping this basin and pushing this transformation forward requires constant positive feedback loops among actors and relationships that constitute the system and the structural factors that shape its contours (Van Metre & Calder 2016, 26). Such interventions may be sustained until such time that Lederach's idea of a sustained "spiral of peace and development" is attained (Lederach 1997, 75).

This entire process which is made more apparent by analyzing the process of transfer, suddenly makes sense for assessing causality and contribution, while holding a lot of promise for more nuanced and creative approaches to evaluation. As Fisher noted, the process of transfer is "exceedingly complex" and thus "a wide range of research methods is needed to comprehensively and sensitively evaluate the sequential elements of transfer" (2020, 446). Here, we can see the potential application of innovative research methods in evaluation, such as process tracing.

Process tracing is the “analysis of evidence on processes, sequences, and conjunctures of events within a case for the purpose of either developing or testing hypothesis about causal mechanisms that might causally explain the case” (Bennett and Checkel 2015, 7). Beach and Pederson’s (2013, 29) approach to process tracing uses a “mechanismic” conceptualization of causal mechanisms which view it as “a theory of a system of interlocking parts that transmits causal forces from X to Y.” Using Beach and Pederson’s approach, we can better appreciate the two-level theoretical and empirical conceptualization of causal mechanisms in interventions (2013, 39-40). The theoretical level involves the underlying theories of the causal mechanism which answers the *why* and *how* questions leading to an outcome, while the empirical level shows empirical manifestations of the causal mechanism such as the series of events driven by entities and their activities (Beach and Pederson 2013, 33-34). A causal mechanism can also have several parts that interact to produce an outcome (ibid., 39-40).

This perspective on causal mechanisms seems to mirror the schematic and flow models of Fisher (2020, 446, 454) which similarly look at the process of transfer at the theoretical level and at the same time discusses the possible empirical manifestations of its components (i.e., constituencies, interactions, products, mechanisms of transfer) which is similar to Beach and Pederson’s idea of “predicted empirical manifestations” (2013, 33). Such innovative ways of viewing causal mechanisms and transfer are important for analyzing the contribution of project interventions to the outcomes of interest by interrogating the validity of a theory (such as theory of change) and comparing it with its empirical manifestations, as well as tracing causal forces to particular key actors and their

activities to assess contribution and ultimately impact. This type of evaluation using the process tracing methodology that aids in contribution analysis has already been conducted by this researcher for The Asia Foundation's People-to-people project and the DAI-ENGAGE Program.[108]

**Rethinking Relevance**

Relevance asks the question *Is the intervention doing the right things?* (OECD 2021). The new OECD evaluation guidelines breakdown relevance into the following elements: responding to needs, policies, and priorities; being sensitive and responsive to context; quality of design; and responsiveness over time (ibid., 38). The new guidelines also integrate the principle of inclusion which strives to understand gendered power dynamics and reflect on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) commitment of "leaving no one behind" or inclusivity (ibid.). These considerations are important for ensuring that interventions are relevant in a particular context.

As previously mentioned, relevance as a dimension of evaluation was not initially considered in this study. But as more CSOs express their frustrations over how their projects are turning out, conceptualized, and implemented, especially on what they perceive as insensitivities or impositions of certain values by their donor partners, then it is clear that we need to reflect and rethink about the relevance of our initiatives. CSO frustrations over questions of relevance revolve around the issues of gender and women empowerment; culture sensitivity in project implementation; violent extremism concepts;

[108] Note that the researcher has not yet received permission to cite evaluation details of the DAI-ENGAGE Program. But a Life of Project Report is available publicly online: https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00TR47.pdf

perceived imposition of “western” standards or values; and the importance of spirituality in peacebuilding. These issues are not mutually exclusive but interrelated to each other.

Some Muslim CSOs take issue with donor requirements for more inclusion such as having equal or proximate number of male and female participants in projects, as well as women’s inclusion as mediators in the negotiation table. For sure, local CSOs understand the value of including women in peace efforts. But their arguments for a more equitable approach to participation can range from pragmatic concerns (such as who will take care of the children), to good old fashion patriarchy (women exerting influence in the privacy of the bedroom). It is quite ironic therefore that donor compliance to promote the principle of inclusivity can also create so much tension in a particular context.

Some CSOs have also criticized big ideas such as women’s empowerment and the use of violent extremism concepts in projects. Moro women in particular see the promotion of women’s empowerment by internationals within the local context as very western-centric, as these may not reflect the inherent agencies of Muslim women in their own communities. Instead, some women and men have argued for a more complementary view of the gender relations which is more reflective of their culture and religion. Meanwhile, using the concept of violent extremism in projects is also contentious and insensitive in certain contexts, wherein the labeling of people and actions as “violent extremists/ extremism” are seen as counter-productive for the transformative goals of peacebuilding.

Spirituality plays a central role in peacebuilding in Mindanao. But some CSOs have criticized the seeming marginal treatment of Muslim spirituality in the peacebuilding discourse. As proof of peacebuilding's shortcomings, some CSOs cite the lack of moral governance among many of their leaders in BARMM as evidenced by some politicians' overwhelming greed and prioritization of personal interests. Some argue that this sad state of affairs is due to the failure of peacebuilding to be more relevant for Muslims despite decades of peacebuilding presence in Mindanao. To clarify, there have been many attempts to integrate Islamic values in peace projects and research as evidenced in the existing knowledge products. But this may be not enough or not prevalent enough as primary source materials for peacebuilding. There may also be a perception that peacebuilding's roots lie in "Christian spirituality," as CRS for instance has been, for the longest time, the champion of peacebuilding and conflict transformation approaches.

The tensions created by peacebuilding is revealing and makes us question the relevance of our peacebuilding initiatives. These tensions may reflect the crest and trough of peacebuilding's evolution in Mindanao and the rest of the world. Thania Paffenholz (2015) provides an interesting analysis on the local turns of peacebuilding which may help put all of these tensions into perspective.

According to Paffenholz, there are two local turns in peacebuilding, both of which are critiques of and a shift away from the liberal peacebuilding project. The first local turn began in the 1990s with the work of its most prominent representative, Jean Paul Lederach (Paffenholz 2015, 858). This first local turn emphasized the necessity of

empowering local people to spearhead peacebuilding instead of externally driven interventions (ibid., 859). The second and current local turn is driven by critical research in response to the further development of international peace and state building agenda and its failures (ibid.). The most prominent scholars of this second local turn are Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver Richmond.

What is useful for my own study is Paffenholz's critique of the problems and contradictions of the second local turn in peacebuilding. These problems include the weak conceptualization and binary understanding of the local and international (including an overemphasis of western internationals); the romanticized interpretation of hybrid peace governance; the blindness to the dominant roles of local elites; and overstating of local resistance and its ambivalent relationship to practice (ibid., 862).

Paffenholz's critique is important for shedding light on CSO criticism of the failure of peacebuilding to touch on Muslim spirituality and transform the moral fiber of their leaders. Some CSOs may equate this failure with peacebuilding's perceived Christian roots or western-centric values which may be incompatible with Muslim faith experiences. At its core however, seem to be the CSO frustration with their own local Muslim elites for their failure to transcend patronage politics and take the high road of moral governance. Espesor's (2017, 81) study of NGO strategies in engaging with formal and informal power holders in conflict-affected communities in Mindanao seem to affirm this. His study reveals that fulfilling their roles as watchdogs and demanding transparent and accountable governance from their leaders remains a glaring weakness of Mindanao civil society (ibid.).

Furthermore, some of the CSOs who are either aligned with the MILF or with the MNLF, commonly blame elites from the other side of the revolutionary fence for the current predicament of Mindanao. However, local CSOs, much like the rest of the citizenry in BARMM, are wary about publicly criticizing their local elites as this would put their lives at risk. This also means that blame is easily placed on the shortcomings of peacebuilding and ultimately on national government. This is apparent during the interviews wherein a couple of key informants expressed a commonly heard narrative among locals about government's divide and conquer strategy to dominate over the Moro population. As one informant commented on the precarious situation of BARMM:

> "You observe. What was done to undermine the MNLF in the past, is also being done to undermine the MILF at present. It's the government using divide and conquer all over again."

All of these experiences support Paffenholz's critique about the poorly defined local and the importance of paying attention to the elite. This particular example shows that the locals of Muslim Mindanao are definitely not homogenous, and that the elites certainly play a huge role in whatever transpires in Mindanao. Hence, there's actually a lot of internal friction playing out among and between Muslim citizens, the Moro revolutionary groups and their local elites, as well as between the heterogenous local and the national elites in government.

What does this mean for evaluation and relevance in particular? Rather than being focused on binary tensions such as between the local and the international, project implementors and evaluators should conduct thorough stakeholder and needs assessment and conflict analysis, to become more aware of the context and stakeholder needs which

can be used as a baseline for later evaluation. This will also allow peacebuilding and development interventions to be more responsive to the textured context, and more relevant to the needs of beneficiaries, which will later have implications for project sustainability and impact.

This chapter attempted to make sense of CSO peacebuilding and evaluation concepts by comparing these to current evaluation theories. The evaluation of peacebuilding brings a lot of possibilities for experimenting with alternative approaches to evaluation as well as a rethinking evaluation concepts by linking useful ideas from other fields of study.

# CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

## Summary, Insights, and Reflection

This concluding chapter summarizes and weaves together all the findings presented in the previous chapters. This includes a discussion of the peacebuilding and evaluation approaches of CSOs; their understanding of the evaluation criteria or dimensions which they use for evaluating their peacebuilding efforts; the challenges they face in evaluation, as well as their suggestions for improving evaluation of peacebuilding initiatives. Based on this, some insights are given in terms of the implications of my findings for the peacebuilding and evaluation fields. I conclude this study with a reflection on my journey as a practitioner and scholar in the field.

### Looking back from where I began

In writing this conclusion, it was useful to review my goal statement when I applied for a placement as a graduate student of S-CAR. I mentioned back then how I problematized over the following questions which I wanted to find answers to in graduate school: *How do we measure the success or the impact of a conflict management program? How do we come up with more institutionalized responses to clan feuds (rido) and other localized community level conflict?*

These questions emerged from my experience running a conflict management portfolio for an INGO which focused on conflict-affected areas of Mindanao in the southern Philippines. We supported the peacebuilding initiatives of local CSOs in Mindanao by providing grants and technical assistance. At that time, our projects were

classified as "conflict management" rather than the peacebuilding and conflict resolution label that we are used to today. I later found out that our local CSO partners had a plethora of peace initiatives and various names for their efforts. The different typologies of peace efforts puzzled me.

Donors and their evaluators and consultants would usually visit us and ask for updates or briefings about the peacebuilding projects of our CSO partners. In such meetings, we would often have discussions about the effectiveness and sustainability of such projects. Consultants and evaluators would often have questions like: *How do you know your projects are successful? How do you measure success? How do you attribute the outcomes to your project? How do you scale up your initiatives? Do these projects add up or connect to support the broader peace process? How do you institutionalize these efforts? How do you capture complexity? Did your projects really make a difference? Are we just mowing grass?* These experts would also have comments like: the peace projects being "band-aid" solutions, piecemeal, scattered, unsustainable, anecdotal, among others. Despite being really smart people, there were no helpful suggestions from them on how to improve our projects, much less find answers to the questions they posed. After hearing these same critiques for nearly 10 years of running the program, I took these to heart and decided to resign and pursue advanced studies to gain a better understanding of this problem.

So here I am. After three years of coursework in the U.S. and more than six years of "judicious loafing," my earlier questions were refined. The earlier questions and criticisms made by donors, which bothered me back then, I have now come to better

understand as the evaluation issues or dimensions that I am exploring in this study: impact, causation, attribution/ contribution, effectiveness/ success, sustainability, issue of transfer, adaptability to change, complexity and the effects on the drivers of conflict. This leads me now to my research question.

**The Research Question**

The central question that frames this study is: ***How do CSOs working in conflict and fragile settings in Mindanao want to improve evaluation to support peacebuilding efforts in that region?*** This study investigates the experiences of CSOs in evaluating their peacebuilding efforts by exploring their understanding of key evaluations issues or dimensions and how these relate to peacebuilding and evaluation theory and practice. This study aims to answer the following specific questions:

1. How do CSOs in Mindanao evaluate their peacebuilding and conflict resolution projects?
2. What key evaluation criteria, issues, dimensions, or concepts do CSOs in Mindanao often use or find important in evaluating their peacebuilding initiatives and why?
3. What are the evaluation challenges encountered by CSOs and their suggestions on ways to improve the evaluation of their peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives?
4. What insights can be gained from the relationship of CSO peacebuilding efforts and their evaluation practices in Mindanao?

**Research Methodology**

As detailed in Chapter Three, this is a qualitive study as it tries to understand the experiences of CSOs with regard to the evaluation of their peacebuilding projects within their unique contexts and dynamic conflict settings. The approach is used to elicit tacit knowledge of CSOs and their subjective understandings on how they think their peace

projects are making a difference in addressing the conflicts in their respective contexts and how they conduct evaluation. In this process, this study was able to generate multiple meanings or definitions about key evaluation concepts from the CSOs' point of view. This study interviewed selected peacebuilding CSOs and evaluation professionals working in conflict-affected and fragile areas of Mindanao in the Philippines. The study informants were purposefully selected according to the following criteria: (1) involvement in peacebuilding and conflict resolution projects and (2) involvement and/ or interest in evaluating peacebuilding projects. This also involves strategically selecting information-rich CSOs or cases that can illuminate the study questions (Patton 2015, 265). The study attempted to cast a wide net in selecting CSOs that engage in peacebuilding and evaluation. A sampling strategy was used that aimed to capture maximum variation of CSOs based on known variations. The sampling strategy considered the different types of CSOs according to certain characteristics such as geographic location, type of CSO formation, type of peace activities, type of conflict addressed, type of evaluation efforts, among others. Capturing a wide variety of CSO types and their engagements ensures diversity in responses to the research questions. A total of 25 key informant interviews were conducted with CSOs and evaluators and one focus-group discussion with evaluators.

