# Mandate Evaluation

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# Introduction

In order to ensure that you can relate the course Mandate Evaluation (or what I call: Evaluation Research for Peace and Conflict) to practical applications in your own context, I decided to take a non-theoretical approach in this learning material. It essentially reflects my experience as an evaluator for over 20 years, and I feel that those experiences on the ground not only enriched my knowledge, but more significantly enriched me as a human being –they taught me empathy, to be humble, and to appreciate what you learn from everyone and from every experience.

# 1. Basic Assumptions about Evaluation of Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Projects and Programs. The Evaluation Research Journey

In 1989 I was studying for a Masters degree in Sociology and Conflict at George Mason University. I was a new immigrant to the United States, and wanted to find a way to connect what I was studying to my work. A strike of luck opened a door for me to work as a research assistant in an evaluation research project conducted by one of the professors in the Sociology Department. The evaluation focused on assessing if a three-year drug and alcohol prevention program for adolescents actually helped to keep them away from using drugs and alcohol. Such substance abuse prevention programs are widely spread in the United States (and elsewhere of course), and are often funded by government or semi-governmental agencies. All such agencies require that professional evaluators conduct assessments to determine whether their funded programs fulfill the objectives they were set out to achieve.

So here I was, a graduate student of sociology, with no background in evaluation, or even social research, working as a junior research assistant in the evaluation of an adolescent substance abuse prevention program. Little did I know that this project will lead me to a full career as a researcher and evaluator until today!

At that time, computers were new! And people like me had to quickly catch up with the new technology in order to code data, type reports, and everything else. I found myself entering an entirely new world of research and evaluation. This was a rather complex world in terms of knowledge, technological skills, practices, and relationships. However, I proved to be such a quick learner; perhaps I was meant to be a researcher more than a prosecutor! My work included contacts with the project staff who were counselors conducting after-school activities with adolescents. I had to follow up with them to make sure that they gathered survey data timely. Surveys were needed to assess, in intervals of six months or so, the propensity for, and actual use of, alcohol and drugs among the project students. We also had to gather such information from a group of students who were not involved with the project! Why was that? I came to learn that this is how we could determine with more accuracy if the students of the project were improving compared to a "control" group who was not receiving the same intervention. Made sense, I thought!

Once surveys were collected, I had to code the data, very carefully, on a computerized file in a program called SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Then, a more senior researcher took that data I coded and did her "magic" to analyze the results and show us tables and charts telling us so much about the data and how the project was achieving its objectives. That colleague

spared no time to train me and prepare me to conduct such statistical analysis, and in a few months I too was capable of not only coding data on SPSS, but also conducting statistical analysis.

Survey data was not the only type of data we collected. We had one researcher working with the students and counselors as a "participant observer"! What was that? That was an undergraduate student who incidentally really looked so young like adolescents, and who would attend all project events conducted with the adolescents, participate like all of them, and at the same time writes her observations about everything that happened during each session. So this is why this person was called "participant-observer". As you can imagine, the nature of the data we received from the participant observer was different from that of surveys. Surveys were mainly quantitative with numeric responses to questions. Participant observation reports, on the other hand, were like stories written to describe in details what happened in each session- who said what, who argued over what, what important events took place which related to the objectives of the project? My job with other researchers was to conduct a different type of analysis of such data, and eventually to code that data on computerized files. We will talk more about this qualitative analysis later in this course.

Ultimately, as a research team we had to compile all the data from all sources, conduct analysis, and write evaluation reports to the donors and partners showing how the project is advancing in achieving its objectives, what obstacles, if any, are facing the project, and how to overcome them. And of course at the end of the three-year project we had to write a final evaluation report explaining its achievements, supported by research data.

Very quickly I became the key researcher for the project, and in a couple of years I was involved with more research and evaluation projects on full time basis. A few years later, as I progressed into my doctoral studies in peace and conflict, I started, since 1998, to conduct evaluation and research of projects related to peacebuilding and conflict resolution. I continue to conduct such evaluation and research to date. Throughout this course I will share more stories of evaluation research that I was involved with particularly in the area of peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

My first trip to conduct evaluation research in peacebuilding and conflict resolution was to Burundi in 1998. Since then I have conducted such evaluation in several countries in Africa, Europe, Asia, the United States and the Middle East. Through this work, I gained much insight into what people deal with at times of conflict and during the challenging transitions to peace. I also came to appreciate very much the contribution that we make through our work. Not only do we provide lessons and advice to improve peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts in the world; we also contribute to so many people professionally and personally. In all my work, I always engaged young men and women from each country I visited. For many of

them, such experiences opened their eyes, and opened doors to new horizons; some of them went on to become professionals in the field; some gained much experience from their work with us, which helped with their growth as persons; and for sure many of them became very good friends. I think that it is such investment in human beings that make our work unique.

# 2. State of the Field of Evaluation of Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Projects and Programs. Fundamentals of Evaluation Research

My experience with evaluation research taught me several lessons which are very well reflected in your readings. Here are the most important lessons I came to take as the fundamentals of evaluation research in general, and in the field of peace and conflict in particular:

## 2.1. Evaluation is a Form of Social Research

This means that when we conduct evaluation we are bound by the same assumptions and requirements of social research. We must address the same questions as in research: Do we use inductive or deductive approaches? How do we sample? What methods do we use? And the list continues…

Research methods, whether quantitative or qualitative, have standards and parameters intended to ensure the accuracy of information collected. Education and training in research methods is a must for someone who wants to conduct serious evaluation. We cannot simply conduct evaluation based on intuition. In addition, evaluation research is distinguished from other social research by its mission of assessing the effectiveness of projects in achieving their objectives. Therefore, an evaluator must take into consideration two levels:

**1)** conforming to standards social science research methods; and,

**2)** conforming to the mission of evaluating the link of project activities to project objectives. Unfortunately, there are occasions when evaluators lose sight of these fundamentals!

> On several evaluation missions, the team I worked with included colleagues who did not necessarily conform to social science research methods and practices, or to evaluation objectives, perhaps due to their training in other fields such as journalism. I remember an incident when I teamed up with two other colleagues (each was handpicked by the organization conducting the project) to conduct evaluation of a development and conflict resolution in Rwanda in 2002. One of the team members, a journalist by training and profession, conducted focus groups and interviews as if he was looking for a scoop! As a result, he would not conform to the set of questions that we had developed in order to measure the effectiveness of the project. Instead, he engaged in what I call "chat interviews" which had no specific direction, and hardly provided data that corresponded to the evaluation mission. Such evaluation practices can raise doubt among donors and organizations about our ability to produce sound results.

## 2.2. Evaluation has Many Facets

From experience, I can say that evaluation has three levels:

**a) Process Evaluation** (most people now call this *monitoring*), which focuses on how a project is managed, and how specific components are implemented. For example, if a project includes conducting several training workshops on conflict resolution skills, then a process evaluation will look at the number of workshops conducted, number of participants, preparations for the workshops, availability of resources and materials to conduct the workshop. Here, the focus is not on whether the participants learned something out of the workshop; it is more about the process used to implement the workshop. This can be crucial to the success of a project. Here is an example:

> In 2007, I was responsible for conducting a workshop in Egypt for a group of academicians and civil society professionals who would form a regional group of universities and civil society organizations to conduct academic and training programs on peace and conflict, with the support of UPEACE. The group included mainly Arabic-speaking individuals from Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Sudan and Palestine. It also included UPEACE colleagues who did not speak Arabic. During the workshop we fluctuated between using Arabic and English. I had hired two evaluators to be present during the workshop in order to observe and provide feedback, in addition to conducting outcome evaluation. At one point, the two evaluators approached me with a suggestion that we use Arabic more as they observed that participants engaged more in discussions when Arabic was used. English seemed to inhibit many of them from actively engaging in discussions, despite the presence of simultaneous translators. According to this "process evaluation" feedback, we adjusted towards more Arabic speaking in order to maintain a higher level of participant engagement.
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> Notice here that this feedback did not relate to whether the workshop ended up successful or not, or ended up achieving its objectives or not. It only dealt with a specific process component (language used) which seemed to have an effect on the the flow of the workshop, and which could influence the success of the workshop.

**b) Outcome Evaluation**. This is the type of evaluation which focuses on whether a project is resulting in achieving outcomes consistent with the project objectives. Outcomes are specific effects (such as improved knowledge among participants in a workshop teaching them about human rights rules, improved skills in conducting negotiations or mediation, or improved perception of knowledge of research topics). Usually outcomes are directly related to what the project was set out to achieve. In other words, very often projects start with specific outcomes that it intends to achieve. Outcome evaluation measures whether, and to what extent, a project achieved its outcomes. Usually outcomes are achieved at a short time span and are measurable if the proper indicators are developed.

> A good example of outcome evaluation is what we usually do when we conduct a workshop aiming at improving people's knowledge, perception or attitude. A classic way to measure the outcome effects is to conduct pre/post tests. This means, for example, to ask participants, prior to the workshop, questions related to what you aim to introduce in the workshop. You then ask the same questions again at the end of the workshop to see if there are changes. I use such approach in my research methodology courses to measure students' perception of their knowledge of various research methodology concepts or tools. For example, how much they think they know about the use of SPSS, or how much they think they know about the use of case studies, or content analysis, or any other research concept or tool that I will focus on during the course. I ask such questions in the beginning of the first class, and one more time at the end of the last class. By comparing the quantitative results between the pre and post tests, we can determine the extent to which students perceived that their knowledge of these concepts and tools improved or not.

**c) Impact Evaluation**. This refers to the long-term effects that a project intends to achieve. Usually such effects relate to the large or grand goals of a project, such as establishing peace, or improving ethnic relations. Usually projects are designed in a way that assumes that by conducting specific activities certain outcomes will be achieved, which in turn will result in such impact. For example, training leaders of ethnic groups in a factioned community on conflict resolution and problem solving skills will improve ethnic relations in the community. In this case, improved ethnic relations is the intended impact.

Impact evaluation is the most elusive among the three types. The readings for this module included good discussions about such challenges. Three challenges exist with impact evaluation. First, the tendency to try to establish direct *causality* between project activities and impact on a community or society level is always hard to determine. Second, the insistence of donors on using *quantitative* measures to prove such impact is often very difficult if not impossible. Third, the insistence of donors that impact assessment be conducted at *macro* (community or society) levels is also almost impossible. For these reasons, I find that sometimes it is more realistic to measure impact assessment by trying to establish *contribution* of a project to that impact, not exclusive *causality*; to use *qualitative* measures in connection with quantitative ones; and, to search for impact evidence at *micro* level, such as the individual or small group levels.

> As I said earlier, impact evaluation is elusive. I felt that in many of my evaluation research missions, when project managers and donors would expect that the evaluation I conduct would be able to tell them with accuracy what impact they achieved. But this seemed to be difficult to achieve especially when they expected *quantitative, macro, causal* results! I remember during one such mission in Liberia (evaluation of Talking Drum Studio-TDS- media peacebuilding work), and as I realized that it was impossible to find such evidence using the parameters I mentioned above that I suggested that we turn to the opposite parameters: *qualitative, micro, contriutional*! I came to that realization after several meetings with the project staff who would tell me compelling stories of success and impact that they have in communities because of their media-based peacebuilding work. The problem was that such stories did not lend themselves to the quantitative, macro, causal parameters. But they were there! And they in fact impacted people. This is when I realized that if I insisted on the method (quantitative, macro, causal) I would be missing the evidence on the ground. The evidence on the ground was suitable for the alternative method (qualitative, micro, contriutional). So, I decided to use case study approach to document each of these success cases.

> This is what I wrote about the first impact case studies I did in Liberia in 1999:

> "Upon completing the facilitated discussion with the TDS staff on April 16, 1999, the evaluation team determined that using case study approach was necessary to capture information related to specific programs that TDS staff had embarked upon. These programs were characterized by their immediate causal effect on the outcome of the issues subject of these programs. In one case, the TDS staff was informed by their correspondent in Lofa County of the outbreak of violence between members of the Lorma and Mandingo tribes. TDS's approach to the news of the violence led directly to minimizing the spread of violence, and to reaching a reconciliation agreement between the two tribes. In a second case, TDS's coverage of the high Liberian labor taxes on laborers from West African countries, who are members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), led to government's adjusting of these taxes in accordance with the ECOWAS agreement.

