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The Network for Peacebuilding Evaluation
Thursday Talks

"Measuring the Impact of Negotiation Training"

Leslie Wingender, Peacebuilding Advisor at Mercy Corps

Part 1: Overview

About the Speaker:

Leslie Wingender is the Peacebuilding Advisor on the Conflict Management Technical Support Unit at Mercy Corps, where she assists country teams on the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of various conflict management programs around the globe. Previously, Leslie was the Peacebuilding Evaluation Fellow at Mercy Corps, focusing on developing and testing M&E tools in collaboration with field staff engaged in peacebuilding work. Prior to joining Mercy Corps, Leslie led a participatory evaluation study in Peru for Partners for Democratic Change and developed conflict sensitive indicators and guidance for emergency humanitarian response for Catholic Relief Services. She worked as a paralegal for four years in San Francisco and holds a Masters of Arts in Conflict Resolution from Georgetown University and a Bachelor's degree in Peace and Conflict Studies from University of California-Berkeley.

Presenter Remarks:

Leslie's presentation was structured to include:

1. Brief background
2. Presentation of the revised tools
3. Preliminary results
4. Challenges/limitations in uptake, collecting data and analysis
5. Lessons learned so far

*1. **Background***

Mercy Corps created the M&E tools discussed in this presentation to measure the impact of a negotiation training program in Iraq. The program in Iraq had a network of over 200 Iraqi leaders, and the first use of the new tools made it clear that the tool needed to differentiate between questions and answers that were "nice to know" vs "need to know". In response to this need to differentiate, the tools were stripped down to key components and disseminated in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nigeria, and Pakistan. While not all countries were able to fully test these tools, the testing process and results were shared amongst the Negotiation/Mediation Working Group.

2. Presentation of the Revised Tools:

a) Participant Survey

The participant survey developed by Mercy Corps acted as a baseline and endline survey, as it was completed before training, 6 months after training, and 12 months after training. The survey measured self-reported change in expertise and confidence in negotiation skills among community leaders. The survey also asked what types of conflicts participants were resolving.

b) Dispute Database

The dispute database tool is meant to get at the complexity of disputes. The tool measures complexity by the number of parties and identities of disputants involved in a given dispute. The database also tracks the location and number of disputes resolved, and the sustainability of negotiated agreements based on the longevity of agreements and financial contributions to the agreements. **For a detailed look at the database, please see the accompanying Powerpoint.*

3. Preliminary Results:

In Nigeria, the results from the use of the tools showed a decrease in confidence after training. **Please see the accompanying Powerpoint to see the Pre-Post Participant Survey data.* The results of the tools were not final. The results represent an iterative and non-linear process, and the question of, "how representative is this data?" is still to be determined.

The results emphasize the importance of refining data collection to have narrow and concise categories.

4. Challenges and Limitations:

The main challenge has been defining the categories such that they are country appropriate and relevant within context, but are still concise and analyzable across programs. This connects to the bigger picture challenge of determining whether the tools are applicable for all negotiation programs and where they are most useful.

Another challenge to integrating and testing the new tools has been staff turnover; although teams have been open to trying new tools, when staff turnover the institutional knowledge is lost and momentum is derailed.

5. Lessons Learned:

A major lesson learned has been identifying the need for clear tool guidelines; guidelines are needed to demonstrate how to adapt tools to country contexts. The tools' development also needs to address gaps in the measurement of impact; there is a need to identify ways to best measure the impact of community level dispute resolution.

Part 2: Question & Answer

Melanie Kawano-Chiu (Moderator): Please elaborate on how categorizations can be broad yet specific? Does that relate to adapting the tools for different countries?

Leslie: The things that are specific are the types of disputes or types of conflict. When adapting to a specific country context, it is important to talk to the field team about what they see as the key issues. We try to put each conflict in one of the following categories: social, economic, natural resources, governance. Each field team needs to have a conversation about what each category means to them and how that is relevant their context.

The categories are broad because they are overarching issues, but they are specific in context.

Kerry Abbot (attendee): As a mediator who has lived in societies with strong traditional forms of conflict resolution and mediation, I wonder if/how Mercy Corps has incorporated those methods into their current work?