This research process was able to draw out the views of CSOs and evaluators about their experiences of evaluation as well as generate multiple meanings and their subjective definitions about key evaluation concepts they use. The summary of the study findings and insights are organized along the following areas:

- Peacebuilding approaches by CSOs (Chapter Four)
- CSO evaluation approaches (Chapter Five)
- Evaluation criteria/ dimensions in peacebuilding (Chapter Six)
- Challenges and suggestions in evaluating peacebuilding (Chapter Seven)
- Analysis and discussion (Chapter Eight)

**Peacebuilding Approaches by CSOs**

The emergence of peacebuilding initiatives is a response to the complex and multifaceted nature of conflict in Mindanao. These are mainly driven by critical events of adversity in their respective areas, continued donor support and agenda, as well as the legacy of colonial expansion and exclusionary policies that resulted to local uprisings. This study has documented the various peace efforts conducted by CSOs which can be classified under the following categories:

- Humanitarian efforts as responses to effects of armed conflict and natural disasters.
- Network and coalition-building in support of peace advocacies.
- Accompaniment and support to the peace process
- Actual conflict resolution efforts focusing on communal conflicts such as rido, resource conflicts, and other rivalries.
- "All-around" integrated peace and development initiatives.
- Initiatives that integrate peace and governance.
- Psychosocial interventions
- Preventing and countering violent extremism
- Peace research and policy work
- Interreligious/ Interfaith dialogues, Culture of Peace, and Peace Education

These peacebuilding efforts are continuously evolving and CSOs are becoming more sophisticated in their interventions, given their successes in supporting the peace process and the overall reduction of conflict. With the emergence of new issues such as violent extremism, the pandemic, and environmental concerns, as well as shorter grant-

giving modalities by donors, CSOs are constantly faced with adapting to new challenges. The resulting expansion of peacebuilding typologies has not only confused CSOs, but also presents some implications for evaluation.

This has convinced some CSOs on the need to revisit peacebuilding and see how all of their initiatives complement and fit in the overall scheme of peace in Mindanao. But such a call only highlights the paucity of writings on the overall history of peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the country. Based on the interviews and the literature review, this study observes at least five streams of influence that have contributed to the overall picture of peacebuilding in Mindanao. These influential streams are the following: (1) peace research leading to interfaith or interreligious dialogues; (2) the establishment of peace education towards a culture of peace; (3) peacebuilding through conflict transformation; (4) indigenous and hybrid approaches to conflict resolution; and (5) donor agendas that drive peacebuilding. Further explorations of these five streams are good starting points toward the writing of an inclusive history of peacebuilding in the country. This in turn will help provide clarity in the evaluation of peacebuilding initiatives.

**CSO Evaluation Approaches and their Views on its Relationship to Peacebuilding**

Discussed in Chapter Five are the evaluation approaches of CSOs. In general, the evaluation practices of CSOs occur as a regular part of their project management activities which include project monitoring and ongoing assessments that provide their staff with regular feedback about their projects. These are often described by CSOs as internally-driven “informal” processes done through regular staff meetings, project

management meetings, and community meetings. The CSOs' decision to conduct evaluation really comes from their desire to improve their projects. These so-called informal evaluation and monitoring activities provide helpful information for CSOs to be updated about their communities; to adjust their interventions; and to help with troubleshooting emerging issues to improve their projects. CSOs contrast this with what they call the more formal evaluations which are usually project-based and externally initiated by funders. These evaluations can be embedded in CSO grant agreements with their donors or can be commissioned by funders separately to external evaluators to support the project or to study a particular issue of interest.

In both internal and external evaluation processes, the approaches, methods, and tools commonly used by CSOs and their evaluators can be categorized into the following:

- The conventional approach of using log frames and results frameworks
- Theory of change
- Surveys, key informant interviews, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observations, simple meetings, community meetings, forums, and workshops.
- Various assessments such as stakeholder analysis, community assessments, needs assessment, conflict analysis, and conflict mapping
- The use of terms "baselining" and "end-lines" are also often mentioned by CSOs in conjunction with assessments.
- Documentation of narratives, the collection of stories, and "success" stories.

Aside from these commonly used approaches to evaluation, CSOs also use other approaches depending on their evaluation needs. The other evaluation approaches, frameworks, methods, or tools they have used are the following:

- Outcome-Impact Orientation
- Bogardus social distance scale
- Action Research/ Participative Action Research
- A variety of peer review and learning processes

- Reflecting on Peace Practice Participant Training Manual
- Reflective Peacebuilding Toolkit
- Conflict Transformation Framework
- Peace Education framework
- PCIA, Most Significant Change, Outcome Harvesting/ Mapping and Contribution Analysis and Complexity-Aware Monitoring approaches.
- More localized M&E and reflection approaches that are modifications of the more mainstream approaches.
- Do No Harm Principles and Do No Harm Framework
- Use of conflict incidence database

CSO key informants have mentioned that many of the evaluation frameworks they use were introduced through trainings, by their consultants, evaluators, and donors or can be found online which CSOs adopt and modify for their own use and needs. These include frameworks such as the Reflective Peacebuilding Toolkit, CDA's Reflecting on Peace Practice, Most Significant Change, and more recently USAID's Complexity Aware M&E. Some CSOs have experimented and combined frameworks to come up with more localized approaches such as COPERS' use of *torya-torya* approach during inquiries which is founded on narrative psychology; ECOWEB's learning process which is integrated in their Survivor Community-Led Response (SCLR) approach to crises; and RIDO Inc.'s reflective *kaprogorogod*.

Some CSOs are more sophisticated than others and put a lot of thinking into evaluation. For instance, CRS has globally developed their M&E capacities, and their knowledge products can be accessed from their website. They have developed their own social cohesion barometer and social cohesion indicators bank; experimented with SenseMaker; and problematized over evaluating the more spiritual dimension of peacebuilding work. Myla Leguro of CRS attributes this to their organization's

commitment and full support for evaluation. Some CSOs have also mentioned using certain software or digital platforms when doing evaluations such as Shura, CommCare, KoBo, and SenseMaker (halted due to the expensive software).

However, the question of evaluation has always been a struggle for many CSOs. Some informants can be apologetic when talking about their evaluation approaches. This can be observed in some of the terms they use: "not scientific," "anecdotal," or *ouido-ouido* (pronounced as widow-widow) which pertains to learning music by ear. This seeming uneasiness when it comes to evaluation can partly be attributed to the lack of training of their staff on evaluation; the lack of resources to conduct a proper formal evaluation; and the unrealistic standards of "old-school" evaluation which is ill-suited for peacebuilding.

Despite these challenges and the seeming uneasiness that evaluation may initially bring, the CSOs interviewed are unanimous in saying that evaluation is essential to peacebuilding. Evaluation is widely accepted by CSOs as a necessary process in order for them to learn from their peacebuilding efforts, improve their interventions, and develop better projects that truly responds to the needs of their communities. Often, evaluation is seen as necessary for ensuring accountability. But more important than upward accountability to their donors, the CSOs take seriously the downward accountability to their communities. In this sense, evaluation allows them to be more sensitive about their interventions, making sure these do no harm, and imparting something lasting to their communities when their projects end. As the president of ZABIDA concludes: "Evaluation itself is a peacebuilding tool, allowing us to understand

the situation of people at certain points in their lives, why they act the way they do, and allowing us to be more respectful of the other."

**Evaluation Criteria/ Dimensions in Peacebuilding**

Chapter Six goes in-depth into discussing the evaluation criteria or dimensions under investigation. This study has proposed that a robust evaluation of peacebuilding programs and projects requires addressing most of the key evaluation issues of impact, causation, attribution and contribution, criteria for success or effectiveness, issue of transfer, sustainability and/ or adaptability of change, complexity, and the effects on drivers of conflict. As mentioned earlier, these key evaluation issues or dimensions were generated from my own experiences of criticisms by donors and their evaluators and further refined in my review of literature. While not all dimensions were equally given attention in the interviews, it nevertheless gives us some idea about what evaluation dimensions CSOs find more useful or relevant in the work they do.

The CSOs interviewed constantly mentioned the concepts of impact, sustainability, success/ effectiveness, and contribution/ attribution as something they look for in evaluating their peacebuilding efforts. The discussions on impact and effectiveness logically generated discussions about changes, in particular, changes in relationships and mindsets. Discussions on sustainability also generated multiple understandings about this criterion, which includes resilience, adaptability to change, and the issue of transfer. Innovation, flexibility, and creativity also surfaced, which can be related to resilience and adaptability through the concept of *response diversity*. Finally, relevance also emerged as an issue of concern for CSOs, which is often overlooked in project design.

CSOs simply view **impact** as outcome level changes. In the context of peacebuilding, impact seems to comprise several elements or characteristics: it is something comprehensive and enduring; requires the passage of time to establish and measure; the result of a confluence of factors; and something nebulous and difficult to measure. It is also important to distinguish the concept of impact as enduring changes, from impact evaluation as a set of methodologies that establish causality. Although it is nearly impossible to talk about impact (the results) without talking about how to capture and measure it through impact evaluation.

*Did our peacebuilding efforts make a difference, and how do I know?* These are apparently the key questions for impact and impact evaluations which I later realized when I was doing my review of literature. Going deeper into the literature, I now understand that **causality** is the heart of an impact evaluation. And depending on how you view causality, this can influence how you conduct an impact evaluation. The evaluators I interviewed in this study simply defer to project documents' description or modeling of causality as manifested in the program logic or the theory of change of a project. But I have also come to realize that donors and old school evaluators lean towards regularity and counterfactual frameworks when it comes to thinking about causation. This happens when causation is understood as a contest of variables to explain variations in outcome, or as the difference of two identical cases. In both models of causation, causal inference is attained through variable-based approaches such as statistical and counterfactual approaches. (Stern & others 2012; Chigas, Church & Corlazzoli 2014).

Meanwhile, most CSOs including myself, understand the results of their peacebuilding efforts from a diversity-oriented view of causation which is both conjunctural and multiple (Byrne 2013). This can be discerned in how CSOs understand the problem of attribution and the value of contribution analysis. This diversity-oriented view involves multiple causation that depends on combinations or configurations of causes that lead to an effect; and generative causation which highlights the role of human agency in manipulating and generating an effect; as well as the process of "digging deep" into the causal mechanisms that explain these effects (Stern et al. 2012). These diverging views on how causality is modeled and how causal inference is made is what is causing all the disagreement, confusion, and heartache when comes to evaluating peacebuilding interventions, which further points to a fundamental difference in philosophical worldviews on what is appropriate knowledge and the appropriate methods to produce reliable knowledge (Moses and Knutsen 2012, 5).

In any case, CSOs view impact evaluations as something impractical to conduct because of the confluence of factors behind it is too complex and too distant for CSOs to control, as well as the time and resources required to conduct it. Bigger NGOs have articulated the need to measure the impact of their projects especially at the cumulative or portfolio level, but also face similar difficulties of resources.

Given that many CSOs pragmatically view impact simply as "change," outcome level change is the primary construct through which CSOs assess the progress and effectiveness of their projects. **Change in relationships and mindsets** are the most common changes that CSOs cite when assessing if their peacebuilding projects are

effective or made an impact. This is not surprising since relationships are central in peacebuilding and changing it involves understanding the effects of conflict on human interactions, minimizing poor communication, and maximizing mutual understanding by surfacing relational fears, hopes, and goals of the people (Lederach 1997, 26; 2005, 34). Looking at the indicators for change in relationship which CSOs use in their projects also affirm the importance of looking at project interventions' **effects on the drivers of conflict** which is also a feasible way of assessing impact.

Change in mindset is also frequently mentioned by CSOs, but its internal process is more difficult to grasp. Change in mindset involves a shift of consciousness (Allen 2011, 241-242). Since conflict manifests as a consciousness of seemingly incompatible goals, needs, or interests, the process of conflict resolution involves the shifting of consciousness by increasing awareness of their own needs and the needs of others, and finding ways of meeting everyone's needs (ibid.). Hence, d'Estrée and others' idea on changes in representation that includes the various types of new learning or revised knowledge, integrative framing, problem solving, better communication, and attitude change can all be useful indicators for changes in mindset (2001). The experience of Balay Mindanaw in reaching out to the security forces during their *Ops Kors* illustrates how changes in mindset and changes in relationships are mutually reinforcing. All of these underscores the importance for evaluators to understand the underlying processes upon which peacebuilding is founded.

*How do you know your projects are successful? How do you measure this success?* Back then, I would confidently reply to evaluators that our partner's project

was successful because “the project catalyzed the resolution of conflict between rival clans.” In the realm of evaluation, the key question for effectiveness is: *Is the intervention achieving its objectives?* (OECD 2021, 52). In the realm of peacebuilding, the question of **success** has been heavily problematized by peace scholars and the concept is often related to the question of **effectiveness** and used interchangeably (d’Estrée & others 2001; Druckman 2005; Elliot & others 2003). Other studies in my review of literature frame the question of effectiveness as *does it work?* or *are we doing things right?* (Frey & Widmer 2011; Kusters et. al. 2011). In my view, a better framing of the key question on effectiveness and success would be: *What peacebuilding interventions worked for whom and why, how did it work, and under what circumstances?* (d’Estrée & others 2001). This is a better framing because it explores the causal underpinnings of interventions, considers the broader context of the interventions, aides in contribution analysis, and feeds better into the process of learning (See Stern & others 2012, 9, 45).

Study informants also view **success and effectiveness** as interrelated concepts. From the pragmatic view of CSOs, success happens when there is change, and hence there is a degree of overlap with the concept of impact being outcome level change. Success is perceived to be broad and highly subjective, while effectiveness is more manageable and tethered to a particular set of objectives in a specific project. On the one hand, a project can be considered effective if its objectives were attained during implementation, though this does not necessarily mean a project is successful, as other things should be considered such as the context, the changing realities on the ground, and

changes in stakeholders. On the other hand, a project's effectiveness can be one of the criteria for assessing overall success.

