Chapter 19

From Research to Action and the Spaces in -Between: Experiences from Peacebuilding Programs for Young People in Cambodia and Uganda

Nikola Balvin and Tania Miletic

19.1 Introduction

In international development, the ultimate goal of conducting research is to apply its findings to improve the lives of people in need. To rephrase this into more operational language, the purpose of research, evaluation, and other evidence activities is to improve the delivery of programs, development of policies, and design of advocacy strategies that prevent or reduce harmful practices, improve health and well-being, alleviate poverty, and otherwise assist and empower people living in difficult life situations. From a peacebuilding perspective, the purpose may be oriented toward addressing structural issues and improving relationships between people affected by violent conflict. Researchers who want their work to have social or political impact have given a great deal of thought to the “packaging” of results, using policy briefs, animation, infographics, podcasts, videos, and catchy headlines on social media. Another, more long-standing and participatory approach to increasing the impact of research has been accomplished by building relationships with key stakeholders. A recent review of interventions developed to enhance the use of evidence by decision-makers found that enhancing capability, motivation, and opportunity to use evidence was key to effective evidence use (Langer, Tripney & Gough, 2016). The importance of key stakeholder participation to increase ownership does not only apply to research but also to programming and decision-making, particularly when it comes to conducting research in the interest of young people (UNICEF, 2017) and especially in conflict-affected contexts, where the building of trust and resilience is vital to recovery and healing.

N. Balvin (✉)

UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti, Florence, Italy

e-mail: nbalvin@unicef.org

T. Miletic

Melbourne School of Government, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

e-mail: tmiletic@unimelb.edu.au

In this chapter, we present two case studies of research undertaken as part of peacebuilding programs for young people and reflect on the activities and approaches they applied to affect change. We chose these two case studies because they not only used both formal and informal education systems as platforms for change but also worked with different stakeholders, at different levels of influence and over different geopolitical contexts. The first case study is of an impact evaluation undertaken to assess a gender and peacebuilding pilot program set in the schools of Uganda's most impoverished and conflict-affected region, Karamoja. The aim of the program was to improve the status of girls in school and reduce conflict between children from different tribal backgrounds by training teachers to recognize and address gender inequality and conflict in the school setting. Despite being a small pilot, it was implemented in collaboration with influential stakeholders from the Uganda government, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as local grassroots organizations. The second case study focuses on a Cambodian nongovernment organization (NGO) leading a long-term, inter-ethnic peacebuilding initiative that engaged with other local and international actors and relevant ministries within the Government of Cambodia. The research project sought to identify the problems and causes of ethnic conflicts in Cambodia and to generate empirically grounded information to inform inter-ethnic peacebuilding initiatives among youth and civil society leaders. We focus on its peace education programs in secondary schools.

Over the past decade, many funders of research have placed an increased emphasis on research uptake and impact. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has been at the forefront of these efforts boldly stating that it "funds research in order to contribute to its overarching goal of poverty reduction" and also providing clear guidance how to communicate the findings of research and build the capacity of stakeholders to use research effectively (DFID, 2016, p. 1). Morton's (2015) Research Contribution Framework is a methodology gaining prominence for analyzing the influence of research. We borrow key concepts from Morton's (2015) framework and use them to analyze the processes and outcomes of our research to determine its observable effects on policy and practice.

Morton's (2015) methodology tracks the effects of research forward and backward: from research users to impact and from policy and practice settings backward to understand how it had been used. It collects data through key informant interviews, review of policies, media materials, relevant reports, etc. (Morton, 2012; Morton & Casey, 2017). As members of the research teams in the presented case studies, we cannot be fully objective, but our aim is not to conduct a thorough assessment of how well the research uptake activities contributed to an impact. Instead we will use the framework's concepts to *reflect* on what worked well and the biggest challenges encountered in making the research count. We end the chapter by discussing the importance and influence of the "spaces in between" research and practice, particularly in relation to the participation of key stakeholders in the research process and uptake and use of its findings.

19.2 Definition of Key Concepts

According to Morton's (2015) framework, three concepts are central to assessing research influence: (1) research uptake, (2) research use, and (3) research impact. Figure 19.1 outlines the theoretical underpinnings of the process from research uptake to impact. Much like a logic framework, impact is conceptualized as long-term behavioral change which follows a chain of events that had begun with activities engaging research users with research (Morton, 2015).