> In both instances, TDS staff carried on specific media and non-media conflict resolution activities, aimed at reaching acceptable resolutions that contributed directly to peacebuilding and reconciliation in Liberia. Further, TDS staff's handling of these

two issues showed that as journalists they were willing to uphold goals of peace and reconciliation, even at the expense of what could be the goals of "regular journalists"- that is, journalists whose goal is to expedite the publicizing of news, even when this could hurt peace and stability (see the interview with Minister Zaizay)."

Source: **Abdalla, Amr et al.** *Evaluation Report of Talking Drum Studio- Liberia- 1999. Search for Common Ground.*

## 2.3. Evaluation Ideally Starts at the Conceptualization Stage of a Project

More often than not, evaluators are called to duty after a project has been articulated and formulated by organizations and donors. Often, also, projects are written to respond to the funding requirements and priorities of donors. While all this is fine, realistic, and makes sense, often the absence of an evaluation eye early on in the process results in complications. Usually project staff are no experts on evaluation; they are motivated individuals driven by sincere desires to spread peace worldwide in whatever capacity they are at. Their motivation and enthusiasm usually translates to "big" goals, almost bigger than what the donor wants, just to make sure that their proposals receive funding.

But, *big goals* are usually the nightmare of an evaluator called to the job late in the game. This is because measuring the accomplishment of such goals, developing the correct indicators, and matching them to the actual activities can prove to be more than what any evaluator can achieve. This is why it is much wiser to engage an evaluator at the inception stage in order to make sure that measuring outcome and impact will take place appropriately.

> I have been invited to lead the evaluation of a major media-based peacebuilding project in four countries. As is the case often, I was invited after the organization had been awarded the funding to conduct the project. As I embarked upon formulating the baseline research in line with the stated objectives, and in light of the actual activities, I realized that the objectives expected from the media programs were set so high- anticipating major societal changes at the action level of citizens, civil society and governments. More importantly, the Logframe (to be discussed in details later in this class) had set out the typical *quantitative, macro, causal* indicators as parameters for measuring impact. At the same time, the specific activities, and components of the media programs did not seem to correspond to such anticipated changes (in terms of content or anticipated change). In addition, the evaluation timeframe was too short to allow for such changes to take place, let alone to be measured scientifically.
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> In order to overcome such challenges, one approach we used was to adjust the Logframes for each country in order to align the objectives with the actual media programs and their content. Another approach was to emphasize the use of case studies at a micro level to document success which was otherwise obscured under the quantitative macro parameters.
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> I am still working on this project, and will continue to feed information about its development to the class.

## 2.4. Evaluators have the Ethical Responsibility to Report Good News and Bad News. Evaluation Politics are Complex!

On one hand, an evaluator is paid for her/his efforts by the project they are evaluating. Does this create a tendency to tell project directors that they are successful and doing a good job? Perhaps. But this would be unethical if the

reality on the ground is not as pretty as project directors wish to believe. At the same time, an evaluator likes to be invited again and again, especially when evaluation is a major source of his/her income. These are real considerations. Yet, professionals must conform to standards of ethics even if this comes at the expense of losing prospects for more evaluation projects in the future.

I resolved this issue by making an analogy of evaluators' work to family doctors! Family doctors are paid by the family itself. Yet, it is not expected that a doctor would always tell family members that their health is in the best condition, even when it is not! This would be ethically and professionally wrong, let alone that it would be detrimental to the well being of the family members. An ethical doctor would always tell family members, based on careful and accurate diagnosis, what is happening with them, and what they need to do to live with good health. Same with evaluators- they need to be able to explain, based on rigorous research, how a project is functioning, and how is it achieving its objectives. Even there is bad news, an evaluator must find the proper, constructive way, to express to the project directors and donors what was not working well, and if not too late, what can be done to remedy the situation. Rothman (1997)'s model of Action Evaluation provides space for applying these concepts.

From my experience, I confirm that evaluators who can professionally, and constructively, provide feedback, even when it points to shortcomings or failure, are the ones who are respected and sought after. In 2007, I conducted an evaluation of an Egyptian TV drama which aimed at sensitizing the public about issues related to civic duties, tolerance, and similar issues. The evaluation results showed that the drama production, and the mechanics of putting it on the air, failed to achieve its intended objectives with the public. At the same time, the focus group process that was used in the evaluation to assess the public's opinions about issues raised in the drama (and which included showing episodes of the drama in closed circuit), proved to be so valuable to that public! So the evaluation report showed, based on quantitative and qualitative results, that the drama itself had no major effect on the public (in other words, the project failed in achieving its objectives) yet an unintended positive outcome was the bringing together of citizens for focus group discussions around the themes of the drama. Such discussions proved to be very important to the audience who regretted that the focus group series ended, and expressed how the gatherings and discussions were informative, and healing to many of them.

The organization conducting the project accepted the results of the evaluation, and in its future drama projects incorporated the focus groups as part of outreach activities directly associated with showing dramas on TV. And they invited me again to conduct more evaluation projects.

# 3. Critical Reviews of the Current State of the Field. Principles of Evaluation in the Field of Peace and Conflict

As explained above, evaluation research is part of social research. At the same time, it is unique in that its mandate is to establish links between project components and intended objectives. In addition, when evaluation research is conducted in the field of peace and conflict, it becomes more unique compared to evaluation research in other areas. The following are principles that I have established over the years for my evaluation work in the field of peace and conflict. They represent the accumulated experience over the years, and do serve as safeguards to ensure that we combine sound research methodologies with the principles we strive to live by and achieve in the field of peace and conflict.

## 3.1. To Capture Information for Both the Contextual Level (i.e., the Conflict Issues and Dynamics), and the Specific Level

Conflicts never happen in a vacuum, and so do efforts for peacemaking and peacebuilding. When it comes to evaluation, the need to collect information at the contextual level, in addition to the specific level of the project subject to evaluation, becomes crucial. The contextual level refers to wider socio-political conditions that may influence the country or certain communities in ways that can in turn have an effect on the project being evaluated. It is important also to recognize that such conditions are least static at times of conflict during transitions towards peacebuilding. Therefore, it is important to know what contextual conditions may have effects on the project which may or may not have existed at the time of conceptualizing the project.

Usually we gather information at the contextual level from what we refer to as key informants. Those are usually key officials in government, civil society, and relevant organizations. We also collect such information from official documents, research reports, and academic writings. In all cases it is important at that stage to be careful not to extend the contextual evaluation beyond what is needed to inform our evaluation of the specific project or activities. So, even at the contextual level, we must maintain a focus on what we are set out to measure, and how contextual information will help in our understanding of the effectiveness of the project or activities.

Currently I am involved in the evaluation of a media-based peacebuilding project in the Ivory Coast. We collected baseline data last June 2010, and were planning to conduct final evaluation activities during July 2011. Since we collected the baseline data, the Ivory Coast went through presidential elections that ended up in violence. Only now, we hope, the violence is coming to end.

From an evaluation perspective, the violence associated with the elections is a strong contextual confounding variable- meaning that it surely influences our ability to gather

reliable information about the effectiveness of the media effort. In a way, someone can argue that the mere fact that the country fell into violence indicates that the media effort had failed. But this may be an unfair assessment of what was expected from one media program in a country which was obviously already boiling with ethnic and political tensions. It is also possible that whether the media program reached its intended audience or not, the violence would have happened anyway.

So, in this case, for sure, when and if we decide to continue with the evaluation of the media work in the Ivory Coast, we will have to conduct a comprehensive review of the contextual factors that led to the violence, and how this may have influenced the ability to gather reliable and valid information about the effectiveness of the media program. Only after such assessment will we be able to decide how to proceed with evaluating whether the media program achieved any of its objectives.

One plausible assumption to evaluate is whether those who were exposed to the media program used more peaceful means to deal with the conflict that erupted after the election compared to those who were not exposed to the media program.

## 3.2. Participation and Inclusiveness

To make all research aspects inclusive of all those affected by a conflict, especially groups that have been traditionally marginalized, such as women, children, and the socio-economically disadvantaged. Participation and inclusiveness are key principles in the field of peace and conflict. This applies to all practices of peacemaking and peacebuilding, and also to all aspects of conflict assessment and analysis. Therefore when conducting evaluation in the area of peace and conflict it is prudent to understand who are the various groups and individuals affected in the situation and to especially make the effort to reach out to those who are traditionally excluded. This may become a difficult task as it would challenge status-quo, and considerations of power balances in different settings. But without it, we would be compromising important principles of our work which could later continue to re-produce conflict and violence. It is necessary here to also realize that reaching to populations which have been traditionally excluded (especially the illiterate and socio-economically disadvantaged) would raise questions about *how* to reach them? Here the methods of evaluation research must adapt to the capabilities of such groups, and to best collect information which reflect who they are, not who we are!

During the evaluation mission in Rwanda in 2002, we were responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of a development and conflict resolution program conducted with Hutus, Tutsis, and also with members of a destitute, almost untouchable, ethnic group called Batwa or Twa. I learned from the project directors that members of that last group received funding, according to the project we were evaluating, to buy vegetables and fruits to sell in the market. The rationale for supporting them was that they would gain a source of income, and a more respected standing in the community as merchants. They received the funds, bought the vegetables and fruits, but on their way to the market, they ate all of it!

I was intrigued, and decided to meet with members of that most impoverished group to understand their logic in what they did. I had a meeting with about five or six of them. I asked them to recount the story of receiving funds from the organization, and what it was to be used for. They told me the story, and acknowledged that they understood very well the objectives behind giving them them the funds. Yet, they also acknowledged that they ate all the vegetables and fruits on their way to the market. That did not make sense to me (as I am sure it does not to many of you as you are reading now). I asked, perhaps in a sarcastic manner, why they did that. The oldest man among them, perhaps in his late 70's or so, looked me in the eye and said "hunger bites!" I still feel his penetrating look at me, and his words until today. This very poor devastated man taught me something I could have never understood on my own, for I never really knew what hunger of the

level he referred to meant. This was one of the most humbling experiences in my career. It showed me that knowledge comes our way not only from books, or with the graduate degrees we receive. The realization about what hunger can do to people could not have come from library books, or interviews with high officials; it had to come form someone who has experienced biting hunger.

This is why I insist that when we do evaluation research in this field of peace and conflict, we must make the space to include everyone, especially the disempowered and marginalized.

## 3.3.  Cultural Appropriateness

To ensure active cultural input and participation in all aspects of research-design, implementation, analysis and reporting. Conflicts do not take place in a vacuum. They always take place within a context, and due to elements in that context. A strong, always-present, element in each context is culture. This is perhaps the most significant element which influences all aspects of evaluation research, from conception to design to implementation. It is also a significant content variable as it influences context, attitudes and feelings, behavior, relationships and interventions. If not aware of cultural influences, it is easy to slip into making faulty assumptions on which to build research design and implementation. This is why it is crucial to always compose evaluation research teams which include various cultural perspectives, and which are grounded in the context in which a research is carried out. Such teams must be engaged in the evaluation research effort since its inception, through its design and implementation, and during the analysis and report-writing stages.

> One of the principles that I adhere to strictly in all my evaluation work is to compose research teams made up of men and women representing the important demographic factors in the place where we are conducting the evaluation (for example, based on religion, ethnicity, etc.). This has proved to be very useful in recognizing many factors that otherwise would cause a lot of problems if not recognized.

> For example, in Burundi in 1998, as a colleague and I were working with a team of 10 Burundian researchers on developing a survey to assess the views of the public about peacebuilding activities, we wanted to add a question about the ethnicity of respondents. The Burundian colleagues were angry at the prospect of including such question and insisted that we do not include it as it can be very sensitive. We tried to explain how important it was for the evaluation to know if the effects of the program varied for Hutus and Tutsis. They insisted that they would not conduct the survey if we included such question. So finally we asked for alternatives. They suggested that we ask people about their village of origin. This, they said, was not a sensitive question, yet it was a strong indication of whether a person was Hutu or Tutsi. They suggested that later after we collect the surveys, they can list the villages that were likely to be Hutu, and the ones that were likely to be Tutsi. This seemed like a good compromise which allowed for us to gather the information we needed to discern whether the program had equal or different effects on the two ethnic groups. We could not have considered such option without the advice of our Burundian colleagues who were aware of the nuances of their own cultures.