Druckman (2005, 302) has provided useful guidance when evaluating success and effectiveness. This involves identifying the different goals of peacebuilding interventions and the various ways of thinking about the possible dimensions of their success: violence reduction, short-term/ long-term change; consideration of elite and other perspectives; and reasons for success or failure. Fortunately, Druckman's suggestion is already echoed in practice by how Mindanao CSOs commonly think about their indicators for peacebuilding success. Depending the type of project, such indicators may include: cessation of hostilities, conflicts resolved, change in mindsets (willingness to share power and resources), and change in relationships among rival groups (when protagonists initiate or become open to dialogues). Ultimately, most CSOs believe that it is the beneficiaries and stakeholders themselves who are the final arbiters of whether a peacebuilding initiative is successful or not.

*But how do you attribute all of these changes/ outcomes to your project?* This has been a question of evaluators that has bothered me for a long time. Experts would often argue that there could be other factors that have led to the reconciliation of warring factions. I understood what they meant, having some awareness of intervening variables back then. I would later encounter this issue in my review of evaluation literature, which is better known as the **Attribution Problem**: *How do you connect the intervention with the results of interest?* (Chigas, Church, and Corlazzoli 2014, 9).

The findings of this study show that CSOs recognize that their peacebuilding efforts do not exist in a vacuum. Given the presence of multiple initiatives by CSOs with many of them tackling the same conflict issues, most of them find it unfeasible and even arrogant to attribute peace outcomes solely to their projects. The only exception is when CSOs are sure enough that they are the only peace projects active in an isolated project area or when their interventions are unique or targeted enough for a specific unreached beneficiary group. Because of this, many CSOs have come to accept that looking at contribution is a more feasible and realistic way of addressing the attribution problem. They also understand that their efforts are merely contributing to the overall peace outcomes in their areas of concern. But none so far, at least in my interviews, have been involved in studying the contribution of multiple CSOs peace efforts in a region in Mindanao.

*How do you know if your interventions are sustainable?* This is another obligatory question often asked by evaluators. I remember not being enthusiastic about **sustainability**, simply because I have witnessed the cycle of how development projects have catalyzed unity and collaboration among stakeholders, only for it to fall apart for various reasons in the long run. This seems truer in the seemingly ephemeral nature of peacebuilding efforts, as they are more vulnerable to conflict dynamics and the fragility of their contexts. Hence, it is not surprising that some CSOs interviewed also see sustainability as a difficult criterion to attain.

**Sustainability** is a broad concept such that other evaluation dimensions and related ideas can fall under its ambit. The concepts of resilience, adaptability of change,

transfer, and innovation can be considered dimensions of sustainability. CSOs generally understand sustainability as the enduring changes resulting from their peacebuilding and development interventions. They variously describe sustainability as a fundamental individual level change; the development of structures or systems to ensure the institutionalization of practices; the adaptability or malleability of networks and coalitions; the replication and multiplication of initiatives; a result of good development practices; resilience to conflict; and a continuation of the spirit of the peacebuilding work they do. These descriptions of sustainability by CSOs can be viewed as characterizations of different parts of a system they work in, and that sustainability is achieved through a web of reinforcing factors running through subsystems and broader social systems.

CSOs consider **resilience** to conflict and political instability as an important criterion for sustainability in their projects. This is not surprising since many areas in Mindanao are beset with multiple sources of violent conflict and poor governance which creates a lot of uncertainty for development and peacebuilding efforts. **Resilience** is an attribute of a social system to respond to long-term stressors and shocks as well as the capacity to maintain peace and resist the effects of violence on societal norms and relationships (Van Metre & Calder 2016, 3). A system is considered resilient when it is able to "absorb, adapt, or transform itself through self-organization and learning to maintain its basic function (peace) in response to violent shocks and long-term stressors buffeting the system." (ibid., 6).

Resilience as an aspect of complex adaptive systems finds a lot of resonance in the field of peacebuilding because many actors and communities in conflict and fragile

settings also have diverse and creative responses to conflict and its effects. Similar to peacebuilding, resilience highlights the positive attributes and capacities of communities, thus helping outside actors become more aware of and driven by community-led efforts rather than by their own institutional capacities and perspectives (ibid.).

Key to resilience is the ecological concept of *response diversity* or the ability to respond in different ways to these shocks and stressors, which increases the odds that a successful set of behaviors will emerge (ibid., 6). Response diversity is a useful concept for capturing the themes of innovation, which includes ideas of creativity and flexibility mentioned by CSO informants. **Innovation** is "a broad framing that includes creating new approaches to intractable problems, adapting programs to changing conditions, applying effective principles to new contexts (scaling innovation), catalyzing systems change, and improvising rapid responses in crisis conditions." (Patton 2016). Based on this broad framing, we can better appreciate CSO peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts as types of innovation. Nurturing innovation is important because it contributes to the resilience of an ecosystem by adapting to changes, to new information, or to the persistent challenges within its context (ibid., 5). Despite its importance, I have yet to encounter evaluations being utilized to nurture these innovations. In my view, this a weakness of peacebuilding in Mindanao.

*How do you scale up? How do all these projects add up to support the broader peace process?* These were the kind of questions by evaluators that I also struggled with. Variants of these questions also highlight the **issue of transfer**: *Does the intervention contribute to the bigger picture? How does it add up to peace writ large?* The question

of transfer problematizes the ways in which efforts in a particular area can have more extensive effects on the course of the wider conflict. (Ross 2004, 3). The findings in my study indicate that only a very few CSOs and evaluators are familiar with the concept of transfer as a criterion of evaluation. Some view transfer much like how skills are transferred during trainings, or a replication and expansion of an initiative.

Upon explaining the idea of transfer, key informants agree that interventions contributing to the bigger picture are important and is said to be a requirement of any project. Hence, it is a case of having different terms for the same idea or concept. CRS is more familiar with the concept of transfer as they cited ideas similar in my review of literature, such as scaling up from individual to group to societal; key people to more people; personal to sociopolitical. Bigger NGOs like International Alert, CRS, and TAF, intentionally connect their peace efforts from the local community (barangay) level to the regional and national levels. A bottleneck for transfer and evaluation in general is the documentation process, which is a perennial challenge for many CSOs.

The process of transfer is a path to sustainable transformation. Peacebuilding literature states that sustainability involves the creation of a proactive process capable of regenerating itself overtime, culminating in a spiral of peace and development, instead of a spiral of violence and destruction (Lederach 1997, 75). While transformation, at the most basic level, represents a change from one status to another, and any intervention that drives and supports its progression toward a more long-term goal (ibid.). Drawing from ecology's study of resilience, transformation can also be conceptualized as a regime shift, wherein an ecosystem moves from one regime to another (Van Metre & Calder 2016, 6).

Viewed in this manner, peacebuilding and development initiatives can also be seen as long-term stressors that gradually nudge an ecosystem into tipping points and into a new basin of attraction (regime), eventually creating and constituting the basin itself through a spiral of peace and development. This process of transformation can be observed in a schematic flow of transfer.

Fisher's detailed modelling of the process and outcomes of transfer captures the process of transformation and how sustainability can be attained (2020, 449, 454). The model specifies the major components and how the elements in each component interact to produce a successful transfer. These major components include: identity and nature of participants; conditions of interactions; qualities of group and intergroup development; individual changes; products or outcomes; mechanisms of transfer; targets of transfer; and effects of transfer. Ultimately, Fisher's model for transfer not only acts as a road map in designing interventions, but also provides evaluators with a useful guide for assessing the effects of peacebuilding efforts. This approach to understanding the process of transfer is mirrored when we look at complexity.

This brings us to the question of *how do we capture complexity?* For key informants interviewed, capturing **complexity** is a function of doing good analysis. This is done through the conduct of thorough research and assessments such as stakeholder and needs assessments, as well as doing conflict analysis with the goal of gaining a comprehensive understanding of the context and its problems. But it should not end there. Similar to Fisher's approach of modeling the transfer process, Glouberman and Zimmerman's approach to understanding complexity is to start by modeling complex

situations. In their influential study on medicare reform, they proposed a model of complexity with a three-part distinction of simple, complicated, and complex problems (Glouberman & Zimmerman 2002). Hence, depending on how stakeholders view their situation and problem, the degree of certainty about what needs to be done, and the degree of agreement among stakeholders on how desirable a course of action is, a problem and an intervention can be regarded as technically complicated or socially complicated or both technically and socially complicated (which amounts to being complex). Patton argued that Zimmerman's approach of beginning from where people are and building on what they know, is crucial for situation recognition, which involves matching an intervention or an approach to the nature of the situation (2011, 84).

This now leads us to the beginning: *Are we doing the right things?* The question of **relevance** in peacebuilding has often been overlooked because of the assumption that locals in conflict contexts would know what projects they need. But as more CSOs express their frustrations over how their projects are being conceptualized and implemented, especially on what they perceive as insensitivities or impositions of certain values by their donor partners, then it is clear that we need to reflect and rethink about the relevance of our initiatives. The gap could be found in poorly done assessments, when assessments are not updated, or when CSOs are in a rush to get new funding. CSO frustrations over questions of relevance revolve around poorly conceptualized projects due to the lack of genuine consultation with stakeholders. Other concerns raised by CSOs are around the issues of gender and women empowerment; culture sensitivity in project implementation; contested violent extremism concepts; the perceived imposition

of "western" standards or values; and the importance of spirituality, especially the need for more recognition of Muslim spirituality in peacebuilding.

These tensions in CSO peacebuilding may be a reflection of peacebuilding's evolution in Mindanao and the rest of the world. According to Thania Paffenholz (2015), there are two local turns in peacebuilding, both of which are critiques of and a shift away from the liberal peacebuilding project. The first local turn began in the 1990s and emphasized the necessity of empowering local people to spearhead peacebuilding instead of externally driven interventions (ibid., 859). The second and current local turn is driven by critical research in response to the further development of international peace and state building agenda and its failures (ibid.).

What is useful for my own study is Paffenholz's critique of the problems and contradictions of the second local turn in peacebuilding which include: weak conceptualization and binary understanding of the local and international (including an overemphasis of western internationals); the romanticized interpretation of hybrid peace governance; the blindness to the dominant roles of local elites; and overstating of local resistance and its ambivalent relationship to practice (ibid., 862). The frustrations of CSOs reflect Paffenholz's critique about the poorly defined local and the importance of paying attention to the elite. At its core seem to be that despite peacebuilding's long-term presence in Mindanao, civil society groups are frustrated by the failure of their own local elites to transcend patronage politics, as well as with their own failures to take into account their elites due to the fear of reprisals.

**Challenges in Evaluating Peacebuilding**

CSOs are often faced with multiple challenges in the evaluation of peacebuilding efforts. Chapter Seven discusses these challenges, which are as follows: the typical constraints to evaluation (i.e., budget, time, data, geographic, and political constraints); inadequate skills in evaluation; negative experiences with evaluators; evaluation mindset; and multiple perspectives on peace and peacebuilding.

Among the typical constraints to evaluation, probably the most telling is **data constraint.** Several CSOs have revealed that they were never given the results of research or evaluations of their projects. "If we are not given the results of evaluations, what will be our basis for improvement?" says Dr. Anwar Saluwang of UNYPAD. CSOs further lament that most of the time, their tasks during formal valuations are limited to organizing communities and arranging key informants for external evaluators to interview. But they never find out about the results of such evaluations. This state of affairs seems to persist because some evaluators may have confidentiality and proprietary clauses in their contracts that prevents them from sharing details about the projects to local partners. Furthermore, the CSOs' need to quickly move on to other projects also prevent deeper reflection of their projects. Evaluators also assume that donors provide copies of their evaluation reports to their partner CSOs. The starvation of CSOs for new knowledge lies in stark contrast with their practice of constantly "feeding the beast" to satisfy donor compliance.

This relates to one of the most common challenges expressed by CSOs: **the general lack of skills among their staff when it comes to evaluation**, which includes documentation and writing skills. While CSOs are generally known for their rich

experience in community-based peace and development work, their staff are often challenged when it comes to putting their ideas on paper. Many CSOs admit that writing is their main weakness, and this goes the same with evaluations. The action-oriented lifestyle of CSOs simply leaves little time for staff to actually reflect and write their experiences, much less keep abreast with the developments in the peacebuilding and evaluation fields.

CSOs in general have positive experiences with evaluators. However, some of them have mentioned some **negative experience with evaluators**. CSOs have shared some less than friendly interactions with some evaluators. These include the fault-finding attitude and self-serving recommendations of some consultants which result to low morale among project staff; the tendency of some evaluators to draw contested conclusions without adequate evidence and proper consultations; impractical recommendations; and sometimes having fundamental differences in worldviews especially with foreign external evaluators. These negative experiences with evaluators may have contributed to negative stereotypes and mindsets about evaluation. Overcoming these **negative mindsets** associated with evaluation has been a challenge for CSOs. This negative mindset has been humorously described by the former president of Western Mindanao State University as a form of “self-flagellation.” Hence, in order to build the right mindset and appreciation for evaluation, there is really a need to put a lot of effort into finding creative ways of encouraging the interest of stakeholders in evaluation.

The multiplicity of peace efforts in Mindanao has created **a crisis of understanding the boundaries of what is peacebuilding**. After more than 20 years of peacebuilding in the Philippines, there are so many perspectives about peace and peacebuilding that it complicates the work of evaluation and of peacebuilding itself. There is no agreement on what constitutes a peacebuilding project. Some observers interviewed reveal that some CSOs just label anything they do under the sun as peacebuilding. So, whether these are livelihood projects, humanitarian efforts, transitional justice, P/CVE, and even infrastructure, all of these can be considered peacebuilding. Some consider this a sign that CSOs have already become too donor-driven or donor-dependent. Is labeling an initiative "peacebuilding" still important in the first place?