Research uptake refers to the extent that research users have engaged with the research and know that it exists. It includes common academic activities such as reading an article, report, or brief and attending a conference or a launch and also collaborative activities in which partners were involved in shaping the research in some way, through an advisory capacity, for example (Morton, 2015, p. 406). *Research use* represents a more involved engagement with the research process and findings, in which stakeholders use it to shape policy or practice, share it with others, adapt it to a particular setting, or act upon it in some other way. The last phase, *research impact*, is what most research in international development aims to achieve. It refers to changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior among the target population, as well as changes in policy and practice resulting from the research process

Fig. 19.1 Basic pathway to impact. (Source: Morton 2015. Reproduced with permission)

and findings (Morton, 2015, p. 406). Of course, in reality, the process from uptake to impact is not always linear, and the stages are not equal in length or effort. A policy can change long before or after a population's behavior or attitudes change, and a countless number of conference presentations may never lead to any behavioral change. The fruitfulness of these efforts is facilitated or inhibited by the socio-politico-economic environment in which they unfold. Evidence alone rarely changes the world, but when coupled with effective uptake approaches, its chances increase. Our case studies examine the uptake, use, and impact approaches of two education and peacebuilding research initiatives focused on young people. In addition, we reflect on the transitions, challenges, and opportunities encountered along the way.

19.3 Peacebuilding and Gender Equality Through Education: A Case Study from Uganda

The first case study is of an impact evaluation of a pilot program from the north-east region of Uganda, Karamoja, titled Gender Socialization in Schools and Communities. The program was part of UNICEF's wider gender, education, and peacebuilding efforts in Uganda, which were part of an even larger education and peacebuilding program called *Learning for Peace* (see Affolter and Azaryeva Valente, 2019, in this volume for details). The first author was part of the UNICEF team that commissioned the impact evaluation and coordinated the engagement of stakeholders from the government and community with the research team. Using Morton's (2015) framework, the case study reflects on how the inputs, outputs, and engagements of different stakeholders during the evaluation process contributed to the findings being noticed, understood, and acted upon.

19.3.1 The Conflict Context

Overrepresented in the country's lowest development indicators, Karamoja is one of the most disadvantaged and conflict-ridden regions of Uganda. Seventy-five percent of households in Karamoja live below the official poverty line, and child mortality is the highest in Uganda (MGLSD and UNICEF, 2015). The region has the highest proportion of girls not in school (MGLSD & UNICEF, 2015), while violence against women and girls is the highest in northern Uganda, with the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting widespread in several districts (ACCS, 2013; Datzberger et al., 2015). The education system is often considered a beacon of hope for improving opportunities for children, but in Karamoja, this comes with additional challenges. The region's limited infrastructure makes it difficult to build and maintain schools, and teachers are difficult to recruit, resulting in high pupil-to-teacher ratios.

With only one in four teachers a woman (MGLSD & UNICEF, 2015), portraying positive gender role models through the curriculum is particularly challenging. A girl's education is sometimes out of line with traditional community values, in which girls are often valued for their bride price and those with formal education are thought to attract a lower price than those who are less educated or illiterate (El-Bushra & Rees-Smith, 2016).

Gender inequality, particularly in the form of negative masculine norms and stereotypes, also has a negative impact on men and boys. Boys and younger men are subjected to initiation rituals directed by community elders (El-Bushra & Rees Smith, 2016). Inter-clan and inter-tribal violence is ongoing (ACCS, 2013). Cattle raids are often carried out to pay for a bride, a custom consistent with viewing girls as commodities. In this context, changing gender norms to achieve equality and social cohesion is difficult but nevertheless vital to addressing the drivers of conflict and working toward sustainable peace.