## 3.4.  Multiplicity of Research Methods

To combine qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to thoroughly answer the *What, How* and *Why* questions. It has become a standard practice in almost all fields of research in social sciences to recognize the mutual benefit of combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. But it had been a long struggle to reach such point as the resistance to the use of qualitative

research as inferior to quantitative measures persisted. On the other hand, advocates of qualitative research continued to undermine or underestimate the benefits of using quantitative research in the field of peace and conflict, and almost demonized as patriarchal, "Western" and pro-establishment. This hostility is sometimes explained by the fact that most researchers in the field of peace and conflict lack any basic understanding of quantitative research, and therefore prefer to dismiss it than to be seen as unable of using it! We insist here that the use of both approaches is necessary for a complete comprehensive understanding. And we believe that if fear of quantitative research, on one hand, and doubt about the objectivity of qualitative research, on the other hand, are factors hindering the development of such quality evaluation research in the field of peace and conflict, then our task is to break into such fear and misconceptions by educating and training more people in both approaches.

I would like to share here two types of information: one is about training people on the use of quantitative research, especially the use of SPSS. The second is about examples of effective evaluation using quantitative and qualitative methods.

On the first item, I have conducted training on the use of SPSS to numerous students and potential researchers almost everywhere in the world. I think that the fact that I myself did not have undergraduate training or education in mathematics, statistics or quantitative research made me aware of how to bring ordinary people up to speed with using SPSS even without mathematical or statistical knowledge. I have done this very successfully, thanks to the advances in what SPSS can do now. The training I offer prepared participants to learn very specific, and easy concepts related to the nature of quantitative variables (continuous, ordinal and categorical), and accordingly take them into a journey of how to determine the appropriate statistical test based on the knowledge of the nature of the measured variables. The training then shows them how to apply different statistical tests using SPSS (for example, chi square, t-test, and ANOVA), and how to read the specific outputs which would indicate if there are significant results.

It is amazing to hear at the end of such trainings how some participants feel that they got over the fear of statistics and quantitative research. SPSS no longer remains to be that intimidating superior entity that they cannot come near. It is rewarding to hear such comments and to know that more people have now overcome their fears of this type of research.

On the second point, there are many examples of how we combined quantitative and qualitative research to discover results which supported each other, and provided legitimacy to our findings and our reports. For example, in October 2001, we were conducting evaluation in Burundi. At that time a peace agreement was just signed, and there was an air of cautious optimism in the country. One question we included in our survey was whether respondents felt that peace was close at hand as a result of signing the peace agreement. The quantitative results showed that 30% of Hutus felt so, and only 15% of Tutsis felt the same. The difference between the two groups was statistically significant. Such finding, statistically solid, led us to conduct focus groups to understand why there was such difference. Here the quantitative survey was necessary in order to provide us with such compelling statistical result. But answering the "why" question was not possible without qualitative methods. And this is why we used focus groups to answer the "why" question. The focus groups showed that Tutsis were cautious because the peace agreement would give more power sharing to the Tutsis- something they were worried how it may affect them in the future. For Hutus, the power sharing represented hope for a better future.

# 4. A Framework for Evaluation: Process, Outcome and Impact Evaluation

In the last three units we discussed the fundamental and essential principles of conducting evaluation in general and specifically in the area of peacebuilding and conflict resolution. We now turn to the specifics of how to conceptualize, design and implement evaluation research. For this unit, we have two readings.

The first reading about the 14 Steps Guide of Evaluation will be our overall guide for the remainder of the units. This is because it provides an easy-to-follow, logical process for thinking, designing and implementing evaluation. For units 4 and 5, the summaries will complement steps 1-10 in the Guide by sharing specific peacebuilding and conflict resolution evaluation examples from real life experience. Steps 11-14 will be discussed in later units as appropriate. Please note that steps 1-2 correspond to the Conceptualization Stage of project design; steps 3-10 correspond to the Design Stage, and steps 11-14 correspond to the Implementation Stage. So, for units 4-5, we will focus on the Conceptualization and Design Stages.

The second reading (chapters 3-4 of Church and Rogers) takes similar concepts to the ones discussed in the first reading, and elaborates on their relevance to the field of peacebuilding and conflict resolution It is a good, well-thought-of guide for conducting a careful assessment of what needs to be done in order to advance peace and conflict resolution. It is written in a way that allows for building sound evaluation, as it shows how to carefully construct specific objectives and relate them to specific activities, all within a strong understanding of the context.

So, we start our journey for units 4 and 5 by looking at steps 1-10, and share examples to illustrate how to best put them to use.

## 4.1. The Conceptualization Stage

The discussion here will focus on the first two of the 14 steps:

- **Step 1**. Clarify what you are trying to accomplish
- **Step 2**. Specify what you want to know

The process of conceptualization is about combining your vision and passion with the real action on the ground. It is about ensuring that our noble goals of peacebuilding and conflict resolution find a practical way to reality. We discussed in the previous modules that it is ideal to engage evaluators early at the conceptualization stage of a project. The main advantage of such early

involvement is to help project designers to prepare their vision, objectives and activities in a concise organized manner, which later can be assessed to determine how a project is functioning.

Here, and before we go any further, I would like to drop a reality point: As much as we are driven by our passion, idealism and desire to spread peace, we are also bound by constraints such as: What do donors want? How to make my ideals and passion fit with donors' priorities? These are real issues that we must deal with in this field. Very often, almost always, our peacebuilding and conflict resolution work depends on donors' priorities; we hardly ever have the funds to make all our passion and idealism translate exactly to what we want to do. I actually find this point to fit very well with our work in peacemaking and conflict resolution because it is all about negotiating our priorities, interests, and ideals, with those of others. So, one important advice here is to accept this negotiation as a healthy part of the realities we must deal with. Perhaps it is safe to say that often at this stage we must align our own passion and ideals with those of donors. Be positive at this stage!

Following the specific steps discussed in the Guide under steps 1 and 2, I would like to share an example of how we designed a project in 2002 to respond to the need to promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence between Muslims and others in the United States in the aftermath of the tragic events of September 11, 2001.

As a Muslim living in the United States, I was of course extremely disturbed by the September 11 tragedy because of the loss of innocent lives, the increased misunderstanding between Muslims and others, and the potential for escalated conflict and violence worldwide, and in the US. Given my work which has always focused on peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the Islamic context, and following the first two steps in the Guide, I had to establish a vision of what I wanted to accomplish to address these issues. My vision, and what I wanted to accomplish related to:

**1)** making more Muslims aware of the foundational principles of peace in their religion, and how to internalize and express them in everything they do;

**2)** to increase the awareness of others in the US and beyond of such foundations; and,

**3)** to build healthy bridges of communication to safeguard peaceful coexistence among all.

The opportunity to translate that vision, and what I wanted to accomplish to reality came when an organization- National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) announced a grant competition to develop projects to "expand the capacity of individuals, institutions and agencies to respond to prejudice expressed against many individuals and communities, especially South Asians, Muslims, and Arabs, as a result of the September 11 attacks."

Within that broad goal laid out by the donor, my colleagues at the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences (GSISS) and I found that there was space to express our vision and to accomplish some of what we want to do to address our concerns after September 11. Being an evaluator myself, I worked with my colleagues to design a project which would achieve our goals, and at the same time meet the guidelines established by the donor, both conceptually and financially. Also, as an evaluator, I knew that I must make sure that a strong evaluation component is included right into the proposal itself.

Accordingly, we brainstormed about our capabilities, our passion, the donor's priorities, what we can do with the amount the donor was ready to offer (it was up to $100,000), and what would work for our community. We were also aware of "what we want to prevent" (please see the Guide- page 7). One approach we wanted to prevent in our

project was the traditional use of old male Imams to speak about Islam to others! We knew that this has not worked for ages, and we instead had full confidence in what young people especially can do in this project. Our rationale (or assumption) was that young Muslims who grew up in the US were better prepared to share their views on peaceful coexistence and peace in Islam with the wider American community. We also assumed that using interactive participatory approaches was more effective in communicating our messages, compared to transitional presentations and lectures.

So, with our vision aligned with that of the donor, our assumptions clear, and with our will to do something positive, we prepared the goals and objectives:

**Goal 1**: To Educate Muslims and Non-Muslims living in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area about Islam's fundamental messages of tolerance, inclusiveness and peaceful coexistence for all people, and to improve their skills in identifying and addressing bigotry and discrimination.

**Objectives:**

**1.a.** To conduct research on the prevalent societal messages (both positive and negative) regarding Islam's position on issues of tolerance, inclusiveness and peaceful coexistence.

**1.b.** To build upon the existing literature developed by GSISS faculty (see Appendix for sample work) in order to provide Islamically-based, scholarly responses to support societal messages of tolerance, inclusiveness, and peaceful coexistence, and to counter societal messages that promote hatred and bigotry.

**1.c.** To develop the scholarly responses generated within 1.b. above into workshop lesson plans to be conducted using peer-based interactive methods.

**1.d.** To utilize the forums and settings established within Goals 2&3 below to improve the knowledge of Islam's fundamental messages of tolerance, inclusiveness and peaceful coexistence for all people, and improve the personal skills to identify and address bigotry and discrimination of 1200 Non-Muslims via 60 workshops conducted by their Muslim peers, and the wider community in general via print media, radio, and TV broadcast of the project's events.

**Goal 2**: To reform the ways in which Islamic institutions and centers operate to address issues of bigotry and discrimination by institutionalizing models of peer-based interactive and collaborative approaches to reaching out to the larger population.

**Objectives:**

**2.a.** To identify four members from ten mosques (for a total of 40 members) in the Washington Metropolitan area to take part in a training workshop on Islam's fundamental messages of tolerance, inclusiveness and peaceful coexistence for all people, and how to identify and address bigotry and discrimination.

**2.b.** To ensure that the 40 members are equally divided across gender lines, and represent adults, college and middle/high school age populations.

**2.c.** To educate the members, in small group workshops, in Islam's fundamental messages of tolerance, inclusiveness and peaceful coexistence for all people, as developed within Goal 1, and personal skills to identify and address bigotry and discrimination.

**2.d.** To develop, collaboratively with the members, workshop lesson plans, and approaches for disseminating the messages learned within objective 2.c. to Non-Muslim peer groups.

**2.e.** To conduct peer-based interactive workshops with Non-Muslims, according to Goal 3 below.

**Goal 3**: To establish forums for interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims, from diverse age, gender, ethnic and professional backgrounds, living in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, in order to collaboratively foster respect and understanding among them.

**Objectives:**

**3.a.** To identify a geographically representative sample of schools, government agencies, businesses, media outlets, and faith groups to be invited to take part in collaborative workshops led by Muslim community members identified with Goal 2.

**3.b.** To have Muslim community members, trained according to Goal 2, lead the workshops with their Non-Muslim peers in order to educate them on Islam's fundamental messages of tolerance, inclusiveness and peaceful coexistence for all people, and on personal skills to identify and address bigotry and discrimination.

**3.c.** To have Muslim community members, trained according to Goal 2, lead the workshops with their Non-Muslim peers in order to collaboratively develop actions and messages to combat various forms of bigotry and discrimination in their communities.

**3.d.** To videotape workshops, and disseminate tapes to media outlets in the community; invite media organizations to attend and cover workshops and interview Muslim and Non-Muslim participants.

**Goal 4**. To conduct ongoing evaluation research in order to establish the issues to be addressed with Goal 1 of this project, to assess the progress of the project, to provide feedback to project staff, and to measure the accomplishment of the project's goals and objectives and its impact on issues of discrimination and bigotry.

**Objectives:**

**4.a.** To develop and implement process evaluation measures, and feedback mechanism, in order to ensure that the project is completing efficiently its various segments and producing its outputs.

**4.b.** To develop and implement qualitative and quantitative outcome evaluation measures to assess the effectiveness of the program in educating and improving skills, as specified in Goal 1, of both Muslims and Non-Muslims, and in fostering respect and understanding.

**4.c.** To develop and implement impact evaluation measures in order to assess the contribution of the project to attitudinal and behavioral changes among those who directly participated in the project, and on their wider communities.

**4.d.** To produce four quarterly process evaluation reports, one feedback session in the eighth month of the project, and one final evaluation report, within sixty days after the end of the project, to include findings and recommendation based on data gathered from process, outcome and impact measures.

Did we get funded? YES! We were one of 19 recipients of funding from almost 400 applicants. Later in this course I will return to this project and show how we implemented its evaluation. But for now, I want to focus on some lessons learned which relate to the Conceptualization Stage: At the design stage of the project, after receiving the funding, we decided to call it Project LIGHT (Learning Islamic Guidance for Human Tolerance).