**CSO Suggestions to Improve the Evaluation of Peacebuilding Efforts**

Given these challenges to evaluation, CSOs have offered some suggestions to improve the evaluation of peacebuilding initiatives (discussed in Chapter Seven). The suggestions below are grouped according to the challenges presented:

***Typical Constraints (budget, time, data, political, geography)***

- Donors should reassess the viability of providing more long-term funding for CSOs.
- Donors that only provide short-term funding should refrain from demanding too much paperwork from CSOs or ask for unrealistic requirements such as immediate evaluations.
- Donors and INGOs should revisit their policies regarding confidentiality and proprietary clauses in their contracts, as well as nondisclosure agreements when commissioning studies or evaluations, as such contractual obligations often overlook the needs of CSOs for learning from evaluation and study results.
- Conduct area-specific, regional evaluations for CSOs and their projects that operate in common areas, especially if these projects have similar peacebuilding goals and objectives.

- In conjunction with this is the need to use existing datasets and conflict monitoring systems of NGOs like International Alert to overlay violent incidences with the collective efforts of CSOs working in the same areas and see what changes can be discerned. Specialized evaluations can then be done to help link observed results to CSOs peacebuilding efforts.

***Inadequate Skills and Capacity in Evaluation***

- Donor funding should also consider the organizational development needs of CSOs, specifically on peacebuilding and evaluation capacity building.
- Capacitate CSOs to do internal evaluations better. Since internal evaluations are the default practice of CSOs, then they need more training to be able to do internal evaluations well.
- Trainings should enhance the evaluative mindset of CSO staff, which will inculcate in them a healthy amount of skepticism and inquisitiveness for them to "constantly ask probing questions and find data to answer those questions."
- Support universities and peace institutes in developing courses on peacebuilding evaluation. Aside from the need to train second-liner peace evaluators, there is also an urgent need for evaluators who are proficient in both evaluation and peace and conflict theories, when evaluating peace projects.
- Tap students and other volunteers to help CSOs in the documentation of their projects, which includes translating local language documentations to English language.

***Negative Experiences with Evaluators***

- Retraining for evaluators is needed to review important guiding principles for evaluators and standards of excellence in evaluation.
- CSOs appreciate evaluators who sincerely want to help them improve their projects and make them understand the evaluation process.

***Developing the Right Evaluation Mindset***

- INGOs/ NGOs/ CSOs should learn from the good practices of CRS when it comes to giving more attention to monitoring and evaluation for learning.
- Viewing evaluation as everyone's responsibility, highlights the importance of developing internal or home-grown evaluators.
- More capacity building is needed to develop the right mindset in evaluation. This involves reorienting evaluators and donors to have a better appreciation for qualitative forms of inquiry and qualitative data such as stories and narratives.

***Multiple Perspectives on Peace and Peacebuilding***

- Support a series of conferences, forums, and seminars that would revisit peacebuilding concepts and approaches in Mindanao.
- Make Islam and other faiths like indigenous religions more relevant to the practice of peacebuilding. This can be done by anchoring concepts of peace and peacebuilding to Islam especially in Muslim communities.
- More resource materials and guidelines inspired by Islamic and indigenous thought should be produced so that these can actually be used in peacebuilding by Muslim CSOs and CSOs working in indigenous communities.
- A dialogue process among peer NGOs/ CSOs, donors, and scholars needs to happen to discuss the dilemmas and limitations of peacebuilding that are causing hurts among some CSOs.
- NGOs/CSOs should be given back the power to design their own peace programs and projects.

## Some Insights

What are the implications of these findings? What does this all mean for the peacebuilding and evaluation fields? Below are four key insights from the study.

***Evaluation should nurture, support, and even inspire local peace and development efforts***. CSOs lament the diminishing space for them to be creative in finding solutions to the problems in their communities. While some CSOs have been wanting to experiment with innovative ideas and solutions to their problems, support has been lacking. Donors and their intermediary organizations usually come in and offer an established set of programs which are sometimes not aligned with the intent of locals. Although donor programs are supposedly the result of a series of consultations with beneficiaries in a country, these may not necessarily reflect the unique situation and needs of certain conflict-affected communities. As this study has shown, there have been some disagreements on certain project ideas surrounding P/CVE, women empowerment,

livelihood, and even the efficacy of peacebuilding itself—all of which, boil down to the question of relevance. Many CSOs just bite the bullet and accept the projects because they need it. Some CSOs have admitted that they are already donor dependent. Consequently, some CSOs have been relegated to becoming service providers for donors and INGOs. Observers have noted that some CSOs do not have their own projects to develop and nurture. This entire situation is exacerbated by the failure of some donors to provide evaluation results to their partner CSOs for them to learn and reflect upon.

There is a need to bring back to CSOs the power to determine the projects that they really need. As documented in this study, some CSOs have expressed a yearning to conceptualize and design their own projects again. CSOs are considered social innovators who are trying to pursue change and improvements in their communities. As social innovators, they need to experiment with interventions which entails a lot trial-and-error. This is the reason CSOs prefer evaluations that help them learn something and improve their efforts. Evaluators have the responsibility to support CSOs and their communities in pursuing what's best for them. This brings to mind ECOWEB's earlier comment about how local knowledge, wisdom, and practices of the various cultural communities in Mindanao remains largely an untapped resource for improving peacebuilding, development, and governance. Here, evaluators and researchers can play an important role in helping societies reconnect with the wellspring of their culture and revitalize themselves in the pursuit to produce meaningful changes in their lives. CSOs have often expressed so many times how they appreciate evaluators who sincerely help improve their projects and make them understand the evaluation process. They want

evaluators to journey with them. Evaluations should nurture, encourage, guide, support, and even inspire the efforts of locals.

***Peacebuilding and conflict resolution theory holds a lot of potential for doing creative evaluations (especially in dealing with complexity in conflict areas).*** Designing evaluations that assess project interventions addressing violent conflicts is inseparable from peacebuilding and conflict resolution theories that problematize the nature of violent conflict. A theory is a set of assumptions about how an intervention attains its goals and under what conditions, and it is theory that bridges between data and interpretation (Stern & others 2012, 25). But aside from holding the power of explanation, theories, or evaluation theories in particular, can also be viewed as thinking aids that provide a working logic to assist in designing evaluations (Cristie and Lemire 2019, 492). This can include assisting evaluators select procedures and methods, providing a rationale for procedures and methods used, and distinguishing evaluation from other activities such as applied research (ibid.).

Inspired by this perspective, I also argue that much like evaluation theory, peacebuilding and conflict resolution theories can also help in designing evaluation (as well as programs). Similar to my earlier discussion of how Fisher (2020) and Kelman (1972) have modeled the transfer process; and how Glouberman and Zimmerman (2002), Patton (2011), and other scholars[109] have modeled complexity, we can also use the various peace and conflict resolution theories as models for thinking about conflict scenarios, possible interventions, and potential evaluation designs. The added advantage

[109] Rogers 2008, Woolcock 2013, Ling 2012, Snowden in Patton 2011.

of using peace and conflict resolution theories as thinking guides in evaluation design is that many such theories have already problematized and accounted for the issues of complexity and systems in conflict situations.

As the findings in Chapter Six reveal, there are different ways of conceptualizing evaluation criteria, dimensions, concepts, and their relationships, and all of these can be modelled. The beginnings of understanding came to me when I was trying to grasp the concept of causation. Taking a cue from Heckman, causality he said, is a property of a model and not of the data, and as such, there are many models that may explain the same data (Heckman cited in Brady and Collier, 2010, 6). Hence, depending on which perspective we use, whether we draw from peace and conflict theory, evaluation theory, or the various theories-in-use by local communities, an evaluator can try out alternative theories or models, and make evaluation designs based on these theories/ models, and see which ones can best explain or evaluate a particular phenomenon under investigation.

Dusting off some older conflict resolution theories, I can see that the Contingency Model/ Approach of Third-Party Intervention of Fisher and Keashly (2013), can be a useful theory to use in evaluation especially when applying the process tracing method. Process tracing is a technique used for studying causal mechanisms in a single case research design (Beach and Pederson 2013, 2). I have earlier contended that process tracing can be used to support contribution analysis which is useful for evaluating projects in complex settings. The strategy of the Contingency Model is to intervene with the appropriate third-party method at the appropriate time in order to deescalate conflict (ibid., 36). The model emphasizes the **matching** and **sequencing** of appropriate third-

party methods at the appropriate time and stage of the conflict. These ideas of matching, sequencing, and contingency are very useful for framing and operationalizing hypothesized causal mechanisms that link the interventions (x) to observed outcomes (y).

Bringing down these ideas at the empirical level, an evaluation can assess the quality of a particular peacebuilding intervention by checking if the intervention matches with the nature and stage of conflict, and if it is conducted in the appropriate sequence of combined actions or approaches. Since a causal mechanism consists of interlocking parts that have no independent existence and therefore interdependent (individually insufficient but necessary part of the whole),[110] a demonstration of logical sequencing would conform to expectations of the correct chronology and also show the interdependence of its component parts. This further strengthens the causal chain which eventually helps establish a plausible causal link between intervention and outcomes. Without proper sequencing of the parts of its causal mechanism (i.e., actors and actions) a project will not work as expected. If the causal mechanism demonstrates the characteristics of matching, sequencing, and interdependence, the actual flow of the project activities will follow a logical sequence that conforms with expectations, which may also reflect the project's theory of change.

There are other peace and conflict resolution theories that have a huge potential for use in evaluation. These are Edward Azar's Protracted Social Conflict Theory, Peter Coleman's Dynamical Systems Theory, and Dennis Sandole's enhanced Three-Pillars Framework. I have personally found the theories of Protracted Social Conflict and the

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[110] See Beach and Pederson (2013, 50).

Dynamical Systems approach very useful for framing and analyzing the complexity of the Mindanao conflict, as well as for sensitizing project managers on the conditions and dynamics of intractable conflict. Particularly interesting is Azar's conceptualization of "process dynamics," which is said to activate conflicts (2015). While the determinants of process dynamics such as communal actions and strategies; state actions and strategies; and built-in mechanisms of conflict, can trigger overt conflicts, these same elements and conditions can also potentially prevent, contain, and resolve conflicts (ibid.). Process dynamics therefore provides us with a useful framework for assessing possible pathways to conflict and pathways to peace which is helpful in designing project interventions and eventually in evaluating the quality of such interventions.

Improving upon Azar's Theory of Protracted Social Conflicts is Peter Coleman's dynamical systems approach to addressing intractable conflict (Coleman et. al. 2007). Similar to Azar's conception of protracted social conflicts, Coleman uses the term "intractable conflict" to describe "conflicts that persists because they seem impossible to resolve." Coleman treats such conflicts as part of dynamical systems which he sees as interconnected elements that change and evolve overtime. This perspective acknowledges the multiplicity of factors relevant to enduring conflict; the complex interactions of these factors; and the different levels at which such conflicts are manifested, interlinked, and maintained by reciprocal feedback loops. A dynamical systems approach treats conflicts as attractors that reduces the multidimensionality of a system which leads to more enduring or intractable conflicts. This happens when elements relevant to a conflict (issues, features, individuals) self-organize into a structure

and become connected to positive feedback loops that further activates other elements in a conflict; lessening the effectiveness of negative feedback loops that function to deescalate conflict (ibid., 1463).

Coleman's framework is intriguing because it is very applicable in analyzing intractable or protracted social conflict in the Philippine setting. The multi-pronged efforts by civil society in reaching out to the Moro liberation fronts, warring factions, and state security forces can be seen as providing alternatives to the conflict attractors that can move a system into a basin of a more benign attractor and prevent what Mitchell calls an "entrapment" in the conflict (2005, 12). The dialogues by civil society with conflict protagonists and respected key stakeholders can be seen as efforts to activate latent attractors, provide alternatives, and increase negative feedback loops that function to contain violence. An evaluation design that has a systems view of conflict and considers conflict attractors and the interaction of positive and negative feedback loops can have more meaningful assessment of civil society peace interventions. Coleman's dynamical systems approach and Azar's Theory of Protracted Social Conflicts are very useful in analyzing the complicated conflict context of Mindanao and show lots of potential for evaluating peace and conflict resolution efforts—escalation, containment, resolution, and transformation. Moreover, these frameworks seem to work very well at various stages of conflict and at different levels of analysis—from the personal-individual level, intra- and inter-community level, subnational, and national.

Sandole's Three-Pillars framework (2010, 56-75) is another model that can be useful when designing peace and development interventions and evaluations. This is

because it provides a broad framework for looking at conflict, its causes and conditions, and possible types of interventions, across various levels in a system, its subsystems, and the elements of that system. This framework provides a useful overview when targeting interventions on particular aspects of the system without neglecting the other component parts that make up the whole. According to Stern and others (2012, 81), a common error in evaluating comprehensive, multi-dimensional programs is breaking down interconnected interventions into component parts to make them more evaluable and then generalizing about the program as a whole. Sandole's framework provides a possible avenue to avoid this common error in evaluation, by acting as a stepping stone towards developing criteria for when and how to view programs as a whole and when and how to disentangle interconnected components without divorcing them from the system as a whole.

There are many more peace and conflict resolution theories with the potential to explain the results of an evaluation and can guide the evaluation process. This entire process of using sensitizing concepts, modeling relationships, and adopting situationally appropriate evaluation designs allows us to revisit and breathe new life and meaning to peacebuilding and conflict resolution theories.

***Evaluation needs to become more transdisciplinary in order to keep up with the growing transdisciplinary field of peacebuilding***. In the 30 years since it has taken root in Mindanao, peacebuilding has rapidly expanded in response to the complex and multifaceted nature of conflict in the region. This can be discerned from the different types of peace initiatives documented in Chapter Four, from humanitarian efforts to

preventing and countering violent extremism. Peacebuilding has followed a similar trajectory of expansion in the world stage from humanitarian interventions, expediting transitions from colonial control, to restoring democracy, and even promoting regime change (Woodhouse & others 2015, 299).

Unfortunately, the evaluation of complex interventions is not yet able to keep up with the changing times. Despite the urgency of destructive conflict and other social problems in the world, evaluation professionals who are far from the rich watering holes of AEA journals in the "global north" are still shackled by the paradigms of their respective home disciplines. And these can be the source of disagreements and confusion on what kind of knowledge is important, how evaluation dimensions are viewed, and what counts as credible evidence and appropriate methodologies. These varying epistemological groundings and methodological perspectives often lead to friction and misunderstanding between CSO practitioners, donors, and evaluators.

