

1. Introduction

A group of people affected by violence in their community meet together to talk with each other and plan their response. A police officer works with community members to patrol the streets at night to prevent crime. A women's group blockades the exit in the negotiation room where rebel groups are trying to withdraw from peace talks. A researcher interviews government ministers about the effect of civil society actors like churches, development organizations, and women's groups on recent democratic elections. These are among the thousands of people who engage in building peace. They work not just to end violence but to create structures that contribute to a just and sustainable peace.

*The field of peacebuilding is wider and more complex than most people realize. It encompasses actors in many different arenas: community members searching for a better life; nonviolent activists pushing for human rights; peacekeepers separating groups in conflict and demobilizing combatants; religious leaders encouraging their followers to make peace with neighbors; relief workers bringing aid; community mediators and restorative justice practitioners who facilitate dialogue between conflicting

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parties; business leaders giving material aid to victims; and government leaders initiating change through public policy. These are just a few actors in peacebuilding.

These actors use different languages to talk about their values and describe their activities. They have different theories of how social change happens, and they have different roles and responsibilities in society. For example, some speak of the need for law and order, others of spiritual healing, human rights and social justice, a return to traditional values, conflict resolution skills, development, education, or a combination of all of the above. In practice, they may work in the same region, yet they may never coordinate their approaches. Building a just and sustainable peace requires that the various actors and actions are coordinated into an overarching framework.

Why this *Little Book*?

This *Little Book* is an attempt to bring together the various fields and activities related to peacebuilding to integrate them into one conceptual framework. At the core of this framework is the idea of *strategic peacebuilding*, an interdisciplinary, coordinated approach to building a sustainable *justpeace*—a peace with justice.

Strategic peacebuilding requires clear goals. While the concept of *justpeace* is growing in popularity, few writings lay out the vision and practice of it. One aim of this book is to promote the concept of *justpeace* as an overall goal or vision for peacebuilding.

Strategic peacebuilding also requires coordination. While some peacebuilding scholars focus on how to directly affect the people in conflict, this book adds a focus on how people working for peace need to network

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with each other. It attempts to synthesize and summarize the values, relational skills, analytical frameworks, and practices of a wide range of peacebuilding actors. This synthesis aims to create a common language for talking about peacebuilding and to increase awareness and appreciation of the important and diverse roles involved.

The framework presented here has emerged out of the thoughts and experiences of thousands of people and networks from around the world who are connected to the Conflict Transformation Program at Eastern Mennonite University. It gathers wisdom from progressives and conservatives, from Northerners and Southerners in the global community, from actions of the past and voices of the future in an attempt to fit these diverse paths into a coherent peacebuilding map.

I hope that this book can serve as a primer for students and others who are interested in learning about the field of peacebuilding. It is also written for practitioners and academics who may know about one part of the peacebuilding puzzle but would benefit from learning more about other approaches and how these fit together.

In short, this *Little Book* attempts to provide a more unified and strategic vision of peacebuilding. It seeks to show how the various approaches to peacebuilding connect and together contribute to addressing violence while bringing about long-term structural change.

2. Defining Strategic Peacebuilding

The field of peacebuilding, like any field, has an audience of cheerleaders, critics, and confused onlookers. People use the term "peacebuilding" in widely differing ways. Some use it to describe activities following a war. Others use it to define a new way of approaching development with an emphasis on peace. Still others see peacebuilding as mainly a relational and psychological process or use it interchangeably with the idea of conflict transformation. This chapter explores the myths and meanings of peacebuilding.

The field of peacebuilding developed in response to the world's most severe cases of violence: widespread and growing poverty; increased crime, racism, and oppression; violence against women; and wars like the ones in Liberia or Colombia, where ethnic, ideological, and class divisions are fueled by a thriving global arms trade. Any answer to the question "What is being done about these problems?" is potentially part of peacebuilding.

Defining Strategic Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding seeks to prevent, reduce, transform, and help people recover from violence in all forms, even structural violence that has not yet led to massive civil unrest. At the same time, it empowers people to foster relationships at all levels that sustain them and their environment.

Peacebuilding supports the development of relationships at all levels of society: between individuals and within families; communities; organizations; businesses; governments; and cultural, religious, economic, and political institutions and movements. Relationships are a form of power or *social capital*. When people connect and form relationships, they are more likely to cooperate together to constructively address conflict.

Peace does not just happen. It is built when people take great care in their decision-making to plan for the long term, anticipating potential problems, engaging in ongoing analysis of the conflict and local context, and coordinating different actors and activities in all stages of conflict and at all levels of society. Strategic peacebuilding recognizes the complexity of the tasks required to build peace. Peacebuilding is strategic when resources, actors, and approaches are coordinated to accomplish multiple goals and address multiple issues for the long term.

Peacebuilding is *not* . . .

- **Peacebuilding is not soft or idealistic.**

For many people, the idea of peace is a farfetched dream in a world full of violence. While strategic peacebuilding works toward a long-term vision of a just peace, it is also based on a realistic appraisal of the complex challenges in the immediate context. Peacebuilders face the challenge to be politically stra-

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tegic in the present while at the same time basing their work in a set of values and principles that meet long-term goals.

- **Peacebuilding is not the same as conflict transformation.**

Conflict mitigation, management, resolution, and transformation use similar sets of skills and processes designed to build relationships and address the roots of conflict through dialogue, mediation, and negotiation. But the field of peacebuilding includes a far wider variety of processes.

- **Peacebuilding is not only for post-war societies.**

Peacebuilding needs to take place in all societies as a way to prevent violence and satisfy human needs. Preventive peacebuilding, also known as *conflict prevention*, aims to create societies that can address conflict without violence.

- **Peacebuilding is not based primarily on Western ideas.**

The values, skills, analytical tools, and processes of peacebuilding are truly global. Every culture has something to teach as well as learn about peacebuilding. Many peacebuilding processes such as restorative justice, mediation, and nonviolent action were adapted to the West from elsewhere.

- **Peacebuilding does not avoid conflict or ignore structural forms of violence and injustice.**

Some criticize the field of peacebuilding for "ambulance driving," or responding to crises rather than work-

ing to prevent violence. In the strategic peacebuilding framework presented in this book, the important roles of preventing violence and creating just social structures go hand-in-hand.

Strategic Peacebuilding is a Connecting Space

The diagram on page 12 illustrates some of the many approaches to peacebuilding. Peacebuilding requires a combination of approaches to peace through a connecting space or nexus for collaboration.

This diagram illustrates approaches to peace rather than actors or issues. Some actors may use several approaches, such as education, economic development, and conflict transformation processes to address many different issues related to conflict, such as HIV/AIDS or environmental pollution. This diagram gives a sampling of some of the approaches addressed in this book.

Each approach makes a unique contribution and complements other approaches. Part of the challenge of peacebuilding is holding together the vision for how these different approaches contribute to peace. Peacebuilding actors may not know about how other approaches could contribute to their own work, or how they can contribute to the work of others.

The concept of "creating space" for peacebuilding is a key strategic principle. Often, there is no physical space where people working toward peace can coordinate their work and share their successes and challenges. The visual diagram of a nexus creates a meeting place or space for this important coordination and exchange between approaches.

The intersection of approaches reflects a set of *values, relational skills, analytical frameworks, and processes.*

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The next chapters discuss these values, skills, analytical frameworks, and processes in more detail.

Nexus of Peacebuilding Approaches