**a)** Always make sure to understand carefully the vision of donors, and decide with yourself if their vision is aligned with yours. Do not be pressured by the hunt for funding even if it means that you would deviate from your own vision and principles.

**b)** Write your goals and objectives in a carefully crafted manner which allows a reviewer to realize that each component is measurable. Take a look at the goals and objectives above to see how they were worded in ways that would allow an evaluator at any point to conduct process or outcome evaluation.

**c)** Make sure to assess carefully what you and your organization/staff can do, and what is beyond your abilities. Develop your plans to fit with space, time and financial constraints.

**d)** I strongly encourage including evaluation as a goal, or at least objective of a project. This shows donors that you are serious about learning what works and does not work in your project. Even if a donor does not declare an evaluation requirement, make sure to include it and do it. It gives donors confidence that you are "serious".

# 5. Frameworks for Evaluation of Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Projects and Programs. The Design Stage

This stage includes the following eight steps (from *3-10*):

3. Design the overall evaluation plan

4. Identify any constraints and limits

5. Acknowledge multiple sources of information

6. Build outcome evaluation measures

7. Build process evaluation measures

8. Incorporate qualitative measures

9. Identify who can provide assistance

10. Plan the evaluation

For each step, I will share an example or two to show how they apply in real life situations:

**Step 3**. Design the overall evaluation plan

Search for Common Ground (SFCG), a reputed organization working on peacebuilding worldwide using media-based approaches received a contract from British DFID to produce TV and radio dramas in ten countries using the metaphor of a football team to promote peacebuilding, rule of law and governance, among other objectives. Below is how we at UPEACE prepared an overall evaluation design to respond to the specific goals and objectives of the project, and the requirements of the donor:

**a) Overall Programme Goals, Objectives and Outputs:**

According to SFCG's TOR, the following are the programme's premise, goals, objectives and outputs:

**Premise:**

The global nature of the production provides a unique opportunity to compare the effectiveness of the series in different cultural contexts and assess how and to what extent SFCG's media productions influence policy, practice, attitudes and power relations related to social issues within and across cultures.

**Goal:**

To educate and entertain a mass general audience through storylines and characters that are universal and recognizable.

Overall objectives:

To increase the average listener/viewer's depth of understanding of how he/she should interact with government.

To manage expectations of the government's accountability, transparency and responsiveness.

To educate and inform **elites** to the concerns and issues of their constituents, particularly the poor or other marginalized groups with whom they might never come in contact.

**b) Evaluation Design**

**b.1. Evaluation of the Drama Production**

The evaluation design includes the following components:

**b.1.1.** Understanding the specific socio-economic and political context in each of the five countries, and how the drama production is connected to that context. This will be designed with a focus on the main premises outlined in SFCG's TOR:

to promote individual responsibility, good governance and tolerance at every level of society...

[to] learn to overcome (...) ethnic/religious/economic differences in order to play cooperatively for the good of the team. The underlying premise being that cooperation and teamwork are essential both in scoring goals and in resolving the pressing problems that are faced by individuals, families, communities and countries.

This evaluation task will be accomplished using key informant interviews with officials in civil society, government and with SFCG country staff and drama producers. It will be conducted as an early evaluation task in order to inform the development of other evaluation components.

**b.1.2.** Understanding the approaches used by drama producers to address specific socio-economic and political issues in terms of the opportunities and constraints they pose, and the mechanisms used to incorporate them in the drama production. This evaluation task will be accomplished using interviews, and if possible focus groups, with SFCG and other production staff in each country. It will also include a review of drama documents and episodes in order to assess how certain themes and messages were developed and produced. This task also will be conducted early in order to inform the design of audience focus groups and survey (discussed below).

**b.1.3.** Evaluating the contribution of the drama production to changes in policy, practice, behaviour and power relation in each country, and the connection of these changes to human development. The tasks here will be of outcome and impact evaluation nature. The evaluators will work collaboratively with SFCG production staff, local production staff and local researchers, to develop focus group, survey and case study models. Focus groups and surveys will be used with representative samples of the population (geographically, socio-economically, educationally, ethnically and religiously) who will have been exposed to the drama. Together, the two approaches will provide qualitative and quantitative information on how the drama will be perceived by the audience in terms of its contribution to changes in policy, practice, behaviour and power relation. Efforts will be made during the focus group and survey process to signal potential specific situations that may offer researchable materials to document, using case study approaches, the impact of the drama on these changes and on human development. Case study approaches will then be used to capture such impact, or contribution of the drama to said impact. The design of the focus groups and surveys will be directly related to the outcomes of the evaluation efforts described under b.1.1. and b.1.2.

**b.2. Evaluation of the Effort with the Civil Society, the Government and Educational Sector**

Similar to the evaluation effort with the drama production, this evaluation will also gather information from various sectors of each country, and will include process, outcome and impact evaluation measures.

**b.2.1.** Understanding the approaches used with civil society, government and the educational sector, as they relate to the drama production. The development of various tools and approaches for working with the civil society, the government and the educational sector will relate directly to the drama themes and messages. Evaluation tasks will include key informant interviews with responsible individuals in the sectors mentioned above, and with SFCG staff. This evaluation task will also assess how such approaches reflect the link between the socio-economic and political context, the opportunities and constrains, and the intended changes and development outcomes in each specific country. When possible, evaluators will attend and conduct observations of trainings or events conducted as part of the approaches to civil society, the government and the educational sector.

**b.2.2.** Evaluating the outcomes and impact of approaches used with civil society, government and the educational sector. As the evaluators identify the types of approaches used, and the materials developed to reflect them, they will develop evaluation methods to assess the outcomes and impact of such approaches and materials on the wider society. The evaluators will conduct focus groups and surveys with representative samples of each society to assess the reach of such materials, their

effectiveness, and their contribution to changes in policy, practice, behaviour, power relations, and the link of these to the impact on human development.

**b.3. The comparative influence of SFCG's media productions in the sample of five countries**

The evaluation design for each of the five countries will follow a systematic approach based on the DFID model, and informed by SFCG's principles. This will allow for conducting comparative and meta analysis during and at the end of the programme. Nonetheless, it must be noted that specific cultural and societal considerations in each country will dictate from time to time that the evaluators adjust their approaches, areas of focus and research questions. However, the evaluators will apply such adjustments while maintaining consistent broad categories of research which will allow for conducting comparisons between the five countries. For example, the specific research questions relating to intended and actual changes in policy, practice, behavior and power relations, may differ from one country to the other. But at the same time, these questions will be treated by the evaluation team as part of the category of Change. Quantitative scores and qualitative data generated for each country within the Change category will be coded in ways that will allow for comparisons and for making inferences across the five countries. The evaluators will include the methodology and results of the comparative study in the Final Report.

# Step 4. Identify any constraints and limits

I recall one constraint I encountered during an evaluation mission in Burundi in 2001. Part of the evaluation mission included a conflict resolution training workshop conducted over two days for about 80 Burundians, and of course was conducted in Kirundi. I met with the two trainers and explained to them that we can use a pre/post survey to assess changes in attitudes and knowledge from before to after the workshop. I assured them that I have conducted very similar pre/post tests for different workshops, and that I can customize one of the survey forms to fit for the objectives of their workshop. I of course explained that the pre/post survey, being a quantitative measure, will be efficient and quick in producing results. I shared a model survey with them, but they did not seem impressed at all! I tried harder to convince them that such pre/post quantitative approach is pretty much standard in our evaluation work worldwide. Still, they were not impressed, then explained to me that their audience, and people in general, do not deal well with "checking boxes". They preferred using one or two open-ended questions about how participants dealt with conflict before the workshop, then once again ask the same question at the end of the workshop. I tried to explain that such qualitative data, in Kirundi, would be so time consuming and will cost so much to translate, and will take me a long time to analyze. They did not relent! Ultimately I had to accept that approach, after the project director assured me that he had budget for translation.

I must admit that although I felt constrained about not using the quantitative approach, the qualitative one proved to be rich with information, and although took more time and cost more money, produced much richer data in the words of the participants themselves.

# Step 5. Acknowledge multiple sources of information

Staying with the same example above about the evaluation of the Burundian workshop, in addition to gathering information about how the workshop contributed to changing participants' knowledge and attitudes about conflict behavior, we also used observations of the workshop proceedings to identify the specific activities that took place, and relate them to whatever emerged from the participants' assessment. In doing so, we were looking at the same activity from different angles (what we refer to in the field of research as triangulation).

# Step 6. Build outcome evaluation measures

# Step 7. Build process evaluation measures

# Step 8. Incorporate qualitative measures

I will continue with using the two examples above about using observations and qualitative measures to assess the effectiveness of the conflict resolution workshop in Burundi in 2001 to highlight issues related to steps 6-8. As you can see, the qualitative approach we used was an outcome measure as it intended to assess the effect of the workshop on participants' knowledge and attitudes. While, the observation process was a process measure aimed at looking at how the workshop took place, what issues were covered and how. Ultimately we wrote a report combining the results from both methods- the observation and the qualitative assessment- to determine how the workshop operated and with what effect. Here is the short report we wrote to summarize our results:

*Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Training in the Willis Center*

Dr. Amr Abdalla, and Dr. Noa Davenport had the opportunity to attend a conflict resolution training conducted by the Youth Program (YP)'s trainer, Sylvere, to a total of 80 youth over two days. The evaluation of this training was conducted via observations, and a pre/post survey. Because the training was conducted in Kirundi, the observations were fairly superficial. However it was obvious to the evaluators that Sylvere has an excellent command of training, group leadership and facilitation, and knowledge of a variety of techniques to communicate his conflict resolution messages effectively. It was also noted by the evaluators that Sylvere was very familiar with the fundamental concepts in the field of conflict resolution. However, it appears that he had received his training a while ago. During the past few years the field has made strides in terms of cultural awareness, new models of mediation, and new models of training. It is the evaluators' recommendation that Sylvere receives updated training in conflict resolution on ongoing basis in order to stay abreast on new trends in the field.

As for the pre/post survey, the design of that survey was itself an enriching cultural experience for the evaluators and for the conflict resolution staff of the YP. It took us more than three hours of debate to finalize a two open-ended question form. This was due to the resistance demonstrated by our Burundian colleagues to the idea of closed-ended questions. They felt that such questions were limiting, and may not translate well to Kirundi. They convinced us that if we let people write down their impressions about the training, in response to two questions covering the general purposes of the training, that this would generate more reliable and valid data. We agreed to their demands with the understanding that the results will be translated to English, and that we will conduct content analysis of these results. The two questions were:

**1.** What do you do when you have a conflict with someone?
**2.** What do you do when other people are in a conflict?

The survey results were translated into English and emailed to us few weeks after we returned from Burundi. A content analysis of the responses showed that:

First, I suspect that the translation of the word conflict into Kirundi gave a connotation of 'fighting'. This is because most responses focused on the violent aspect of a conflict (hitting or fighting physically). Perhaps this is how the respondents think of conflict any way. However, their responses in the pre-test to the first question showed a heightened focus on emotions and anger. This seemed to be the main preoccupation of people when they get in a conflict. Some suggested that they try to control their anger, and others suggested that they cannot. On the other extreme, some suggested that they let go, forgive, or walk away. Of course few of them suggested that they would try to understand the other side, but such responses were very rare. In the post-test there was a marked increase in responses which include statements such as: "First I try to understand;" "first I look at the causes of the conflict;" and "I bring an elder or a mediator to help us."

A similar pattern existed with the responses to the second question. Several responses showed that participants were more comfortable with the third party role. Most of them viewed their role as one of separating the parties. Some also added that they would either try to work on the relationship, or give advice. Not many respondents in the pre-test stated that they would try to understand causes, issues and interests of parties. The concern was mainly twofold: Separate them so that they do not fight physically, and mend the relationship.

The post-test results showed that participants, in addition to separating parties, increased their attention to getting the parties to understand each other's issues and interests, and to dig into the sources of the conflict.