This research gap among professionals is illustrated in my own puzzlement over why participative and "user-friendly" approaches to evaluation utilized by CSO practitioners such as Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment, Outcome Mapping and Outcome Harvesting, are not as known in academic circles. I have also been puzzled why the process tracing approach to case studies which is used in comparative politics in the academe is not being considered more for use in evaluation, despite their striking similarities with Outcome Mapping and Harvesting approaches in terms of their similar focus on unearthing causal mechanisms by determining the sequence of events and the

actions of actors that lead to certain outcomes.[111] I have personally found process tracing feasible in evaluation, especially in interrogating a project's theories of change as well as uncovering the causal mechanisms that link interventions to observed outcomes.[112]

A possible path for evaluation to build bridges among the different disciplines is to take a cue from the peacebuilding field. Peacebuilding and conflict resolution developed as a response to existential problems such as the devastation of the two world wars and the imminent threat of violent conflicts, which drew scholars from various fields and paved the way for the emergence of a more multidisciplinary field (Woodhouse et al. 2015, 9, 159). One can argue that the peace and conflict resolution field is in fact the epitome of transdisciplinary social research. The evaluation field can also emulate the peacebuilding field's sense of urgency in dealing with urgent real-world issues and problems which led to the gathering of the best minds from different disciplines to address the existential problems of deadly conflict. Recently, there has been one such call from the evaluation field as seen in the 2021 issue of AJE which enjoins evaluators towards the transformation of evaluation to urgently respond to these "times of cascading crises and urgent aspirations." (Julnes 2021).

Evaluation can also look for examples in transdisciplinary research. Patricia Leavy (2011, 9) defines *transdisciplinarity* as "an approach to social research that involves synergetic collaboration between two or more disciplines with high levels of

[111] In a Skype conference hosted by the SPP Working Group last March 25, 2014, I personally asked the process tracing scholars John Gerring and Colin Elman about Outcome Mapping/ Harvesting approaches and its relation to process tracing. But even after describing to them outcome mapping/ harvesting the guest speakers were clearly not aware of it, which indicates a gap in how process-tracing is used in the academe and development community.
[112] This is based on my experience of evaluating The Asia Foundation's *DFID-PPA program in* 2017.

integration between the disciplinary sets of knowledge." Transdisciplinary research is oriented toward addressing real-world issues and problems, viewed from a holistic lens, and often utilizing responsive or iterative methodologies, and participatory research designs (ibid.). The good news is that there are participatory and utilization-focused evaluation approaches that share the same principles with the transdisciplinary research. Developmental evaluation for instance, comes closest to transdisciplinary research for being problem or issue-centered and for having an appreciation for synergetic approaches, transcendence, emergence, innovation, complexity, and flexibility (Leavy 2011, 30; Patton 2016, 289). This indicates that research, which deals with the production of knowledge, and evaluation, which is concerned with knowledge production to help make better decisions, are not really that far off in terms of responding to the burning issues of the world. All of these embody Scriven's vision of what evaluation can become—a *transdiscipline* (Wanzer 2021, 43).

***Much can still be explored about the evaluation criteria/ dimensions especially pertaining to peacebuilding and conflict resolution***. The 2021 OECD Evaluation Criteria is very useful as an overall guide to evaluation which is generally applicable to most development and peacebuilding projects. The evaluation dimensions or issues explored in this study focuses particularly on peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives. These dimensions organically arose from the common questions that practitioners and evaluators have regarding the quality of their peace interventions. These are questions that pertain to impact, causation, effectiveness/ success, attribution/ contribution, issue of transfer, complexity, sustainability/ adaptability to change; and

relevance. Some of the evaluation dimensions I investigated for peacebuilding are the same dimensions found in the general OECD evaluation criteria guidelines (i.e., impact, effectiveness, sustainability and relevance). Some of these peace evaluation dimensions can be viewed as interrelated elements and sub-elements, or even considered gradations of the OECD criteria.

What this study shows is that evaluations should not be limited to using only the standard OECD evaluation criteria, or any general criteria for that matter, as the specific demands of peace and conflict projects may require us to go beyond the established criteria and explore other evaluation dimensions that are situationally applicable to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This study has problematized the aforementioned evaluation dimensions for peace and conflict, but not all criteria where comprehensively interrogated as planned. This study barely scratched the surface in terms of problematizing these evaluation dimensions. More case studies can be done in the future to illustrate the characteristics of each peacebuilding evaluation dimension and even unearth new domains of a criteria which Teasdale (2021, 362) says are often implicit and assumed in the evaluation process.

## Conclusion: A Reflection

I conclude this chapter on personal note. I asked myself *what does this all mean for me?* To answer this, I once again I went back to my goal statement when I applied for admission in the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR):

> "My aspiration in my professional life is to help uplift people's lives and contribute to the attainment of a just and sustained peace in conflict-affected areas of Mindanao. Teaching, research, and development work that leads toward this goal is my chosen vocation. I chose the degree program

> Ph.D. on Conflict Analysis and Resolution because it is uniquely suited to my line of work as an anthropologist and development practitioner in the field of conflict management." – (28 Oct. 2012)

When I took on the challenge of managing a conflict management program for an INGO, I did not have any background on peacebuilding or conflict resolution. Peace studies was still in its infancy in Mindanao. But I was confident that my training as an anthropologist with a background in people-centered development, and experience of working in Mindanao, made me suitable for the job. Anthropology served me well for nearly decade of managing the program as it gave me the necessary perspectives in understanding the different cultures in Mindanao. And the relationships that I have built because of my anthropological perspective, kept me locally attuned and safe at a time when kidnaping in Mindanao was the norm, and security trainings for INGO staff were not yet a thing.

Taking on a job related to conflict management was a leap of faith and a leap into the unknown, as it was a new portfolio for my INGO. I relished the role of being a pioneer in our field, bringing together different groups of people to research on conflict in Mindanao, and come up with some feasible strategies to address such conflicts. I was good in dealing with my partners' idiosyncrasies and bridging their views to design better conflict management programs. I trusted my local partner CSOs to give me their honest opinion about the situation in Mindanao, their strategies for resolving conflict, the kinds of support they needed, and valued their advice for the betterment of the program. We supported their initiatives as long as it was feasible and they could rationalize it.

I relished my role so much that I became too focused and inward-looking in my program. I was dismissive of other peacebuilding approaches by other NGOs outside my own circle of partner CSOs. I was skeptical about approaches that I perceived to have too much emphasis on peace trainings without the corresponding action to actually resolve conflicts. This attitude towards "peace-oriented approaches" is reflected within my own office. Former colleagues even had a word for it—*peaceniks*. Thinking back, my conflict management program was under the shadow of a state-building framework which prioritized good governance and developing the capacities and legitimacy of the state. This demanded a certain way of doing things in the office that pulled me away from properly exploring other peacebuilding approaches. This may partly explain the reason for my dismissive attitude towards peacebuilding back then.

I remember a year into my work in 2005, I attended a public forum in Davao where the guest speaker was John Paul Lederach. His name did not ring a bell for me. I was wondering why my fellow participants were so excited and they considered him a rock star. Lederach's lecture certainly made sense, though I felt at that time, that everything he said was something we had done intuitively. Part of the reason for this indifferent attitude towards peace studies is probably because I equated it to the Culture of Peace (COP) seminars I had attended, wherein much of the experience was forgettable. As a young faculty back in Notre Dame of Jolo, there was also the impression among the academe that peace and conflict were a matter for the established social sciences, as opposed to the newer field of peace studies. But looking back at that conference

proceedings back then, I realize now that many of the discussions are relevant to my current study, and I am now better placed to appreciate these. [113]

In my own sphere of conflict programming, we supported a variety of approaches used by CSOs drawn from indigenous peace-making, and the more mainstream conflict mediation, and whatever strategies that CSOs labelled them to be. But I also observed that our projects had a certain quality of using a more political approach to containing conflicts. This means working politically to leverage local power constellations to achieve some sort of resolution to conflicts. This involves working with local strongmen, rebel leaders, warlords, as well as the mainstream politicians and other influentials. At a bare minimum, it was about attaining negative peace. As long as rival groups stopped shooting and killing each other, I considered it a success. The deliverables for our projects were simply the number of conflicts resolved. This was drilled down to me by my superiors and by my donor representative. This approach contrasts with what Rudy and Leguro earlier described as the "nicey-nicey" peace efforts that do not have any impact when dealing with the intricacies of politics and governance (2010).

When I left for the U.S. to study at S-CAR (now Carter School), the flood gates of knowledge opened for me. Suddenly, all the things that I was dismissive and judgmental about, came like deluge that smacked me on the face and washed all my ignorance and assumptions away. I experienced a paradigm shift. I realized that peacebuilding and conflict resolution was a vast and expanding field. It was a truly wonderful and exciting field with lots of potential for transforming conflict and changing people's lives.

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[113] https://cpn.nd.edu/news-events/events/2005/07/15/second-annual-cpn-conference/

But what really got to me was when I came back to the Philippines for my dissertation fieldwork. I was doing field scoping for my study site, which enabled me to catch up with friends, former colleagues, and partners. I was informed that some of the projects we supported had languished and failed, and for various reasons, some of my CSO partners had ceased their operations due to auditing problems. What's worse is that a community that we supported for conflict resolution returned to conflict. This shook me to the core. I experienced what you might call cognitive-dissonance, because I could not reconcile that I was taking my Ph.D. to supposedly help improve the lives of people, and yet my project could have been the cause for conflict recurrence and the loss of life. It is a bitter pill for me swallow. From that time, until now, and probably for years to come, this failure makes me question my future in this field of study. I wanted to finish my dissertation quickly but I was weighed down by guilt (and other distractions), and it dragged on. I do not have all the facts yet, but this still needs to be investigated and written someday.

After wallowing for some time, I had no choice but to move forward. This dissertation research eventually became a process for me, of reaching out to the NGOs/ CSOs that I was initially dismissive about and finding out more about the important work they do. Surprisingly, they were very accommodating to my request for interview. Despite the challenges of the pandemic and the economic hardships that they are facing, the CSOs still received me with open arms, like some long-lost brother. All of this made me realize a number of things.

First, peacebuilding and conflict resolution works. The field is founded on decades of practice, research, modeling, testing, and theorizing. Peacebuilding efforts are gradually bearing fruits in the Philippines. After five decades of civil strife, the country was able to sign two peace agreements with two major Moro revolutionary groups. The most recent milestone being the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which eventually led to the creation in 2019 of the new Bangsamoro Region. During this period, International Alert documented an overall decrease in violence in the region for three consecutive years from 2017 to 2019 (Conflict Alert 2020). Despite some flare ups due to the transition and the challenges posed by the pandemic, the peace is holding. While a proper evaluation still needs to be conducted to assess the link between the overall peace outcomes and the contributions of CSOs, I think no one would disagree that the broader peace is obviously the result of the concerted efforts of various stakeholders, including civil society which deserves a lot of the credit for actively shepherding and contributing to the peace process from the start.

Behind this success are the proven principles and fundamentals that guide peacebuilding. The principles of Do No Harm and conflict sensitivity in particular, really matter. I realize now that while my program was sprinting for deliverables of getting conflicts resolved, the NGOs/ CSOs that have embodied the peacebuilding principles were on a steady marathon towards more meaningful and lasting peace. Peacebuilding fundamentals and principles matter. Hence, it is also essential that evaluators assessing peacebuilding interventions need to be knowledgeable about the foundations of peacebuilding and conflict resolution, for evaluation results to be meaningfully captured.

Second, reflection is very important in this line of work. Evaluation itself is an important process that aids in systematic reflection and learning, and a powerful way to link theory with practice (Elliott, d'Estrée & Kaufman 2003). However, evaluation is often overlooked in the cycle of learning and reflection about peacebuilding and conflict resolution projects because doing it right is so difficult to do in real-world conflict settings (which includes navigating donor bureaucracy). CSOs in this study have expressed becoming burned out and frustrated in their work. Given their hectic lifestyle and the serious nature of their work, CSO practitioners rarely get a chance to reflect and learn from their experiences in implementing projects. Reflection gives CSOs some ample pause to step back and look at the broader picture. In particular, critical reflection through reflective practice is essential for second-order learning, through the questioning of assumptions, beliefs, and values (Cheldelin & Warfield 2004; Marsick & Sauquet 2000; Ramsbotham et. al. 2011, 48). CSOs would seriously benefit in investing more on reflective practice and including it in their programming for staff development. Staff should be given more time and space for them to reflect and write down their experiences and translate these into learning guides for their office. Looking back, my own myopic views and assumptions have prevented me from seeing the merits of other CSOs and their approaches, and from exploring other options, which may have resulted to more costly mistakes. My experience is a cautionary tale on the importance of reflective practice.

Lastly, I came to realize that there is a commonality in all the genuine peacebuilders that I have met, whether they are my professors in the academe, or the CSO practitioners that I have encountered. I have observed that a common trait they all

have is humility. It is a trait that I have always wanted to emulate. Many of the key informants that I have interviewed in this study, I have known for some time. I look at each of their names and faces on zoom, and I still remember how I was back then with them. In our encounters in the past, I might have come off as brash, dismissive, indifferent, aloof, and even outright rude to some them. Despite this, they have consistently remained so open and inviting, so generous and humble, and so forgiving. They come from different walks of life, from different ethnicities, religions, and nationalities. But no matter what the differences, it seems that their experience of peace work, and their experience of encountering the other despite the adversities, brings out the best in them.

In the end, *did I get what I came for in studying in the US?* I would say yes. I finally got some answers to the questions that led me to pursue higher studies, albeit through a longer route. I definitely now have a better grasp of peacebuilding and conflict resolution and the evaluation fields. *Was it worth it? Does it all matter in the end?* Perhaps. I don't know yet. It depends, I guess, on what I do with all my learnings from this entire experience. Several paths fork beyond me.