Leslie: The methods program participants use for dispute resolution is up to them, traditional methods included. With how we're capturing the data, there is an opportunity to capture traditional dispute resolution.

Renee Amirault (attendee): How does Mercy Corps balance quantitative and qualitative forms of measuring impact? What are ways they perform qualitative research?

Leslie: Our participant data is quantitative, but our participants are limited and data is not yet community wide. The process is beginning to think, what questions would we ask to be community wide? For qualitative data, we follow up on specific case studies through interviews. Our qualitative data also comes from conflict mapping based on participant knowledge of issues.

Jennifer Berg (attendee): When categorizing a dispute, how do you determine the category for a dispute that has many sources? For example: when looking at natural resource access in Israel/Palestine, a system of governance, based on ethnicity, creates economic inequality that results in unequal access to water.

Leslie: We hone in on addressing what is the issue you are trying to resolve right now? We identify the "trigger event". This question returns to our earlier point on the importance of working with the field team to learn how they see each category manifesting in their context, and talking with participants about how they see the categories in their context.

Ruairi Nolan (attendee): Are there any examples of program changes that have been implemented in response to the results you've gotten using these tools?

Leslie: The tools are still being developed, so there aren't examples of program changes based solely on these tools yet. Still, in Jordan where economic issues have been most often identified as source of dispute, we strategized with the Jordan country team about more advanced negotiation on natural resources.

Ruth Simpson (attendee): My question is in two parts: 1. What analysis tools/ software do you use for the data? 2. Do you get feedback from communities and others involved in disputes to contextual data you get from the mediators?

Leslie: In response to the first part of your question, 1. We have been using an analyst who is able to go in depth. We are working on what we will do for analysis when this project finishes and the analyst is no longer on call. For preliminary analysis we are developing an equation to give to country teams.

In response to the second part of your question, 2. Your suggestion to triangulate feedback from communities and engaging those outside of the immediate dispute would be most relevant during the follow up case studies mentioned earlier for the question about qualitative data.

Tim Smythe (attendee): You mentioned change in expertise as an area of measurement. How do you measure the increase in knowledge and skills for the key elements that training programs cover? Are there ways to measure beyond participant surveys?

Leslie: Measuring the absolute change in knowledge and skills would require a test, and we made the call to not add in another step for participants at this time. The self reported expertise increase was accompanied by a decrease in confidence; the more participants learned, the more they realized the complexity of what they were dealing with. “The more you learn, the less you know”

Tara Dewan-Czarnecki (Iraq Foundation): With my organization, our projects tend to work more directly with the victims of conflict-related violence. How can we adjust these tools to make them sensitive to victimized groups who are acting as mediators in their communities?

Leslie: The tools we’re discussing are very adaptable, and could be adjusted for following up with female mediators. An example of the tools’ flexibility was when tribal leaders in Iraq didn’t want to report on a specific question, those responses weren’t necessary for the tools to work. The tools allow flexibility according to participants’ needs and responsiveness.

Kerry Abbot (attendee): During the presentation you mentioned that the tools and program were not tested in all the countries where they were disseminated. In which countries did the test not happen? Why?

Leslie: Our programs are not identical across countries, sometimes we are training a cohort of mediators, sometimes we are working with community leaders on communication. The groups each country program is dealing with determine if the tools can be used. If we are doing follow up with a cohort, then we can get detailed and deep results. But when we are trying to keep up with larger groups of community leaders, it is more difficult to go deep, we cannot be as detailed. We are becoming more specific about how to use the tools, learning in which situations they will be most effective.

Bruce Hemmer (State Department): We have tried to measure community impact quantitatively and qualitatively by asking disputants about their satisfaction with the mediation process, how likely they would be to recommend it to others, how interested they are in being trained as mediators, etc. We also asked leaders of schools, courts, etc. similar questions and their interest level in hosting mediation programs. I wonder what you think of these questions as indicators of how well mediation is resonating and likely to spread.

Leslie: For us the question is, how far can we assume our impact is going with our partners and the community? How do we look at how one program can adapt to and affect everything in a community?

If you have any follow-up questions, please post them on the Thursday Talk Discussion Forum here.