In general, it is our belief that the training was successful in communicating fundamental concepts of conflict resolution. It included a strong cultural component by including the Burundian traditional model of conflict resolution with the western models and frameworks. Sylvere also did a good job in using examples that were relevant to

them. Finally, the results of the pre/post showed clearly that the training helped participants increase their awareness of other dimensions of conflict: mainly conflict analysis and conflict mapping. The program may benefit from adding more components on controlling anger, especially that this was mentioned often. It can also benefit from improving participants' skills in "peacekeeping" between fighting parties. Finally, participants can gain from each other by discussing who are appropriate third parties within the traditional system, and how to engage them.

## Step 9. Identify who can provide assistance

During the evaluation of the TV drama in Egypt in 2007, we agreed that we would develop a sample of audience to include citizens from urban and rural areas. As most of the evaluation team members were urban folks, we knew we would have no problem identifying proper locations for our city focus groups, and also to select the proper individuals who fit the criteria we had established in Cairo and Alexandria. The challenge was related to the one rural area where we needed to conduct the research. We knew that the culture of people in rural areas is different, more conservative, and may not easily allow entry for strange men and women from the city to conduct focus groups.

Luckily, one of our evaluation team members had strong ties to his village in Behera. The village seemed to fit our sampling criteria. He assured us that because of his contacts we would be allowed to conduct the focus groups, and that he can easily bring the number of people we need for the research. He proved to be crucial for the success of that evaluation project due to his excellent connections in the village. He had the credibility with the population of that village, without which there was no way that we could have had access to that population.

## Step 10. Plan the evaluation

There are many considerations with evaluation planning. I can perhaps categorize these considerations in two groups: content and logistical considerations. The first set of considerations relates to the sequence and organization of the type of data to be gathered. The second relates to the administrative aspects of carrying out evaluation activities.

As an example of content considerations, I would like to share this example from the evaluation of SFCG's Team in Kenya. In preparation for the baseline research which took place in September 2009, we hired six Kenyan researchers to conduct evaluation activities. In order to prepare them well for the task, we needed to familiarize them all with the content of the drama, as this is how we could best use their knowledge and cultural experience in developing survey, focus group and interview questions, before they went out in the field to gather data. We needed to do all this within six days, and needed to allocate most of that time for field work. So preparation work had to be completed within one day or so. In order to achieve all these activities, we needed to set up our plan to allow first for educating them about the drama. So, we held a first meeting to explain the objectives of the evaluation project. We then distributed among the six of them the scripts of the 13 episodes of the drama, and asked each of them to read two very carefully and be ready to share with the group a summary of the main events in a sequential order, and the main themes that were contained in each episode (for example, refusing to give bribes; addressing gender violence; police brutality, etc.). After one hour, we started the storytelling with each of them summarizing the events of the sequential episodes. Within about one more hour, each one of us became familiar with the entire drama and its events. At the same time we recorded the most significant and most recurred themes in the drama. Accordingly, we used the drama themes to formulate our survey, focus group and interview questions. All this happened with full participation of our Kenyan colleagues, who then conducted the surveys and focus groups in six regions of the country, and were all back with complete data sets by the sixth day!

Getting the six researchers to go out in the field and conduct surveys and focus groups is where you must pay full attention to administrative and logistical considerations. We had to ensure their security and safety. So we made sure to have them travel comfortably, stay in decent safe places, and be equipped with all they needed to do their work. For example, they needed umbrellas due to rain and hot sun. We made sure they all have the right ID cards, all the office supplies they needed, and of course enough pocket money. We also made sure to train them on how to keep receipts and submit them to the administrative assistant at the end of the activity in order to ensure that our book-keeping is in order.

All these administrative matters must be attended to carefully. My recommendation is to always accompany an administrative assistant to deal with such logistics, finances and the like so that the evaluator can focus on the content work. Of course there are times when budgets do not allow for such "luxury"! But try your best to anticipate that need and find ways to have such support.

# 6. The Logical Framework Approach

Logframe or LFA as you see in your readings is a subject of heated debate among professionals in the field of development, evaluation, and management. First, let me alert you that the readings on LFA include information on two levels: On one level, it deals with LFA as a management tool; on another level it addresses LFA as an assessment and evaluation tool. For the purpose of this course we are focused on the second level, but at the same time it is a good idea to review the information about LFA as a management tool, as this gives you an insight into how LFAs are developed, and how this impacts our work as evaluators. In addition, some of you may be interested in applying the tool in your own professional work.

I suggest that in addition to all the good reasons for the hot debate about LFA, an additional reason why many continue to debate it is that the jobs and livelihood of many depend on working with LFA! Many NGO managers, evaluators, and professionals working in donor organizations are bound by the design and outcomes of LFAs. At the same time, reality shows that most people are not necessarily pleased with how it is used whether for management or evaluation. I think a major problem with the tool is that it functions as a harsh judge of performance: you either fail or succeed! And more often than not, you fail! Most frustrating here is that the failure judgment is based on what many critics see as faults with the tool itself, its linearity, its rigidity, and its high emphasis on *quantitative, causal, macro* indicators, when it is almost impossible to attribute results in this manner to any one project!

The problem becomes worse when we deal with impact evaluation, as mentioned earlier. Impact evaluation assumes, by nature, that a period of time elapses between the completion of a project, and the realization that an impact has taken place. At the same time, for budgetary and fiscal cycles, donors require that all project activities and evaluation be completed at the end of the funding cycle. As a result, there is no reasonable time to assess impact, yet, as said earlier, many people's jobs depend on assessing it! This of course is in addition to the typical challenge of attributing with any confidence the impact to a specific project, and not to any other factors.

Having said all this, we all to a great extent are required to operate using LFA or similar models. We cannot be negative, and we must find ways to make the best out of it as a tool for evaluation. In this summary I would like to share a positive example of how we used LFA, or something similar with Project LIGHT (see above), and how I continue to struggle with it in one of the projects I am currently involved with.

**Project LIGHT**

You recall from Unit 4 that we included a goal relating to project evaluation with our proposal to NCCJ. This was the evaluation goal:

**Goal 4**. To conduct ongoing evaluation research in order to establish the issues to be addressed with Goal 1 of this project, to assess the progress of the project, to provide feedback to project staff, and to measure the accomplishment of the project's goals and objectives and its impact on issues of discrimination and bigotry.

**Objectives:**

**4.a.** To develop and implement process evaluation measures, and feedback mechanism, in order to ensure that the project is completing efficiently its various segments and producing its outputs.

**4.b.** To develop and implement qualitative and quantitative outcome evaluation measures to assess the effectiveness of the program in educating and improving skills, as specified in Goal 1, of both Muslims and Non-Muslims, and in fostering respect and understanding.

**4.c.** To develop and implement impact evaluation measures in order to assess the contribution of the project to attitudinal and behavioral changes among those who directly participated in the project, and on their wider communities.

**4.d.** To produce four quarterly process evaluation reports, one feedback session in the eighth month of the project, and one final evaluation report, within sixty days after the end of the project, to include findings and recommendation based on data gathered from process, outcome and impact measures.

In terms of implementation, we stated in the proposal that "A Research and Evaluation Track (RET) team will develop quantitative and qualitative measures to assess the effectiveness of the project in achieving all its goals and objectives. Specifically, they will develop pre/post measures for assessing changes in knowledge and attitudes among Muslim and Non-Muslim participants as a result of participating in the project's activities. They will also develop follow-up measures to assess impact and long-term effects few months after participating in the project. Finally, the RET team will conduct case studies to document success stories where project participants, or other indirect beneficiaries effectively addressed incidents of bigotry or discrimination, and will assess the extent to which the project contributed to such success."

We indeed followed the evaluation plan almost verbatim. The point I want to emphasize here is that we made a clear distinction between outcome indicators and impact indicators. Outcome indicators related to knowledge and attitude change on the short term. These were assessed using post workshop surveys with participants. They proved very effective in showing us where we were more effective. For example, we found that most participants reported that the knowledge they received in our workshops was very good and new. They also came to realize the message of tolerance that the workshop vouched for. What they did not think was happening sufficiently was their confidence in what they can do as a result. Interestingly, younger participants were more likely to report more positive results. In the last module of this course, we will share excerpts from the final evaluation report to show the outcome evaluation results.

At the impact level, we took advantage of the project deign which allowed for conducting workshops over 7-8 months. We had set a six-month period after each workshop before we would go back to workshop participants to ask questions related to the impact of the project on them (such as whether they used information they learned in the workshop, and how; if they took any action consistent with what we shared in the workshop). This allowed for conducting impact assessment before the end of the project funding cycle. In addition, we ended up saving on our expenses, which allowed to extend the project without additional costs for six more months, which we used to conduct more impact assessment. The impact assessment results showed that several workshop participants reported major impact on their thinking, attitudes, and behavior. Here are examples of what the impact they reported:

*Question: Has attending the seminar had an impact on you?*

**Answers:**

"Yes. It helped me to see that there are many Muslims who want to reach out and cooperate with other religions and peacefully co-exist."

"The Project L.I.G.H.T. seminar had a huge impact on the full-time and deployed staff of Shelter House, and in particular, myself. Not only did the seminar help put to rest many misconceptions of the Islamic faith I held prior to the seminar, but Muslims as a people. The program was extremely enlightening."

"Before the seminar, I didn't realize Muslims were of all races. In addition, the women in head wraps, like they were not approachable always intimidated me. Since the seminar, I am more comfortable around the women and I have an understanding as to why they wear the different clothing."

### *LFA Challenges with a Current Project*

I am now involved with the evaluation of a media-based peacebuilding project. I was invited to do the evaluation later after the project goals and objectives were already defined. Four problems exist with the LFA, and how it impacts my work:

- **Insistence on unrealistic causal quantitative indicators**. Several of the indicators assume that it will be possible to quantitatively determine the increase in the perceptions of the public that their government officials have increased actions and behaviors consistent with rule of law or human rights. From a conceptual point of view, it is difficult to establish quantitatively if citizens knew that governmental officials' behavioral change was due to the media programs.

- **Disconnect between media program's thematic emphasis, and their relation to the Logframe objectives and indicators**. In this project, I found that certain objectives and indicators were stated in a way that was not necessarily represented in the media programs. The challenge I am facing here is that the media programs do not necessarily include sufficient materials related to the rule of law and human rights to the point that we can establish causality between a change in perception of the public and the TV/radio programs. So, even if we were able to establish baseline quantitative data to measure against later at the evaluation stage, we could not with confidence establish that such changes were due to the media programs, and not due to other factors.

- **Emphasis on behavioral change on a wide scale**. The Logframe includes objectives and indicators which assume that watching or listening to the TV/radio programs will lead citizens and officials, at a wide scale, to change their actions and behaviors related to governance and rule of law. This seems to be almost impossible to prove or to attribute to the media programs only. Further, ongoing outcome results show that the media programs by themselves do not necessarily lead to such behavioral change, but that engaging in more focused outreach community activities associated with the media programs may have such effect among some individuals. So, in this case, we can prove that the media programs, combined with community outreach activities, can lead to such impact among some individuals, but we cannot say that the impact is widespread. I believe that this counts as success of the project, but according to the Logframe's strong emphasis on wide quantitative impact such results do not amount to success.

- **Timeframe and funding limitations**. The funding for evaluation does not match with the highly aspiring Logframe. The amount of quantitative work required to measure the indicators is far larger than the funding allocated for evaluation. In addition, the impact assessment that the Logframe aspires to measure cannot be achieved within the short timeframe. And even if we can measure such impact indicators immediately at the end of the media programs, there is no evidence that they are sustainable.

## 6.1. Final Words about LFA

I think that LFA, or similar models, are here to stay! We must deal with LFAs and work through them with donors and organizations. At the same time we must find ways to make them useful for evaluation efforts, and for the healthy development of projects. To do so, I recommend the following:

**1)** As an evaluator, try to engage in the design of LFAs from the beginning, Support project directors to apply steps 1 and 2 of the 14-Step Guide in order to make sure that the project goals and objectives are laid out in a measurable manner conducive to LFA requirements.

**2)** Ensure that SMART principles (please review readings) are applied to the development of indicators. Think that whatever you will develop at the design stage will "come back to haunt you" at the implementation and reporting stage.

**3)** Be cautious about including too many causal, quantitative, macro indicators. These are usually very difficult to prove, or attribute to the project subject to evaluation. Include them only to the extent that you think that you can realistically measure them and relate them causally to the project.

**4)** Encourage, when appropriate, the use of qualitative indicators and measures. Although donors are still hooked on quantitative measures, there are always ways to show them that qualitative measures can also be compelling. In my experience, I found that well-designed and executed case studies provide strong evidence. Such evidence usually does not rise to the level of macro analysis. Yet, it is actually more possible to establish causality between projects and qualitative results.