The first path leads me back to INGO work, where the earnings are big and life is fast. I certainly need to earn big and quick after 10 years without regular employment. INGO work is the fastest way for me to recoup my losses. The advantage of this path is that I will definitely contribute more to enriching the programs of my organization (as I would like to think that I am more knowledgeable and wiser now). I would certainly advocate for more ethical and innovative ways of doing evaluations, and probably come

back to donor boardrooms stronger and more assertive in conversing about what needs to be done in peace programming such as supporting more CSO-generated, demand-driven programs and to be bolder in supporting experimentations with alternative evaluation designs. I would certainly renew my ties with Mindanao CSOs, help them understand evaluation, and rally behind them to work for reforms in donor practices and encourage more evaluations that nurture and support CSO innovations. There's also potential for the testing peace and conflict theories in the process. Though I must admit that in my interview with representatives from the donor community, there is already a hint of change in attitude when it comes to the conduct of evaluations, and this change is also seen in evaluation documents. Donors are now more open to trying out alternative evaluation designs and encourage partners to talk about project failures.

I foresee two disadvantages along this path. First, I fear that I will be ensnared again in the cycle of dysfunctional practices in the aid and development community as described by Blum (2011). Second, will I have the freedom to write about my work? Will I be allowed to write a critique of our approaches? I once remember overhearing a senior director say to my boss: "We all chose not to be academics." This telling remark is a hint that such scholarly exercises are discouraged. In any case, the fast and hectic lifestyle of INGO work might not be conducive for reflective practices and academic pursuits in the first place.

This leads me to the second path of academe. While the monetary compensation in teaching is way below that of the INGO, it is still livable. I see myself contributing to a university's department by infusing peacebuilding and conflict resolution theories that

can breathe new life to the fields of anthropology and sociology. I can also use my knowledge of evaluation theory to enhance the teaching of research methods and even encourage the development of a new course on peacebuilding evaluation. I can pursue new areas of research inspired by my dissertation, write in journals, and even do consultancies on the side to supplement my income. The advantage of this path is that I will have the privilege to mold young minds and rally them in what Julnes (2021) calls "times of cascading crises." As we stand on the brink of major ecological and climate disaster, I will have the opportunity to learn and work with some of the best minds in the university to readily meet the challenges of global transformation. But will all of this matter? Considering our nation is sinking in the dark sea of disinformation, fake news, and historical revisionism as seen in the recent election of our new president, a son of a dictator, who rode on an army of paid trolls that spread lies and disinformation over social media to reach Malacañang Palace. One can always say that it is a noble thing to stay and fight to save the youth and the country. But in this climate of disinformation and lies, where credible media organizations are embattled and academics' facts-based knowledge are derided online, it will be an uphill battle. I foresee a looming storm ahead for our country.

This leaves me with a third path: drop everything and leave. I feel the need to protect my family from the coming storm. I think my kids deserve to grow up in a healthy environment with lots of opportunities. I can still take up teaching or totally have a change of career—culinary arts? But if I go along this different path, was it all worth it? Does it even matter in the end? Only time can tell.

## APPENDIX A: BRIEF PROFILES OF ORGANIZATIONS AND EVALUATORS INTERVIEWED IN THIS STUDY

**Balay Mindanaw Foundation Inc. (BMFI)**. Balay Mindanaw Foundation Inc. is a Filipino Mindanao-based and Mindanao-focused non-stock, non-profit foundation, primarily engaged in promoting equity-based development and sustainable peace. Its stated mission is *Helping Build Empowered Sustainable Communities, Helping Build Peace in Mindanaw,* as it pursues its vision of *Kaangayan*, *Kalambuan*, *Kalinaw sa Mindanaw*, *sa Pilipinas, sa Kalibutan* (Equality, Development, Peace for Mindanao, for the Philippines and for the World). BMFI's work and its people articulate a sense of fierce pride for Mindanao and a passion for transforming this poorest and most conflict-torn region of the country into a "balay," or a true home for its peoples –Christians, Muslims, and Lumads (indigenous peoples) of Mindanao. It was registered with the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) on May 8, 1996.
Official website: https://balaymindanaw.org/main/bmfi/

**Bangsamoro Women Services Center (BWSC)**. Bangsamoro Women Services Center is a CSO reorganized in 2015, that traces its beginnings to the Bangsamoro Women Solidarity Forum (BWSF), which provided a venue for both MNLF and MILF women to dialogue. I first met the executive director of BWSC, Tarhata Maglangit, in 2005 during a Peace and Solidarity Mission[114] in Sulu when they were still BSWF, as part of the Mindanao Peace Weaver delegation to Sulu. The BWSF leadership became strained when a faction of the MNLF—the MNLF Executive Council of 15—was formed and ousted Nur Misuari after his failed rebellion in 2001. After taking a brief hiatus, the members of BWSF/ BWSC became active again during Gov. Mujiv Hataman's Reform ARMM Now movement which initiated system-wide reforms in ARMM. Tarhata was personally active in advocating for the Bangsamoro Basic Law (which became the Bangsamoro Organic Law) and campaigned for it in MNLF and MILF communities in the five ARMM provinces. She also participated in lobbying for it in the senate and congress. BWSC still continues with their programs in women empowerment, livelihood, and has partnerships with the Institute for Autonomy and Governance.

**Catholic Relief Services (CRS)**. CRS is the official international development arm of the US Catholic Bishops Conference. CRS has been operating in the Philippines since 1945, supporting and providing Filipino communities with long-term development aid through various programs ranging from emergency response and recovery to disaster preparedness, agro-enterprise, and peacebuilding. CRS peacebuilding programs started in 1996, during the historic moment when the Philippine Government signed the Final

[114] http://www.geocities.ws/minredphil/updates_sulusolidaritymission102.html
http://www.rep.usm.my/index.php/en/19-bulletin/content-january-june-2005/206-sulu-state-of-war-calls-for-peace

Peace Agreement with the Moro National Liberation Front. From 1996-2010, their peacebuilding program has been focused on relationship building, mostly working on conflict transformation dimensions: personal, relational, structural, cultural. In 2010, CRS started integrating governance in their peacebuilding approach.
Official websites: https://www.crs.org/about/mission-statement
https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/where-we-work/philippines#toc-link

**Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD or HD)**. The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) is a Swiss-based private diplomacy organization founded on the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. Their mission is to help prevent, mitigate, and resolve armed conflict through dialogue and mediation. In the Philippines, HD supported the implementation of existing peace agreements between the Government and various armed groups, mediated in local clan conflicts, and helped the Philippine Government reach a landmark peace agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). HD established their Sulu mediation program, *Tumikang Sama Sama* (TSS), which later became an independent CSO.
Official website: https://www.hdcentre.org/activities/philippines-mindanao/
https://www.hdcentre.org/who-we-are/

**Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS)**. The Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil society was established in February 2002 as a solidarity network of 29 civil society organizations of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and other communities elsewhere in Mindanao with significant Moro population. CBCS is committed to a shared vision of a Bangsamoro society where people (Darussalam) enjoy the fruits of their successful struggle for a peaceful, democratic, and progressive society. The network engenders cooperation, partnership, and the collaboration of civil society and other duty-bearers to be more effective in its advocacies for sustained peacebuilding, good governance, human rights, transitional justice, and in promoting an enabling environment for the delivery of basic services to needy conflict-affected communities of the Bangsamoro within and outside of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. From an initial 29 CSOs, the network has since expanded to 160 member organizations. Official website: https://bangsamorocivilsociety.org/about-us/

**Center of Psychological Extension and Research Services (COPERS)**. The Center of Psychological Extension and Research Services is the community engagement arm of the Psychology Department at the Ateneo de Davao University (ADDU). Conceived in 2006 by Dr. Orencita V. Lozada and her colleagues in the Psychology Program, the Center was envisioned to respond to community needs in realizing the mission of the ADDU to serve as a Filipino, Catholic, and Jesuit university in Mindanao. Today, COPERS is manned by ADDU psychologists, mental health practitioners and research affiliates, and trained volunteers that generate empirically-based analysis of community needs, network with duty bearers and service providers, and implement novel psychological applications as appropriate to the peculiar concerns in the region. Drawing from its considerable expert base, COPERS sustains its various concerns for psychoeducation, intercultural dialogue,

peace psychology, security sector reform, organizational effectiveness, mental health management, crisis intervention, psychosocial support and trauma rehabilitation, and post-disaster recovery planning.
Source: COPERS Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/AteneoCOPERS/)

**Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefits, Inc. (ECOWEB)**. ECOWEB is a national NGO founded in 2006 and based in Iligan City, Mindanao. ECOWEB is driven by a vision of a peaceful and progressive society living in a safe environment and committed to mobilize resources, build partnerships and empower communities. They work towards this vision by addressing the effect of the four problems that beset most communities in the Philippines: environmental degradation and climate change, poverty, conflict and strained social relations, and poor governance.
Official website: https://ecowebph.org/who-is-ecoweb-inc/

**Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID)**. Initiatives for International Dialogue is a Philippines-based advocacy institution promoting human security, democratization, and people-to-people solidarity. It started out as a solidarity organization in 1988, after the Marcos regime. As a way of thanking the world when Marcos was ousted, the founders of IID wanted to look outward and share the Filipino experience of a peoples' struggle by way of animating the peaceful struggles of others, hence the south-to-south orientation in their call for solidarity. When the 2000 war in Mindanao started, IID began to again look inward to the Philippines and organized their Mindanao program—the Mindanao Peoples' Caucus (MPC), which became a platform and network of grassroots organizations, communities and NGOs affected and engaged in the conflict in Mindanao. MPC in turn established the "Bantay Ceasefire" (Ceasefire Watch) a network of civilians in conflict areas monitoring the implementation of the official ceasefire agreement between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Together with other peace networks, IID led the establishment of the Mindanao Peace Weavers (MPW), the broadest peace network for Mindanao in the country and currently serves as its secretariat. Official website: https://iidnet.org/about/

**Institute for Autonomy and Governance (IAG)**. The Institute for Autonomy and Governance is a leading policy center on governance and human security in the southern Philippines, which was crystalized with the idea of finding political and governance solutions to the Mindanao conflict. Its mission is to engage peoples, leaders, and institutions in capacity building, dialogue, and knowledge production towards evidence-based public policies and practices. IAG started in 2001 as a program under the College of Law of Notre Dame University in Cotabato City under Dean Benedicto Bacani and inspired by university president Fr. Eliseo Mercado, Jr. of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. IAG was registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission in 2005 and has since grown with a reputation for independence, consistency, inclusiveness, and scholarship domestically and internationally. IAG comes out with regular semi-annual reviews, policy briefs, monographs and discussion proceedings which are widely acknowledged as primary resource materials on Mindanao.

Official website: https://www.iag.org.ph/profile/programs

**Integrated Resource Development for Tri-People, Inc. (IRDT)**. IRDT is a non-government organization headquartered in Zamboanga City but has projects all over Mindanao. The organization was founded in May 2006 by a husband-and-wife team of social workers, Ben Nasser Isnain and Kalma J. Isnain (its current Executive Director). The organization grew out of Kalma's experience of working as a community development specialist under the UN Multi Donor Programme in 1998, when development projects poured in Muslim Mindanao following the signing of the Final Peace Agreement between the Moro National Liberation Front and the Government of the Philippines. After realizing that the gains of these development projects in formerly conflict impacted communities need to be locally supported, the couple established the IRDT. Currently, IRDT focuses on three areas of work: community and social development; humanitarian and emergency response; and research and publication.
Official website: https://irdt-ph.org/

**International Alert**. International Alert was founded in 1986 to help people find peaceful solutions to conflict. They are committed to helping people and their societies resolve conflicts without violence, and working together to build sustainable and inclusive peace. In the Philippines, International Alert was established in 2010. After their influential study on shadow economies came out in 2013, they established an innovative system for the real-time monitoring and tracking of conflict incidents—Critical Events Monitoring System (CEMS). The system also contains interoperable datasets and tools which can be used for a variety of purposes by interested organizations. They also support a radio program in Mindanao (Alerto Bangsamoro) in partnership with Notre Dame University and have a regular publication called Conflict Alert.
Official website: https://www.international-alert.org/

**Kalimudan sa Ranao Foundation, Inc. (Kalimudan)**. Kalimudan is the second oldest CSO in Marawi City. It started right after the euphoria of the People Power Revolution in 1986, when a group of professionals from the academe and religious sector in Marawi came together and decided to reach out to their communities to explain the social transformation happening at the national level. Having a vision of empowered communities living in peace, Kalimudan strives to enhance capacities for development towards sustainable livelihoods, a healthy environment, and improved wellbeing for the people of Lanao.
For more information: https://www.mpiasia.net/component/content/article/31-programs/annualtraining/2020-annual-peacebuilding-training/facilitators/460-kalimudan-sa-ranao-foundation-inc-kfi.html

Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community-Service/Kalimudan-Sa-Ranao-Foundation-Incorporated-1720845478128143/

**Maranao People Development Center Inc. (MARADECA)**. MARADECA is a non-stock, non-profit service-oriented institution catering to the needs of the Moro People in their quest for socioeconomic advancement, peace, and development. It envisions empowered, self-reliant, and self-sustaining, peaceful, and God-fearing Bangsamoro communities in Lanao, by providing venues and opportunities for the Bangsamoro people to build a healthy, peaceful, productive, and sustainable environment. MARADECA adopts a people-based, community based, integrated and sustainable development framework that creatively reflects the aspirations of one Moro People, while actively building meaningful partnerships with national and international networks.
Official website: https://www.maradeca.org/about-maradeca/

