

Accepted Manuscript

Title: Measuring Unintended Effects in Peacebuilding: What the Field of International Cooperation Can Learn from Innovative Approaches Shaped by Complex Contexts

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PII: S0149-7189(17)30293-8

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2017.09.007>

Reference: EPP 1492

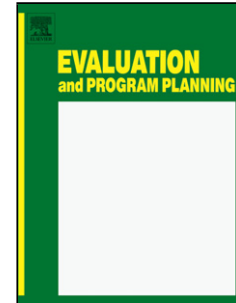
To appear in:

Received date: 11-9-2017

Accepted date: 22-9-2017

Please cite this article as: Lemon, Adrienne., & Pinet, Mélanie., Measuring Unintended Effects in Peacebuilding: What the Field of International Cooperation Can Learn from Innovative Approaches Shaped by Complex Contexts. *Evaluation and Program Planning* <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2017.09.007>

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Measuring Unintended Effects in Peacebuilding: What the Field of International Cooperation Can Learn from Innovative Approaches Shaped by Complex Contexts

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HIGHLIGHTS

- OECD-DAC guidelines do not adequately guide evaluators to find unintended effects.
- Qualitative monitoring supports teams to explore beyond the logframe from the start.
- Participatory methods naturally guide teams towards examination of unintended effects.
- Expected risks are not the only elements determining complexity and unintended effects.

Abstract

Capturing unintended impacts has been a persistent struggle in all fields of international development, and the field of peacebuilding is no exception. However, because peacebuilding focuses on relationships in complex contexts, the field of peacebuilding has, by necessity, made efforts towards finding practical ways to reflect upon both the intended and unintended effects of this work. To explore what lessons can be learned from the peacebuilding field, this study examines the evaluations of Search for Common Ground, a peacebuilding organisation working in over 35 countries across the world. Analysis focuses on 96 evaluations completed between 2013 and 2016 in 24 countries across Africa, Asia, and the MENA regions that found unintended effects. Programmes focusing on women, youth, and radio were most effective at identifying and explaining unintended effects, likely because the project design guided broader lines of questioning from the beginning. The paper argues that OECD-DAC guidelines are not enough on their own to guide evaluators into exploration of unintended effects, and teams instead need to work together to decide where, when and how they will look for them. Different approaches were also used to capture positive and negative outcomes, suggesting that evaluators need to decide at what level they are evaluating and how to tie effects back to the project's contribution. This study explores evaluation techniques and approaches used to understand impact in complex contexts in the peacebuilding field, and draws on lessons learned

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