# 7. Evaluation Implementation: Working on the Ground

I think that this module's readings from Church and Rogers are very useful. They provided excellent elaborate focus on how to implement work on the ground, and provide some very useful tips and relate them to real challenges that evaluators and project staff face on the ground. They also connected them so well to LFA, and to the steps we discussed in modules 4-5. The discussion in this module will relate to step 11 of the 14 steps.

**Step 11**. Implement the evaluation (conceptual level)

I would like to add here that what they presented is excellent when a project has very clear tangible outcomes to measure, and for which we can develop such concise indicators and measures. I of course agree, as a social researcher, that developing indicators, and what we refer to in general as operationalization of research, must follow rigorous rules to ensure that our research is valid and reliable. However, I have two comments about their approaches:

**1)** Sometimes it is rather difficult to quantify indicators of certain objectives. Actually, sometimes it would be unfair for assessing the effectiveness of a project to insist that we prove that 30% or 20% of a population would, for example, reintegrate or engage more with their neighbors. Yes, this is a tangible measurable indicator. It makes it easy to say that an objective has been achieved or not. But, does it really measure what is happening on the ground? Are there other factors that we are not accounting for which may also measure an objective?

**2)** I think that the authors glossed over the question of how to determine with certainty that the quantitative increase according to some indicator is causally attributable to a project's activities. As they say correctly, in times of conflict and peacebuilding, there are many variables in play. Some contextual, some relational, some personal. How can we determine that a project, and nothing else led people to become friendlier to each other, for example, unless we create experiment conditions? Perhaps there are times when we can determine with accuracy that a specific project intervention led solely to specific quantified results. My problem with the authors is to give an impression that any evaluation in the field of peace and conflict follow such guidance.

From experience, I think that more often than not we end up having to accept something less than rigorous quantitative causal relationship between project activities and their intended outcomes. Sometimes we do not have

the size of samples to make confident inferences. Sometimes the effects do not lend themselves directly to quantified indicators. Therefore, while I agree with the authors that we should strive to find such quantitative measures, and establish causality, sometimes we need to accept that this may hurt our correct assessment of a project, and that at times qualitative measures, with some attribution to a project activity (but not direct exclusive causality) is the best we can achieve.

In this regard, I would like to share an example of a case study we conducted in Sierra-Leone in 2002. In that case study we assessed the contribution of the work of a young ex-child soldier in convincing other child soldiers to abandon the fighting and to reintegrate back in the society:

**Case Study 1: Golden Kids Program**

This case study of Golden Kids is about an ex-child soldier called Swanky. The boy was 9 years old when he was captured by the RUF and the AFRC rebels. He fought for the rebels for 3 years. TDS found Swanky in one of the interim care centers. To the surprise of all, he is now one of the best producers and presenters on the Golden Kids news. He participated in a conference held in Cairo, sponsored by UNICEF, on children who were affected by war and children rights. Swanky's testimony and presentation of his story at the conference, was very powerful. TDS-SL endeavored to find his parents in Kono, but he is currently sojourning in Freetown under the care of TDS staff, and is going to school.

Not only did Swanky benefit from TDS-SL's care for him.; through TDS-SL, and the Golden Kids program, he has been able to touch the lives of so many children, and to send to them a strong message for peace and reintegration. After all, he himself was a rebel fighter; he knows what they have been through. This gives him much credibility in approaching and convincing other children to become a positive force in the society. The impact of Swanky's and the Golden Kids' work was assessed in the Don Bosco Institute, where many children confirmed the positive message they have been receiving, and the transformative effects of these messages on their lives. These results came as no surprise to the evaluators, as other data from the audience survey and from key informant interviews confirmed the wide positive effects of TDS-SL children programs, especially in the area of trauma healing (see results of the audience survey above).

**a. Case Study Techniques**

In this study, the evaluator, Suleiman Hussein, interviewed Swanky himself, to tell about his previous experience in the war with the rebels, as well as the most horrible story he came across during the war, and how he got connected to the TDS. He also interviewed Ken, the person in charge of the Golden Kids programs in TDS-SL, to talk about the nature and input of his job. He also paid a visit to a child training and rehabilitation center called Don Bosco where he interviewed the Director of the camp named Bo John. The purpose of his interview was to know TDS-SL's impact on their work in general and, the impact of Golden Kids programs on their children specially.

**b. Interview with Swanky**

The Evaluator met Swanky in the office of Ken after he had already been informed that the evaluator wanted to meet him. He was confident and relaxed. When asked about how did he come about to be a Golden Kid, he explained that:

"In 1997 Government soldiers and rebels captured me to fight with them. I was 9 years old. They trained me, and I fought for them for 3 years. When UNAMSIL came the rebels freed us. UNICEF took us to Freetown; that was year 2000. I was in child protection organization in Freetown called Family HomesMovement, One day Mr. Gibril from TDS came and interviewed us. After the interview he realized that I was an intelligent boy. We were a group of children taken from different camps. We were given five days workshop training to become child journalists."

When asked about what kind of risks he was going through before joining the Golden Kids, Swanky explained:

"Rebels took me from my parents in Kono in the East and send me to the North. They took me to everywhere they go; some times they bully me and abuse me. I was not going to school, they were always taking us to go and fight with the Government soldiers. I was very fast to learn the tactics of the war, if you are not strong, you will die and they abandon you and go. Many of my friends died and we left them and go. After I came back from the war I was very stranded and confused in the child protection camp. I did not know what to do until TDS connected with me. The most difficult day was when the rebels took me and my best friend, called Mohammed, with them to go and fight. On our way to the battlefield we fell ambushed with ECOMOG soldiers. When the firing started, they shot my friend in front of me. And when he was dying, he screamed and he mentioned my name T-BOY - this name was given to me by the rebel commanders-when I saw him in this situation, I had nothing to do other than to take his weapon from him, and covered him with my T-shirt. I did so because I didn't want the enemy to take that weapon, that day the fighting was very serious, this friend that I missed was at the same age of me and a close friend of mine, I still remember him."

The impact of TDS-SL on Swanky's life has been tremendous. He explained that TDS has a very big impact on him, because TDS "takes care of me by giving me the opportunity to go to school, takes care of all necessary expenditures includes health, clothes, every thing that I need. To me, education is very important, because in Sierra Leone, if you don't go to school you cannot do any thing. TDS has changed my life completely, because now I am in class six." Swanky also described his specific activities with TDS. He stated:

"I am an interviewer for TDS, my main position is a reporter. Sometimes they take me to interview other kids in the various child camps. While interviewing them I ask them about their previous experience with the rebels; they are always happy to meet me, as well as tell me more about their experience, because they want their voices to be added to, and heard in the TDS programs."

Speaking about the impact of the program on kids, he said that he went to so many ex-child combatants' centers, where he met his old friends who were in the jungle with him. They asked him a lot of questions about how he became a Golden Kid, especially when he went to Lungi ex-child combatant's camp. All the kids there wanted to be like him, "because they saw me in a good shape and condition."

Swanky suggested that TDS-SL should try to give wide opportunity to more kids to voice out their problems. However, he also acknowledged hat before TDS-SL came, kids could not say anything, nobody heard them, and they had no means for speaking out their problems.

**c. Interview with Ken, TDS-SL Staff Member in Charge of Golden Kids Program**

Ken explained that Golden Kids program is for kids' advocacy through the radio programs. Children are given the opportunity to voice out their problems. Before this program, children were hardly heard. That was why the program tried to get to children wherever they are- in the camps, streets, schools and ex-child combatant care centers. TDS-SL staff trains the children, and teaches them skills of journalism. Once trained, they go to schools and camps to interview the kids, record their problems and air them through the various radio stations. Initially the program was just fifteen minutes, and now is extending. Golden Kids also go to areas other than Freetown, like Kenema, Bo, Port Loko, and Makeni. They train children there and also record their problems and bring the cassettes down to Freetown, and air them.

Describing how TDS-SL got to know Swanky, Ken said:

"It was Gibril who got connected with Swanky in one of the child's camps. When he realized he was very intelligent after interviewing him, we took him to several camps where he met his friends. The kids were impressed about him because he is a smart boy. He obeys laws, especially with the school teachers. Some children in the school do escape the classes, wander around, but he always stays behind. He is very good at interviewing people; the first time we took him with us he mastered everything. Now I just give him the background of the interviews, then he would do them himself; he handles everything very well. We allow him to interview managers, and other top personnel. The feedback is always that the boy is smart."

Talking about the impact of Golden Kids on other children, Ken stated that they go to up- country and talk to the parents of the kids, and try to re-unite them with them.

The kids are respected by their parents and in their communities. This is because of the training that TDS-SL has been giving to the kids. Many people want their kids come to TDS-SL programs, and the kids also want to come because they always want their voice be heard in the studio. The fact is that the parents seldom handle the kids very well, because they have no time to do that themselves. But whenever TDS-SL trains them and sends them back, their communities respect them.

### d. Interview of the Director in Charge of the Don Bosco Camp

When asked to describe the mission and activities of the Don Bosco, the director stated:

"There is Don Bosco centers in 140 countries around the world. Rev. Father John Thomson established ours in Freetown, in January 14 1998. It is catholic oriented organization, from a congregation called Silesian. It focuses on youth work to develop their mind, especially the disadvantaged youth. One of its aspects is to spread Christian faith, but it includes all categories of children. The other aspect of development is to educate the children, especially the street children. We have displeased children, ex-child combatants. Don Bosco was established at the time when all the childcare organizations folded their properties and left. Our main activities are to rehabilitate the minds of children, give them education and provide them vocational training."

Describing TDS-SL's work with children, the director said:

"We started working with them in the same year our organization was established. When TDS came to meet children, the first boy they trained to do video filming was Mohammed Krumah from Don Bosco. He represented Don Bosco in Common Wealth Children Summit in South Africa; he is currently in South Africa. TDS has children programs; they use media to ask children to leave street and go to the camps. They also send children to Don Bosco. They work with us with good intention. Whenever we have our programs we ask their help and they come and do everything for us for free of charge and they don't take anything from us. Every December we have our national party; TDS is very much attendant in those events."

When asked about TDS-SL's specific impact on his organization's work, he said that TDS does many activities with the Don Bosco- they campaign for peace building; their children programs send a positive impact on the Don Bosco children, especially, the Golden Kids programs. They are always efficient. Those programs help tremendously with the Don Bosco's programs of rehabilitation. When asked if the children in his institute listen to the Golden Kids, he affirmed that know the program very well and they listen to it.

### e. Interviews with Children in the Don Bosco Camp

In the Don Bosco camp the evaluator met 4 young ex-child combatants. The first one among them was Ibrahim Conte, 15 years old who came to holding his small radio. The evaluator asked him if he listens to Golden Kids program. He answered: "Yes, I always listen to the program and tell my friends who are still in the streets to come to the camp because being on the streets is not good for their future. The program asks us to do that. I myself was one of those who listened to it and because of that I am here."

The next ex- child combatant was Allasan Turay, 13 years old, who told the evaluator that he listens to the Golden Kids program. He said "I don't have my own radio, but I listen with my friend whenever it is time for the program. The evaluator asked him if he knew Swanky; he said "yes, I know him, and I listen to his voice in the radio." The evaluator asked him about the benefits from the program. He said: "I came here to learn because of this program. Before that, I did not know who would look after me to do what I want to do until I listened to this program."

The third ex- child combatant was Abubakar Koroma, 14. The evaluator asked him if he listens to Golden Kids program. He said: "Yes, I listen to it but not every day, because I don't have my own radio; I am planning to buy one." When asked about what the program tells him, he said that "It tells us to leave street and go to the camps, where we will be able to re- unite with our families."

The fourth ex-child combatant was Sulemana Sesay, 14. When asked about what he knew about Golden Kids program, he said "I listen to the program from time to time. It tells us not to remain going around on the streets; we should go to the childcare centers to get free education."

**f. Conclusions**

The interviews with Swanky, Ken, the Don Bosco director and the four children, all showed the positive effects of the Golden Kids program both on the life of Swanky, and on the lives of children on the street. The impact on Swanky's life has been tremendous. He was transformed from being a child combatant, perhaps with no destiny other than that of his friend Mohammed, or the fate of the so many street children. TDS-SL's efforts with Swanky extended beyond simply training him to be a radio journalist. TDS-SL staff obviously have embraced that child, and helped him in so many ways. This is an example of supporting TDS-SL's media work, with other non-media activities to help even one child.