**Nagdilaab Foundation Inc**. Nagdilaab Foundation is a member of the ZABIDA consortium. It is an NGO based in Basilan, organized in 2003 and duly registered with the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development. They follow the vision of working in partnership with communities for peace and development. Their staff are composed mainly of pastoral workers, and can be characterized as multi-cultural, interreligious, and community based. They have programs on community organizing, education, culture of peace, children and youth, microfinance, and governance. Currently, their NGO is being tapped for P/CVE work. They have been working with surrenderees of the Abu Sayyaf Group; and together with government and other stakeholders, are part of Asia Foundation's CONVERGE program which is essentially about countering violent extremism.
Official website: https://zabida.org/the-consortium/nagdilaab-foundation-inc/

**Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP)**. Nonviolent Peaceforce is an international NGO headquartered in Geneva. Their mission is to protect civilians in violent conflicts through unarmed strategies, build peace side-by-side with local communities, and advocate for the wider adoption of these approaches to safeguard human lives and dignity. NP champions Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP)—using encouragement and deterrence, rather than violence and fear. As fully committed partners, NP teams strategically remain in areas experiencing violence for a sustained time because they witness on a daily basis how active nonviolence deescalates one flare-up at a time. In the Philippines, NP is an implementing organization of the peace process between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Philippine government. NP's current country director in the Philippines, Rexall Kaalim, is a veteran of MPC's Bantay Ceasefire where he braved warring groups to help forge ceasefires. Official website: https://nonviolentpeaceforce.org/our-mission/

**Ranao Muslim-Christian Movement for Dialogue and Peace (RMCMDP)**. The members of what would become RMCMDP was originally part of a grassroots movement that was initiated after the 1992 bombing of St. Michael's Cathedral in Iligan City and the subsequent massacre of a Muslim family. They mobilized across religious and ethnic lines to dialogue and diffuse the tensions between Muslim and Christian faith communities generated by the bombing and killings. One of its co-founders, Dr. Moctar Matuan, was also interviewed in this study as an evaluator. For more information about

RMCMDP please refer to: https://www.uri.org/who-we-are/cooperation-circle/ranao-muslim-christian-movement-dialogue-and-peace-cc
Official Facebook webpage: https://www.facebook.com/RMCMDP/

**Reconciliatory Initiatives for Development Opportunities, Inc. (RIDO Inc.)**. RIDO Inc., is an organization working to prevent, reduce, and resolve major and potential conflict in Lanao areas using customary laws, genealogy (*salsilah*), and clan organizing. Through the leadership of its founder and executive director, Sultan Hamidullah "Pogi" Atar, RIDO Inc. and their local partners have facilitated the resolution of more than 70 *rido* cases in the provinces of Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur.
Official website: https://ridoph.weebly.com/

**The Asia Foundation (TAF)**. The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. In the Philippines, TAF programs promote better governance to support economic growth, strengthen the rule of law, and foster peace and development in Mindanao. TAF's conflict management program in Mindanao was established in 2004, in response to an earlier household survey that showed the prevalence of clan conflicts (*rido*) which was a cause for concern for many citizens in Mindanao. The resulting Conflict Management in the Philippines program conducted an in-depth study on *rido* and efforts to address such conflicts and community conflicts over natural resources. The program has since expanded to deal with other types of conflicts and has evolved into its present-day peace programs.
Official website: https://asiafoundation.org/

**Thuma Ko Kapagingud Service Organization Inc. (THUMA)**. Thuma Ko Kapagingud Service Organization Inc, is a local, nonstock, nonprofit NGO that caters to socially excluded men and women across the province of Lanao. THUMA is a relatively new NGO, having first met its executive director Ms. Khuzaimah S. Maranda in Marawi in 2019 while doing an evaluation of a program. During that time, she was thinking of starting a new NGO, which would eventually become THUMA. They have partnered with the Institute for Autonomy and Governance for an initiative on preventing/ countering violent extremism, supported by Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). THUMA recently launched a "Peacetival" in collaboration with Save the Children Philippines which highlighted a series of peace-building activities through sports and creative approaches, that helped enhance the youth's understanding of their role in peacebuilding and in the fight to curb the spread of coronavirus.
For more information about THUMA please refer to the following sources:
https://issuu.com/piaregion10/docs/tfbm_1st_semester_magazine/s/13719238
https://www.iag.org.ph/pcve/1868-iag-to-launch-preventing-violent-extremism-project-with-4-partners
https://1id.army.ph/2021/02/08/55ib-joins-youth-peacetival/

**Tumikang Sama-Sama Inc. (TSS)**. Tumikang Sama-Sama which means "Together we move forward," in Tausug, is a Non-profit Government Organization advocating "Mediation for Peace." TSS has its origins as a Peace Working group in Sulu supported by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, with the idea of acting as a neutral body to prevent and resolve incidents between MNLF fighters and government security forces who were still clashing despite the 1996 Final Peace Agreement. Their role was to jointly identify existing and potential security problems, jointly develop plans for resolving them, and conceive plans for addressing the longer-term humanitarian impact of conflicts in the region. After several years of working on the broader peace process, TSS decided to focus on clan conflicts (*rido*) which appeared to be the main drivers of insecurity in Sulu. TSS became formally independent in 2016. They still do mediation, especially of *rido*, MNLF engagement, and education to prevent violent extremism.
Source: https://www.hdcentre.org/publications/taking-peace-into-their-own-hands/
Official Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/TSSInc.Mediation/

**United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD).** Cotabato-based UNYPAD is a peace and development institution that envisions a just, peaceful, and humane society. It was formed to help alleviate the plight of the people in Mindanao and other marginalized sectors of society. Its goal is to mobilize young individuals and equip them with essential knowledge, skills and appropriate technologies so as to become agents of society that will promote unity and solidarity, transparency and accountability in governance.
Official website: https://unypad.org/our-historical-background/

**United Youth for Peace and Development- Relief Assistance Network and Organization, Inc. (UNYPAD-RANAO)**. Based in Marawi City, UNYPAD-RANAO was primarily founded to provide support services to the most marginalized and disadvantaged communities in the Bangsamoro areas. They gained autonomous and independent status from UNYPAD National organization. Their projects included election reform advocacy, election violence monitoring, security sector engagement, facilitation of Barangay Development Plans (BDPs), Early Warning Early Response (EWER), humanitarian and medical outreach activities. Official website: http://www.unypadranao.org/background.html

**Zamboanga Basilan Integrated Development Alliance (ZABIDA)**. ZABIDA is a consortium of four non-government organizations, committed to the empowerment of communities for human security. The consortium is composed of Katilingban sa Kalambuan, Inc. (KKI), Peace Advocates Zamboanga (PAZ), Reach Out to Others Foundation (ROOF) in Zamboanga City, and Nagdilaab Foundation Inc. (NFI) based in Basilan. All of them are committed to uplifting the quality of life of disadvantaged sectors in Zamboanga City and Basilan. Since 2007, ZABIDA has been engaged in different initiatives for peace, development, democratic governance, disaster preparedness and risk reduction management. Official website: https://zabida.org/

The independent evaluators interviewed for this study are all experienced researchers and evaluators who are actively involved in the peace and development initiatives of civil society in Mindanao.

**Dr. Howard Mañego** is a former professor in research and international business management at Korea Nazarene University, South Korea. As a former research associate of Ateneo de Zamboanga University Research Center, he has conducted various studies in the areas of peace education, socio-economic, human security, and governance issues. Dr. Mañego has a wide range of experience in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of foreign-assisted development programs and projects in Mindanao.

**Dr. Norma Tillo-Gomez** has conducted a wide range of research, including an analysis of the power relations in the former ARMM, displacement due to armed conflict, disaster risk reduction management, social inclusion of indigenous children, and youth vulnerability to violent extremism. Dr. Gomez was the former head of the Notre Dame University Research Center and team leader of BRAC Philippines in Cotabato City.

**Dr. Ofelia Durante** was a director of the Ateneo de Zamboanga University Research Center and a former faculty and vice president for academic affairs and director of the Peace Education Center at the Notre Dame University in Cotabato. Dr. Durante is highly regarded as a parent of peace education in the Philippines.

**Prof. Rufa Cagoco-Guiam** is a retired university professor of the Mindanao State University (MSU) in General Santos City. She is a graduate of the Department of Anthropology in the University of Hawaii in Manoa, USA. Prof. Guiam has extensive experience in evaluating peacebuilding projects and has conducted monitoring and evaluation studies for major donor-funded projects in Mindanao. She also maintains a regular column in a leading national daily, Philippine Daily Inquirer.

**Dr. Moctar Matuan** is a retired university professor of the Mindanao State University in Marawi and was director of the Institute for Peace and Development in Mindanao (IPDM) of the university. He also served as the OIC of the Dansalan Research Center after the passing of its founding director, Dr. Peter Gowing. Dr. Matuan is actively involved as a research and evaluation consultant of various CSOs in Marawi.

## APPENDIX B: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

| No. | Area | Organization | Contact Person |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Marawi | United Youth for Peace and Development- Relief Assistance Network and Organization Inc. (UNYPAD-RANAO) | Ansary Diamaoden<br>Executive Director |
| 2 | Marawi | Reconciliatory Initiatives for Development Opportunities, Inc. (RIDO Inc.) | Sultan Hamidullah Atar "Pogi"<br>Executive Director |
| 3 | CDO | Balay Mindanaw Foundation Inc. (BMFI) | Charmaine Mae "Xx" Dagapioso-Baconga and Lerio "Baht" Latumbo<br>Co-directors, ICPeace |
| 4 | Cotabato | Institute for Autonomy and Governance (IAG) | Atty. Benedicto Bacani<br>Executive Director |
| 5 | Marawi | Maranao People Development Center, Inc. (MARADECA) | Salic Ibrahim<br>Executive Director |
| 6 | Zambo | Integrated Resource Development for Tri-People, Inc. (IRDT) | Kalma Isnain<br>Executive Director |
| 7 | Zambo | Zamboanga-Basilan Integrated Development Alliance, Inc. (ZABIDA) | Dr. Grace Rebollos<br>President |
| 8 | Davao | Center of Psychological Extension and Research Services (COPERS) | Dr. Gail T. Ilagan<br>Director |
| 9 | Marawi | Thuma Ko Kapagingud Service Organization Inc. (THUMA) | Khuzaimah "Khuzy" S. Maranda<br>Executive Director |
| 10 | Basilan | Nagdilaab Foundation, Inc. | Dedette Suacito<br>Executive Director |
| 11 | Iligan | Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefits, Inc. (ECOWEB) | Regina "Nanette" S. Antequisa<br>Executive Director |
| 12 | Manila | Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) | Iona Jalijali<br>Country Representative |
| 13 | Cotabato, Davao, Zambo | Evaluators FGD | Dr. Ofelia Durante,<br>Dr. Norma Gomez &<br>Dr. Howard Mañego |
| 14 | Sulu | Tumikang Sama Sama (TSS) | Rosemain Abduraji |

| | | | Executive Director |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15 | Davao | Catholic Relief Services (CRS) | Myla Leguro<br>Director, Interreligious Peacebuilding Program |
| 16 | Cotabato | Bangsamoro Women Services Center (BWSC) | Tarhata Maglangit<br>Executive Director |
| 17 | Cotabato | Consortium for Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) | Guiamel Alim<br>Chairman |
| 18 | Marawi | Ranao Muslim Christian Movement for Dialogue and Peace (RMCMDP) | Dr. Moctar Matuan<br>Co-founder/ Evaluator |
| 19 | Marawi | Kalimudan sa Ranao Foundation, Inc. (Kalimudan) | Mr. Amenodin “Ding” T. Cali<br>Executive Director |
| 20 | Gen San/ Cotabato | Independent Evaluator | Prof. Rufa Cagoco-Guiam<br>Evaluator |
| 21 | Davao | Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID) / GPPAC | Gus Miclat<br>Executive Director |
| 22 | Cotabato | United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD) | Dr. Anwar Saluwang<br>UNYPAD Executive Council Member and former Director |
| 23 | Manila | The Asia Foundation (TAF) | Sam Chittick<br>Country Representative |
| 24 | Cotabato | Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) | Rexall Kaalim<br>Country Director |
| 25 | Manila | Anonymous International Governmental Donor | Anonymous contact person |
| 26 | Davao | International Alert | Nikki Philline C. de la Rosa<br>Executive Director |

## APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTED GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS, IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS, AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

### Semi-Structured Interview Guide Questions for Key Informant Interviews

Respondent (Code): Dissertation KII Tool
Date of Interview:

Key Informant Interview Summary Page

| What are the most interesting or relevant parts of the interview? |
| --- |
| |
| How do you analyze these comments and understand them in the context of peacebuilding and evaluation and CSOs? |
| |
| Based on this analysis do any recommendations emerge for peacebuilding/ Evaluation/ INGOs/ NGOs/ Donors? |
| |
| **Reflective Practice Section**:<br>What happened during the interviews? (Note your respondents' feelings/ reactions and your own).<br>Why did it happen? What can I learn from it? What can be used for my study?<br>What were the challenges during the interview? What can be improved in the interview?<br>What would I do differently next time? Why? What would I do the same next time? Why?<br>What next? |
| |

**<u>Purpose:</u>** This study seeks to understand how CSOs evaluate their peacebuilding efforts and what improvements can be made to make evaluations more responsive to peacebuilding initiatives within a dynamic conflict environment.

**<u>Central Question</u>:** ***How do CSOs working in conflict and fragile settings in the southern Philippines want to improve evaluation to support peacebuilding efforts in that region?***

**General Guidance:**

- Ask participant if he/she has read and understood the Informed Consent Form and if there are questions about it. Verify if participant has given his/her consent for the interview.
- Ask permission from participant to audio record the interview for note-taking purposes.

**Preliminaries:**

- Tell me about your work. How did your organization come into peacebuilding & conflict resolution?
- What is the nature of your peacebuilding projects?
- What types of conflict does your peace interventions address?

***1. How do CSOs in the southern Philippines evaluate their peacebuilding and conflict resolution projects?***

**How do you normally evaluate your peacebuilding and conflict resolution projects?**

- What evaluation methods/ frameworks/ tools do you typically use when you evaluate your peacebuilding projects? Please explain your preference for using these methods/ frameworks/ tools.
- What drives your decisions when doing evaluations (i.e., Why do you decide to evaluate; how do you decide the approaches and methods to use; when do you use external/internal evaluators; the timing of evaluation; donor requirements to evaluate, etc.)?

