Peacebuilding with impact: Defining Theories of Change

Description

Tweet

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Executive Summary: â??Focusing on theories of change can improve the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions. A review of 19 peacebuilding projects in three confict-affected countries found that the process of articulating and reviewing theories of change adds rigour and transparency, clarifes project logic, highlights assumptions that need to be tested, and helps identify appropriate participants and partners. However, the approach has limitations, including the diffculty of gathering theory validating evidence.

While they are not a panacea, devoting greater attention to theories of change is a simple and relatively inexpensive means of increasing the quality of peacebuilding interventions. Donors and peacebuilding agencies should review their procedures to encourage and accommodate more widespread focus on theories of change, and ensure adequate resources are set aside to allow appropriate monitoring of these theories throughout the life of an intervention.

A focus on theories of change led to the following key fndings:
â?¢ Clarifying project logic helps highlight tenuous assumptions;
â?¢ Clearly identifying the aims of activities and measures of success strengthens project design;
â?¢ Determining the appropriate actors to work with, and not just the easy-to-reach, enables better programme focus;
â?¢ More explicit links need to be made between local level activities and national peace processes for desired changes to occur;
â?¢ Confict analysis is critical for determining the relevance of activities but is rarely done;
â?¢ Staff often require support in ensuring their theories of change are suffciently explicit;
â?¢ Current project planning tools do not help practitioners articulate their theories of change;
â?¢ Gathering evidence to validate a theory of change is challenging, particularly in conditions of conflict and fragility;
â?¢ Critical review of theories of change needs to be undertaken in conjunction with other forms of evaluation to have maximum value;
â?¢ Theories of change can encourage an overly linear approach, when change in con?ict contexts can be more organic or systemic.

Recommendations:
1 Donors should revise their logical frameworks guidance to encourage the use of theories of change, notably to include them within the â??assumptions and risksâ?? column of existing logical frameworks or by adding an additional column.
2 Theories of change need to be as precise, nuanced and contextually specific as possible and be based on broad conflict analysis.
3 Practitioners need to articulate theories of change within a hierarchy of results and to review these periodically throughout the implementation of a project, particularly if conflict dynamics change.
4 Donors should encourage funded agencies to review their theories of change throughout the project

cycle and make resources available for this.â?•

Category

1. Uncategorized

Tags

1. CARE
2. peacebuilding
3. Theory of Change

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