On the level of the society, Golden Kids have touched the lives of so many children in that country. All kids indicated that they have been actively listening to Golden Kids. They were very clear on its message. And because of Golden Kids many of them are now in safe hands with an organization such as the Don Bosco, where they have a shelter, and are receiving care, and training that will help them become good citizens of Sierra Leone.

The case study above included mainly qualitative approaches, and at the same time focused directly on the main question: Did Swanky's work make a difference in the lives of child soldiers? I think the answer is an affirmative yes. At the same time, I cannot say that this approach followed strictly the LFA or quantitative techniques. Yet, the case study approach, the stories in first person voice, and the compelling outcomes, all show us that careful rigorous research can also extend to qualitative research.

My point is to make you aware of the multiple approaches that we have available to us. Which ones to use definitely depends on the nature of what we are measuring, the resources, the cultural appropriateness, and many other factors. But they all share one thing in common: we must stick to rigorous principles and methods of research design and implementation.

# 8. Evaluation Implementation: Collecting and Analyzing Data

Church and Rogers presented very valuable information in this unit's readings. Their readings provide us with very practical tools for continuing with data collection, and dealing with data. This unit also corresponds well to steps 11 and 12 of the 14-step evaluation guide we worked with earlier. Here are some additional practical tips and experiences within steps 11 and 12, which complement what you have read for this module from Church and Rogers:

**Step 11**. Implement the evaluation (data collection level)

**Step 12**. Code and synthesize data

Of course implementation of evaluation is a very wide area which includes many elements. Below I summarize some these elements, with some practical examples.

## 8.1.  Elements of evaluation implementation

### 8.1.1.  Develop Participatory, Inclusive Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

Once we are clear on the concepts we want to measure, and the samples of populations we will work with, we can decide on the best ways to collect the data. Collecting data can take place in various forms. We usually cluster such forms into two categories: qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative methods refer to approaches which use open-ended methods of investigation or questions. Examples of qualitative methods include interviews, focus groups, and observations. In such approaches a researcher gathers "words" or event descriptions. Qualitative research gives more space to interviewees or members of focus groups to express themselves in their own words rather than to force on them a certain scheme of response such as a number scale.

Qualitative approaches are powerful in gathering in-depth data and in ensuring that data is natural. Yet they are also much more time-consuming at the analysis stage. Often qualitative approaches are concerned with the "why" and "how" questions.

Quantitative approaches are ones that are based on quantifying research questions and variables. Surveys and questionnaires are the most common methods for gathering quantitative data. In designing surveys, a researcher measures each variable using numeric scales. These scales vary in their nature,

with major implications to how to analyze them statistically. For example, a question about "what is your gender" would use a categorical scale of "female" or "male". But a question about "what is your age" allowing respondents to report their actual age would result in a continuous scale. In addition, a question about "how do you like this class?" with a scale of 1-5 with 1= I hate it; and 5- I love it, would result in an ordinal scale. The differences between the three scales dictate the types of statistical tests that we can use later to examine our hypotheses and assumptions.

Whether you develop qualitative or quantitative methods, you must make sure that the wording or your questions and the methods of data collection are both valid and reliable. Validity and Reliability are crucial concepts in research. Simply put, Validity refers to the degree to which a question or a construct measuring a specific variable (tangible or abstract) is accurately measuring it. If I am measuring the level of affection between people, how do I determine this? Is it by the extent they hug and physically get close to each other? Or is this culturally specific? To the extent that you ensure that you are measuring affection using the appropriate indicators culturally, your measurement is valid. Reliability refers to the accuracy in collecting data. It deals with how we apply a research instrument evenly and equally with all research subjects. So, if I use a measuring tape to measure people's height, if the measuring tape is designed properly, we say it is valid. But if I apply the measuring tape in an inconsistent manner (sometimes asking people to take their shoe off, and sometimes not) then we say that the measurement is not reliable.

Ideally we would combine qualitative and quantitative approaches for any research in peace and conflict. This is because each can be useful in certain ways.

### 8.1.2. Conduct Cultural Reality Check

As explained earlier, cultural factors are critical in the field of research in peace and conflict. Therefore, as you are designing your research components, and as you move towards drafting qualitative and quantitative instruments to gather data, make sure to review them from a cultural perspective.

> This can be conducted by members of the research team you composed, or by experts on the cultural context of your research. Examples of issues that must be addressed culturally vary. For example, do you remember the story I shared earlier in this course about a research in Burundi in 1998? We were faced with a situation where the group of Burundian researchers refused the inclusion of a question in the survey about whether a respondent was Hutu or Tutsi. It was such a sensitive issue at that time and asking such a question could have had negative implications. So we decided to take out the question and instead ask respondents about their ancestral rural home, which usually indicated with much confidence whether they were Hutus or Tutsis. What I did not share with you is that, interestingly, 3 years later when we conducted a similar survey in Burundi we were told by the researchers that it was OK to ask the question about Hutu of Tutsi! This was due to a wide media and government campaign over the three years to help people identify with their own ethnic identity without fear.

### 8.1.3. Conduct Pilot Tests

Pilot testing refers to the effort made to rehearse a research instrument before launching widely and officially. Pilot testing is usually conducted with a small number of respondents to a survey or interview to assess whether the questions are clear or not, how long it takes to complete the survey or interview, and if there are missing areas in the research. I usually send out researchers to conduct pilot testing with about 20 individuals (if it is a survey) in order to assess such issues. This becomes the final test before making the final adjustments.

> Do not under-estimate the importance of pilot testing. It can detect mistakes and misunderstandings that may ruin a research if not corrected. For example, in a survey we conducted with students at UPEACE about their use of different media (radio, TV, internet) before and after coming to UPEACE, we realized that a question that read "Did you use internet before coming to UPEACE?" was understood by some to mean whether they used internet in the morning before coming to UPEACE, not before coming from their own country!

### 8.1.4. Make Adjustments Accordingly

Needles to say, based on the cultural check, and the pilot testing, a researcher will make adjustments to the design of research instruments to ensure that they are valid and reliable. With this step, the Design stage is complete and you are ready to launch your research in the real world.

### 8.1.5. Design Participatory, Inclusive, Culturally Appropriate Research Plans of Implementation

At this stage, you are ready to conduct the research in the field. To do so, you must remember some of the principles we discussed earlier, especially those about inclusion and participation.

It is probable that you already accounted for including several groups in your sample, and that you hired a culturally appropriate research team who have the proper entry into the research populations. With that, you also want to make sure that the approaches they use to address different segments of the population are appropriate, and that proper methods are used. For example, if you are conducting the research with illiterate groups, then make sure that your researchers will provide them questions in a simple easy manner, and will not impose on them terminologies or methods (quantitative for example) which do not fit with their context. Instead, make sure that the researchers use simple language, and gather data in the way the respondents can express.

Also make sure that cultural considerations are observed. In one research in Bangladesh, we failed to gather data from housewives because our entire research team was made of men! We had selected only men because we were conducting a research on Madrasas. Knowing that these are conservative highly patriarchal institutions we made an exception to the rule of including women in our research teams. But we paid the price when housewives would not speak to strange men knocking on their doors when their husbands are at work!

In terms of logistics, make sure that your researchers are safe and comfortable. Their needs will vary from one place to another. In Kenya, researchers asked for umbrellas to protect from the sun. In Sierra Leone they asked for insect spray. In most places they ask for ID badges and letters of introduction. Provide them with appropriate accommodations and with pocket money for their trips.

### 8.1.6. Gather Code and Store Date Properly

Usually research data is gathered in the form of paper surveys, paper interviews or focus groups. It is very possible that you lose such forms if they are not stored properly. It is also possible that you get confused if you do not identify the data properly. One rule of thumb in data gathering and coding is to assign to each form a unique ID. In doing so, you can easily track the forms and correct electronic data coding when needed. Never under-estimate the need to assign unique ID to each research form.

Once you have the forms identified, make sure that they are stored in a safe place. Depending on the nature of the data and the sensitivity of information, you may consider careful security measures.

Usually we code data on computerized systems such as SPSS or Excel. Of course careful attention to data coding is expected and it is recommended to have researchers double check data coding. In all cases make sure that data files are saved frequently, and that back ups are stored safely. Computers crash, and your data may be lost!

### 8.1.7. Conduct Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analysis

This is the main point of all this evaluation research stages and steps! Ultimately we want to test our evaluation research questions, assumptions and hypotheses. Data analysis is the step in which we look carefully at the results, explore what it tells us, compare results, look at correlations, look at causality, and dig into qualitative data.

To the extent that you were organized from the beginning, and to the extent that you stuck to a focused and narrowed research design with clear assumptions and hypotheses, and out of which all your variables and questions emerged, you stand a good chance of enjoying smooth data analysis. To the extent that you were all over the place, and had no internal coherence between your evaluation design, research questions and your implementation, you stand a chance of sifting through chaotic data.

Quantitative analysis depends, as we explained earlier, on the nature of your scales and numeric data. Accordingly, and based on a clear understanding of the assumptions and hypotheses you are testing, you choose the proper

statistical tests. Do you remember Project LIGHT? I promised to share outcome evaluation results. Here is an excerpt from the final evaluation report showing how we used quantitative research:

Project LIGHT implemented three types of evaluation:

**1)** Post session survey;

**2)** Post session comments; and

**3)** Follow-up interviews conducted two-five months after sessions. The following is a description of the results from the three evaluation methods.

**Post Session Survey Result**: The survey was distributed to participants after each presentation. It aimed at measuring success of presentations quantitatively and qualitatively. As the table below indicates, majority of participants gave high marks to different aspects of the presentation. There were statistically significant differences between younger respondents from high school and undergraduate college age, and respondents from adult groups. Younger participants were more likely to give higher scores to each of the six evaluation items. This could be the result of the ability of our younger presenters to relate to their audiences more effectively. It has been the observation of the project administrators that younger presenters from among the Muslim community were more adept in public presentations and speaking. This is perhaps due to their US-based education that emphasizes much participation and interaction. By contrast, the adult Muslim presenter population included several who received their formative education in foreign countries. They did not have the same emphasis in their education systems on participation and interaction.

However, the results for both groups, albeit statistically significantly different, were impressive in suggesting that Project LIGHT was well presented and included good information about tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

**Table**

Average Scores as of April 2004

| | All Participants N=414 | Young Participants N=180 | Adult Participants N=234 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1. Information about Islam's messages of tolerance and peaceful coexistence** | 4.53 | 4.64 | 4.45 |
| **2. Information about discrimination and bigotry against Muslims** | 4.24 | 4.51 | 4.03 |
| **3. Information about actions to address discrimination and bigotry** | 4.12 | 4.42 | 3.88 |
| **4. The organization of the presentation** | 4.42 | 4.51 | 4.35 |
| **5. The presenters** | 4.64 | 4.79 | 4.52 |
| **6. The Question and Answer session** | 4.46 | 4.62 | 4.34 |

On a scale of 1-5 (1=poor, and 5=excellent), how do you rate the following presentation elements. All differences between young and old participants' responses are statistically significant (p<=.05)

Qualitative data analysis on the other hand does not rely on numbers. It relies on what I call qualitative significance. This is about what is important in what people say or do; and what does this mean to the evaluation. So in doing qualitative data analysis we are concerned with the stories of people, their

anecdotes, their experiences and the meanings of them all. We accomplish this by conducting various types of analysis such as content analysis, discourse analysis and narrative analysis.

Once all these steps are followed, we are now ready to share results with the project staff, donors and other interested parties. Evaluation reporting and dissemination is the topic of the next and final module.

# 9. Evaluation Reports and Dissemination

Now, everyone is eager to see your report: the project staff, the donors, and your colleagues! Writing an evaluation research report can be one of the most enjoyable elements of your work, or it can be the most dreadful! It all depends on how much you made sure to keep your evaluation design and implementation focused, intact, and directly related to what needed to be measured. As long as your variables and your indicators were developed properly; your research instruments were designed carefully, your samples were selected to match the population served, and the execution of these methods was done correctly, then most likely you ended up with good process of data analysis, which should lead to good report writing. But if any of these steps has not been conducted carefully, then perhaps the report writing stage may be a challenge.