**Please tell me about your experiences in evaluating your peacebuilding/ conflict resolution projects.**

- Can you share some examples of positive/ negative experiences with the evaluation of your PB/CR projects? What made these positive/ negative?

**(Other Questions)**

**How do you normally evaluate your peacebuilding and conflict resolution projects?**

- What role does evaluation play in your peacebuilding work?
- Is evaluation important for your work as a CSO? Why do think so? Why not?
- What drives your decisions in doing evaluations (i.e., their decision to evaluate, their approaches and methods, timing—when do you evaluate, etc.)?
- What are some of your experiences of evaluating your peacebuilding projects? Can you share an example of a positive experience in evaluation? What made it positive? Can you share an example of a bad/negative experience? What made it "bad"?
- How do CSOs translate evaluation findings to improve their programs?
- What challenges do CSOs face in doing evaluations of peacebuilding activities?
- What are the evaluation needs of CSOs working on peacebuilding in the southern Philippines?

2. ***What key concepts or dimensions of evaluation do CSOs in the southern Philippines often use or find important in evaluating their peacebuilding initiatives, and why?***
   *(Examples of these are impact, causation, attribution/ contribution, effectiveness/ success, issue of transfer, complexity, sustainability/ adaptability to change; the effects on drivers of conflict and others)*

**What criteria do you use to assess the quality of your peacebuilding projects?**

**What aspects of evaluation are most useful/ important for you in evaluating your peacebuilding initiatives? Or, what evaluation questions do you find most helpful in assessing the quality of your PB initiatives? Please explain.** (*State some of the dimensions listed above*).

- How do you understand each of these key evaluation concepts/ dimensions in your context?
- Are there variations in the meaning of each concept? Please explain.
- What are the local terms used for these evaluations concepts that you use?
- Do you prioritize certain aspects/ dimensions over others? Why?

**What are some evaluation questions do you find difficult answering? Please explain.**
**What other criteria do you use to assess the quality of your peacebuilding projects?** (state the concepts listed)
**What evidence do you seek to prove your peacebuilding efforts are effective? Why?**
**How do you know if your peace projects are making a difference (are effective/ having an impact)?**

**(Others)**

**How do you know if your peace projects are making a difference (or are effective)?**

- What criteria do you use to assess the quality of your peacebuilding projects?
- What aspects/ dimensions/ concepts of the evaluation criteria do you find most useful in evaluating your PB/CM work and why? (state some of the dimensions listed above).
- Do you prioritize certain aspects/ dimensions over others? Why?
- In your context, how do you understand each of the key evaluation concepts/ dimensions you mentioned?
- How do you understand the other concepts within your context (state the concepts listed above)?
- Are there variations in the meaning of each concept? Please explain.
- Do you think these concepts are worth considering in evaluating your PB/CR projects?

3. ***What are the suggestions of CSOs on ways to improve the evaluation of their peacebuilding initiatives?***

**What challenges do you commonly face in evaluating your peacebuilding projects?**

**What do you think are the evaluation needs of CSOs working on peacebuilding in the southern Philippines?**

**What are your suggestions on ways to improve the evaluation of PB/CR initiatives?** (You may also address your suggestions to donors/ funders).

| **(Others)**<br>**As a CSO, what are your suggestions on ways to improve the evaluation of PB/CR initiatives?** (you may also make suggestions for donors/ funders)<br>• Why do you think these specific suggestions will be helpful for you?<br>• Can you share your experiences with each of these suggestions? |
|---|
| ***4. What insights can be gained from the relationship of CSO peacebuilding efforts and their evaluation practices in the southern Philippines? In comparing the actual evaluation practices of CSOs and existing evaluation theories, what learnings can be used to improve peacebuilding programs and their evaluation?*** |
| **Do you have anything to share on the relationship between peacebuilding and evaluation practices?**<br><br>**What do you think is the relationship between your peacebuilding efforts & your evaluation practices?**<br>• How do you compare the evaluation practices of your CSO with the practices of other organizations?<br>• How do your evaluation practices compare with the existing evaluation theories you know of, or with how evaluation is done in the mainstream?<br>• What learnings from the evaluation process can be used to improve peacebuilding programs and your evaluation practices?<br><br>**(Others)**<br>**What learnings from evaluations can be used to improve the evaluation of peacebuilding programs?** |
| *Optional Questions (when there is still time later):*<br>• What innovations did you develop in your peacebuilding efforts?<br>• What challenges did you face/ or are currently facing in doing your PB/CR work?<br>• What are your CSO's needs and your suggestions to improve your CSO's peacebuilding initiatives? |
| *Thank You!*<br>*Remind informant to send signed Informed Consent Form.* |
| ****Since this is a semi-structured interview, the researcher may ask follow-up questions related to the main research questions as needed. The researcher may also reframe the questions as needed and refer to some questions from his In-Depth Interview & Focus Group Discussion Guide Questions**** |

## Semi-Structured Interview Guide Questions for In-depth Interviews and Focus Group Discussions
## Key Evaluation Concepts/ Issues[115]

**Purpose:** This study seeks to understand how CSOs evaluate their peacebuilding efforts and what improvements can be made to make evaluations more responsive to peacebuilding initiatives within a dynamic conflict environment.

**Objective of In-depth Interviews:** To deepen the conversation about specific evaluation concepts, issues, dimensions, or to highlight cases.
**Objective of FGDs:** To converse with CSOs as a group, and with their staff and discuss their experiences of doing evaluations and jointly define some evaluation concepts/ issues/ dimensions as they experience it.

**General Guidance:**

- Ask participants if they have read and understood the Informed Consent Form and if there are questions about it. Verify if the participants have given their consent for the interview.
- Ask permission from participants to audio record the interview for note-taking purposes.

| Key Issues/ Challenges | Provisional Definitions/ Properties of each Dimensions (Guide for Researcher) | CORE Question for each Dimension / List of Possible Sub Questions & Possible Reflective Questions |
|---|---|---|
| Impact | Positive and negative, primary & secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended (OECD).<br><br>Long-term economic, sociocultural, institutional, environmental, technological, or other effects on identifiable populations or groups produced by a project, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. (Bamberger & others)<br>• **Proportion of changes** that can be attributed to a project.<br>• **Higher level outcomes** or<br>• **Equitable and durable improvements** in human wellbeing & social justice.<br>• **Final level in a casual chain** | ***Did your peacebuilding efforts make a difference and how do you know?***<br>• Can you share your experience of what you consider a PB/CR project that made an impact on conflict? Why do you think it was impactful?<br>• Can you share experience of PB project that did not make an impact? Why do you think it made no impact?<br>• What are your criteria in assessing the impact of a PB/CR project?<br>• Are their variations in how impact is seen/ measured? Under what contexts are these different? |
| Causation | Causality is a property of a model, & not of the data & there are many models to explain the same data. (Heckman in Brady & Collier 2010).<br><br>**Models of causation**<br>• Regularity frameworks<br>• Counterfactual frameworks | ***What is the nature of the cause-and-effect relationship? How does modeling causation result to differing views of impact? What's going on?***<br>• How would you know if the changes in the conflict is due to the PB/CR intervention? |

[115] This table also functions as a guide for the researcher. It compiles the relevant information and questions related to the key evaluation issues as cited in my review of literature

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | • Multiple causation<br>• Generative causation (human agency & generative aspects)<br>• Linear, domino, cyclic, spiral, mutual, & relational causality.<br>**Design Approaches**<br>Statistical, experimental, configurational, theory-bases, case-based, & participatory approaches. | • What processes catalyzed the shift from conflict to peace (the changes)?<br>• What aspect of the project is most important in catalyzing the change?<br>• What incremental changes occurred before the outcome?<br>• Can the changes be the result of something else? |
| Attribution/ Contribution | **Attribution**<br>• Cause of the effect<br>• Extent of the effect<br>**Contribution**<br>• Exploring attribution through contribution<br>• Credible theory of change<br>• Activities implemented<br>• ToC verified by evidence<br>• Other factors | ***How to connect the intervention with the results of interest?***<br>• How do we connect the PB/CR efforts to peace outcomes in communities?<br>• How do the various PB/CR efforts contribute to overall peace outcomes in selected subnational areas and how do we know? |
| Success or Effectiveness | RPP criteria for effectiveness<br>Violence reduction, short-term/ long-term change; consideration of elite and other perspectives; and reasons for success or failure<br>Changes in representation, Changes in relations, Foundations for transfer<br>Foundations for Outcome/ Implementation<br>Sources of failure: intervention/ implementation & incorrect hypotheses about the conflict. | ***What PB/CR interventions worked for whom & why, how did it work, & under what circumstances?***<br>• Can you share your experience of what you consider a successful or effective PB/CR project? What made it successful/ effective?<br>• Can you share experience of an unsuccessful PB project? What do you think makes it unsuccessful?<br>• Are these successful/ effective under certain contexts? Explain. |
| Issue of Transfer | More people approaches<br>Key people approaches<br><br>Linkage between individual level with socio-political level<br><br>Linkage between key people with more people and vice versa.<br><br>Linkage between community level interventions and the meso level and the macro structural level. | ***Does the intervention contribute to the bigger picture? How does it add up to peace writ large?***<br>• How do various PB/CR interventions create a spill-over effect that influences peace and order conditions in project and non-project areas?<br>• Is there evidence that a transfer of change occurred from participants to the wider community? What are these evidences?<br>• What are the linkages between individual level with socio-political level; and the linkage between key people with more people and vice versa? |
| Sustainability | • Resilience to risks overtime | ***Do the changes endure?*** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | • Adaptability of change | • What makes a PB/CR effort sustainable in your context?<br>• Can you share your experience of a PB/CR project wherein the effects of the project have endured? What do you think made the project resilient?<br>• Under what circumstances were these projects sustainable?<br>• Are there variations in the meaning of sustainability in PB/CR?<br>• How have project outcomes adapted to shifting contexts and stress points overtime?<br>• Did the efforts build on previous success/ learnings? |
| Complexity | **Different perspectives**<br>Program view vs. stakeholder view vs negotiated view of situation & solutions (related to causality)<br><br>**Models of complexity**<br>• Simple, complicated, complex<br>• Variations in causality<br>• Governance, simultaneous strands, alternative causal strands, nonlinearity, tipping points & emergent outcomes<br>• 'Key facts' in causal density, implementation capability, reasoned expectations.<br>• Reflexivity & exposing & reducing uncertainties. | ***How can emergent & nonlinear dynamics of complex adaptive systems be captured, illuminated & understood?***<br><br>***How do stakeholders understand their conflict situation & the proposed solutions to their problem?***<br>• How do your projects account for & address complexity? Can you share an example from your experience?<br>• How do you account for complexity in evaluating PB/CR? Can you share an example?<br>• How do stakeholders understand (or model) their conflict situation and their proposed solutions to the problem?<br>• How did your projects adapt to complexity of conflict environments and program implementation?<br>• Did the goals of PB/CR evolve in response to disputant needs and changing conditions; |
| Effect on the drivers of conflict & other RPP criteria for effectiveness | • Stopping a key driving factor of war or conflict<br>• Contribute to a momentum for peace<br>• Result in the creation or reform of political institutions to handle grievances<br>• Resisting violence & provocations to violence.<br>• Increase in people's security and in their sense of security. | ***How did the interventions affect the drivers of conflict, create momentum for peace, & increase sense of security for locals?***<br>• What drives conflict in your areas?<br>• How did such interventions affect the drivers of conflict?<br>• How did the efforts contribute to a momentum for peace?<br>• Did the efforts result in creation of institutions to handle grievances?<br>• Did the projects increase in resistance to violence and provocations? |

<table>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>• Did it increase security or sense of security of locals?<br>• In your experience, is this criteria meaningful in evaluating PB/CR?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Other Possible Dimensions?</td><td></td><td>Are there other concepts/ issues/ criteria that locals use to assess if their PB/CR projects are making a difference? Are there other local terms/ concepts used to evaluate the effectiveness of a project? What other evidence do local use as evidence for impact/ success etc.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Part 2: Most Significant Dimensions, Challenges, & Suggestions</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">What aspects of evaluation are most useful/ important for you in evaluating your peacebuilding initiatives? Or, what evaluation questions do you find most helpful in assessing the quality of your PB initiatives? Please explain. (State some of the dimensions listed above).<br>• How do you understand each of these key evaluation concepts/ dimensions in your context?<br>• Are there variations in the meaning of each concept? Please explain.<br>• What are the local terms used for these evaluations concepts that you use?<br>• Do you prioritize certain aspects/ dimensions over others? Why?<br><br>What are some evaluation questions do you find difficult answering? Please explain.<br>What other criteria do you use to assess the quality of your peacebuilding projects? (state the concepts listed)<br>What evidence do you seek to prove your peacebuilding efforts are effective? Why?<br>How do you know if your peace projects are making a difference (in terms of the criteria/ dimensions/ issues/ aspects stated above)?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">What challenges do you commonly face in evaluating your peacebuilding projects?<br>What do you think are the evaluation needs of CSOs working on peacebuilding in the southern Philippines?<br>What are your suggestions on ways to improve the evaluation of PB/CR initiatives? (You may also address your suggestions to donors/ funders).<br>What learnings from evaluations can be used to improve the evaluation of peacebuilding programs?<br>Do you have anything to share on the relationship between peacebuilding and evaluation practices?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Thank You! Remind informant to send signed Informed Consent Form.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Since this is a semi-structured interview, the researcher may ask follow-up questions related to the main research questions as needed. The researcher may also reframe the questions as needed and refer to some questions from his Key Informant Interview Guide Questions.</td></tr>
</table>

## APPENDIX D: MATRIX FOR ORGANIZING DATA

| CSO | Peacebuilding Approach/ Types | Evaluation Approach | Evaluation Criteria/ Dimensions | Challenges/ Weaknesses | Suggestions/ Needs | Peacebuilding & Evaluation Relation | Insights/ Thoughts/ Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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