While a report is the most important product that comes out of evaluation, there are other important dissemination processes as well. For example, policy makers may be interested in your evaluation. Of course they do not have time to read entire reports. So, you may need to produce a short, to the point presentation. Media too may want to know about your evaluation. In this case, you need to produce user-friendly presentations for a wide audience with varied levels of education. And, you may want to publish your results in scholarly journals. In this case, you need to prepare an academic type of presentation suitable for academicians. Let us share some examples here within the last two steps 13 and 14 of the 14-Step Guide to Evaluation...

## 9.1. Last steps

**Step 13**. Report and present findings

The next to final step in conducting research is to write it in a report format. A research report usually includes:

**1)** An **Introduction** explaining the reason for conducting the research, and the benefits of conducting it. It may refer to some of the highlights of its findings. A short section may follow which would include a historical account of the conflict, if any.

**2)** A **Literature Review** Section discussing the main theories and concepts used by scholars and academicians on the research topics. This section may also include the theoretical or conceptual framework.

**3)** A **Methodology** section explaining the three stages discussed here: conceptualization, design and implementation. Of particular interest in this section is the rationale for constructing variables and sample designs.

**4)** A **Findings** section to include the results of the research. Here you show what your data analysis revealed, and provide your interpretations of such data. This is also a place to relate the literature to the results.

**5)** A **Recommendations** section to include the actions that you suggest in order to advance peace, avert violence or prevent conflict. This section may be preceded by a short summary of the main findings and interpretations.

An important advice with writing a report is: be honest and do not hide anything. If there were shortcomings with the data for example, or the sample you ended up using did not meet your requirements, just explain them. Do not try to hide them. It is better that you be upfront about them and explain any limitations they caused. Such approach averts much confusion and dismissal of your report.

Also, if you are the bearer of "bad news" do not hide them! But also try to find a suitable constructive way to share them, and to suggest ways to improve. In this regard, let me share with you the executive summary of an evaluation report I wrote for a workshop that was conducted by UPEACE in 2003 (at that time I was still working at George Mason, and conducted that evaluation for UPEACE). Look at it, and see how I incorporated some of the "bad news" within a constructive framing. Read it, then see what I have for you next.

### Executive Summary (UPEACE workshop)

The South Africa workshop was the first of three workshops conducted in Africa to address peace education. The United Nations' University for Peace (UPeace) is conducting this project to "strengthen capabilities throughout Africa to provide high quality teaching on issues critical to conflict prevention, mediation, conflict resolution and reconciliation, and the building of peace". It is within the context of this strongly felt need that UPEACE is organizing the three workshops. Under an agreement with UPeace, George Mason University's Peace Operations Policy Program (POPP) is conducting process, and limited outcome, evaluation of each of the workshops.

The first workshop in South Africa, conducted from October 28-31, 2003, has been a tremendous learning experience to all involved. No doubt, the workshop was successful in reflecting and achieving the project's five objectives to a great extent, and to provide participants with knowledge and skills useful for developing peace education in their respective institutions. Several issues are noteworthy here because of their significant contribution to the workshop's success, or for their potential improvement in future workshops.

First, it is remarkable that the workshop ensured adequate participation of African women involved in the field of peacebuilding, albeit not yet equal in number to men. The workshop was also successful in bringing a majority of African participants and presenters. However, the upcoming workshops would benefit from including more peacebuilding practitioners and government officials, in addition to academicians.

Workshop administrators successfully designed sessions to reflect the workshop objectives. The majority of participants and presenters were clear on the objectives of the workshop. The majority also indicated that the workshop achieved to a great extent its objectives. However, the accomplishment of the objective related to *forging partnerships between academia and civil society, and policy makers*, seemed to receive lower

ratings. Commentaries made in interviews and on the Workshop Assessment Form also supported these findings.

The theme of African Realism received mixed reviews during the workshop. The administrators obviously made efforts to ensure that sessions would reflect African Realism, and are grounded in such realities. Several participants acknowledged that they learned a lot by interacting with other Africans interested in peacebuilding. However, it seems that there are still many questions about how the theme of African Realism should be approached.

The workshop obviously addressed a wide variety of issues related to peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The overall workshop design and implementation; the information provided; and the organization of the workshop were very well received by participants. The workshop format, however, included too many activities, and very short time to rest, which adversely influenced participation by workshop participants. Several participants cited absence of small and breakout group activities as reasons behind low participation. Further, participants wished to participate and share more actively, and to make the workshop more inclusive of others such as government officials. Use of case studies, and participatory sessions designs with fewer speakers, seemed to increase audience participation.

Most participants expressed satisfaction with the materials used in the workshop. They seemed to be useful for their purposes, and enriching to their knowledge. A few participants wished that the workshop included a wider variety of materials, and more handouts.

Finally, as a result of attending the workshop, participants' knowledge and aptitude related to various peacebuilding and conflict resolution matters increased, as evident from the pre and post-test results. Further, participants affirmed in their anecdotes that by attending the workshop they increased their knowledge of those subjects, developed connections with others in the field, and that they would act upon what they gained by making changes to their existing curricula, and developing networks of people with similar interests.

According to the findings in this report, the following are recommendations to the project administrators:

**1)** Continue to make efforts to include African peacebuilding professional women in the workshops.

**2)** Ensure increased participation of peacebuilding practitioners and government officials in the workshops. This is important especially in light of the relatively low ratings given to the accomplishment of the fifth project objective.

**3)** Develop approaches to engage more African peacebuilding professionals in a type of steering committee to discuss how to address the theme of African Realism. Participants' commentaries suggested that they needed a deeper, more comprehensive approach, with more input from African professionals in order to explore conflict issues and peacebuilding approaches that may have not been covered adequately in the workshop.

**4)** Design alternative plans to ensure adequate coverage of all sessions in case of absence of presenters. The absence of some presenters in the South Africa workshop resulted in difficulties to workshop administrators and participants.

**5)** Reduce the number of speakers in each session in order to ensure that there is ample time for discussion and engagement of the audience.

**6)** Design more small groups and breakout sessions in order to ensure more participation by workshop participants.

**7)** Include more practical techniques during sessions, especially case studies. Explore the possibility of having participants prepare ahead of time case studies from their regions, in order to expand African Realism and to increase participation.

**8)** Review and increase the number of high quality handouts during the workshop. Participants seemed to appreciate the textbooks by King and Sharp. But they seemed to be interested in higher quality handouts.

**9)** Develop follow-up mechanisms to keep participants connected, and to support their efforts to build or change curricula, and to develop networks. Several participants already indicated that they would take actions in these directions. It will be necessary for the

evaluation of the project's outcomes and impact to develop such follow-up mechanisms now.

**10)** Explore options to reduce the workshop load, either by shortening the days, or having a half-day off in the middle of the workshop. Several participants pointed out that they were exhausted because of the busy workshop schedule.

I still remember that when the UPEACE colleagues received the report, it took them a few weeks to recover from the disappointment. At the same time, they were gearing towards the next workshop in Uganda. Look now at the Uganda executive summary:

### Executive Summary (Uganda workshop)

The Uganda workshop, conducted between December 1-5, 2003, was the second of three workshops conducted in Africa to address peace education. The United Nations' University for Peace (UPeace) is conducting this project to "strengthen capabilities throughout Africa to provide high quality teaching on issues critical to conflict prevention, mediation, conflict resolution and reconciliation, and the building of peace". It is within the context of this strongly felt need that UPeace is organizing the three workshops. Under an agreement with UPeace, George Mason University's Peace Operations Policy Program (POPP) is conducting process, and limited outcome, evaluation of each of the workshops.

Like the one in South Africa, the Uganda workshop has been a tremendous learning experience to all involved. From an evaluation perspective, the second workshop in Uganda was a great success as almost all concerns raised in the first evaluation report were effectively addressed in Uganda. No doubt, the workshop was successful in reflecting and achieving the project's five objectives to a great extent, and providing participants with knowledge and skills useful for developing peace education in their respective institutions.

The demographic figures suggest that the workshop included a fairly large number of Africans, which was intended to ensure that the theme of African Realism would be present in all aspects of the workshop. Compared to the South Africa workshop, the Ugandan workshop seemed to include more non-academicians who were involved in the field of peacebuilding. This increase in the number of non-academician participants reflected a positive adjustment in order to ensure that the workshop effectively addressed the fifth objective of building networks and contacts in the civil society. However, several participants wished to see more inclusion of peacebuilding practitioners and government officials, in addition to academicians.

Workshop administrators successfully designed sessions to reflect the workshop objectives; they ensured that participatory interactive approaches be used to accomplish the workshop objectives. The majority of participants and presenters were clear on the objectives of the workshop. The majority also indicated that the workshop achieved to a great extent its objectives. The accomplishment of the two objectives related to *engaging African academicians in the long-term process of contributing to the development of Africa-specific materials in the field of peace and conflict studies*, and to *strengthen the capacity of African universities and civil-society organizations to teach, train, and deliver courses on peace and conflict studies*, continued to receive the highest ratings among participants and presenters. The Uganda workshop participants obviously rated the accomplishment of the objectives higher, and with less disparity, compared to the South Africa workshop participants. The positive effect of using participatory interactive approaches was strongly felt by interviewed participants and presenters.

The theme of the Integral African Approach received much more positive reviews from session leaders and participants, compared to the results of the South Africa workshop. The satisfaction score on this issue increased statistically significantly in the Uganda workshop. According to workshop administrators, encouraging dialogue and participation during workshop sessions allowed for bringing up African-specific issues and insights. Several participants acknowledged that they learned a lot by interacting with other Africans interested in peacebuilding. According to some participants, the Integral African approach may enhance further with more Africa-developed reading materials.

The workshop obviously addressed a wide variety of issues related to peacebuilding and conflict resolution in an effective manner. The overall workshop design and implementation; the information provided; and the organization of the workshop

were very well received by participants. The workshop format benefited greatly from more participatory interactive approaches. The differences between the two workshops' satisfaction scores on various aspects of the workshop showed significant increases on all items in the Uganda workshop. It is remarkable that the workshop organizers arranged a visit to CSOs in order to ensure that the fifth objective was better addressed. Addressing issues of English/French translation, and ensuring effective time management are perhaps the only two points to focus on in future workshops.

Most participants expressed satisfaction with the materials used in the workshop. They seemed to be useful for their purposes, and enriching to their knowledge. A few participants wished that the workshop included more reading materials that included African perspectives, and others pointed to the need to attend to the Francophone population linguistic needs.

Finally, as a result of attending the workshop, participants' knowledge and aptitude related to various peacebuilding and conflict resolution matters increased, as evident from the pre and post-test results. Further, participants affirmed in their anecdotes that by attending the workshop they increased their knowledge of those subjects, developed connections with others in the field, and that they would act upon what they gained by making changes to their existing curricula, and developing networks of people with similar interests. Participants expressed much appreciation to workshop organizers, and wished to attend more workshops, and to be connected to the project and other participants.

According to the findings in this report, the following are recommendations to the project administrators:

**1)** Continue to make efforts to include African peacebuilding professional women in the workshops.

**2)** Continue with innovative efforts to ensure increased participation of peacebuilding practitioners and government officials in the workshops. The addition of a visit to CSOs in Uganda was very well received; similar efforts, in addition to increasing the number of non-academicians in workshops, will ensure a successful accomplishment of the fifth project objective.

**3)** Continue with a workshop design that includes more small groups and breakout sessions in order to ensure more participation by workshop participants.

**4)** Continue with more practical techniques during sessions, especially case studies, and expand on the success of open dialogues and audience participation.

**5)** Review and implement approaches to address the needs of the Francophone population.

**6)** Develop follow-up mechanisms to keep participants connected, and to support their efforts to build or change curricula, and to develop networks. Several participants already indicated that they would take actions in these directions. It will be necessary for the evaluation of the project's outcomes and impact to develop such follow-up mechanisms now.

**7)** Explore options to ensure better time management in order to allow for audience participation and discussion, which seemed to be the key approaches to the success of the Uganda workshop.

## Step 14. Reflect on proposed revisions

I think that when you look at the effect of the first report on how the UPEACE colleagues at that time took the "bad news" to heart, you can understand the great benefit of evaluation. Obviously, in the second workshop they accounted for all the mistakes of the first one, and ended up producing an excellent workshop. This is what evaluation can do - improve lives! When conducted with integrity, professionalism and in an atmosphere of mutual trust, projects improve as a result.