19.3.2 Program Overview

The main activities of the Gender Socialization in Schools and Communities pilot program took place from March to November 2015, with the aim to develop a practical, school-based intervention that demonstrated the peacebuilding potential of positive masculinity and femininity models in a conflict-affected region. UNICEF worked closely with the Ugandan Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sport (MoESTS) and two local implementing partners – the Development Research and Training (DRT) and Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) – to develop gender- and conflict-sensitive teacher training materials, including a teacher handbook with examples of lesson plans and teaching methods that addressed conflict and gender inequality. Such gender- and conflict-sensitive plans raised teachers' awareness of the number of boys and girls from different ethnic backgrounds in their classes and aimed for all students to be given equal opportunity to participate in class activities. Following the development of these materials, a "train-the-trainer" model was rolled out, in which core coordinating tutors as well as representatives from MoESTS and district inspectors were trained to become trainers who would later deliver the training to Karamojong teachers. The teacher examined gender equality and conflict through conceptual as well as practical approaches, encouraging the teachers to reflect on the issues in their lives and classrooms, including identifying gender stereotypic depictions in teaching. The core coordinating tutors continued to act as mentors to the teachers throughout the pilot, ultimately aiming for the teachers to become "agents of peace" whose new egalitarian attitudes and practices trickle down to the students.

19.3.3 The Impact Evaluation

The pilot program was evaluated by an independent research team from the American Institutes for Research (AIR), with funding and direct management from UNICEF and support from MoESTS. The impact evaluation employed a mixed-methods experimental design, with quantitative data collected at the start and end of the program and qualitative data collected in focus groups, interviews, and case studies at the end (Chinen et al., 2016). Analysis of quantitative data showed that the program succeeded in improving teachers' knowledge and changing attitudes about gender equality and conflict, but any changes in teacher practices were not statistically significant (Chinen et al., 2016). The qualitative findings mostly supported the quantitative trends, reporting teachers' correct use of relevant terms (e.g., "sex" and "gender"), knowledge of appropriate strategies for conflict resolution, ability to recognize gender-equitable practices to increase class performance and harmony, and beliefs that boys and girls should have equal responsibilities and opportunities to participate in the same activities. Some changes in teacher practices were also observed, including gender-equitable seating arrangements, dividing resources equally between boys and girls, and dividing classroom responsibilities between the two genders. Nevertheless, traditional concepts of gender roles prevailed, and more complex practices such as making lessons gender responsive and connecting gender equitable practices to peacebuilding were not observed.

The evaluation's recommendations were to (i) provide more concrete examples of the practices the program is trying to instill in materials and training; (ii) have greater involvement from the community and school governance bodies to increase their buy-in to the messages communicated by the program; (iii) ensure that teachers receive ongoing mentoring, reinforcement, and coaching; (iv) improve the training logistics, including offering teachers incentives to attend; and (v) conduct research on the impacts of the program over the long term (Chinen et al., 2016).

19.3.4 Research Uptake

The impact evaluation findings suggested that the Gender Socialization in Schools and Communities pilot yielded relatively positive outcomes in the short term, particularly given the stringent gender norms of the context. However, this chapter is not about the success of the program, but rather about how the research undertaken to evaluate it contributed (or not) to further changes following its conclusion.

Using Morton's (2015) Research Contribution Framework, Table 19.1 presents the overall "outcomes chain" or "pathway to impact," with the UNICEF-AIR impact evaluation theorized as the input that facilitated the activities and outcomes in the chain. It is important to note at the outset that the "research activity," like the rest of the pilot program, adopted a collaborative approach and engaged key stakeholders in its design and findings. The MoESTS was involved in decision-making around

Table 19.1 Research contribution analysis for the Evaluation of the Gender Socialization in Schools and Communities pilot in Karamoja, Uganda

Research impact	Final outcomes and contribution	Several impact evaluation recommendations were acted upon – including having greater involvement from the community to communicate program messages and ensuring that teachers receive ongoing mentoring – potentially contributing to the long-term goal of the evaluation/research initiative
	Changes in behavior/practices	New programs sponsored by Irish Aid were initiated to strengthen capacity in gender and peacebuilding for community members Ongoing mentoring of teachers Inclusion of some of the training materials in the national teacher curriculum
Research use	Changes in knowledge/skills	Gender unit of MoESTS strengthened and pushing scale-up of program
	Reactions of research users and changes in awareness	Increased awareness among partners and key stakeholders (e.g., MoESTS, DRT, teachers, core coordinating tutors) of gender equality as a result of the research (and program) process MoESTS keen to include teacher training in the national curriculum of teachers following presentation of findings
Research uptake	Engagement/involvement	Launch event to disseminate research findings to government ministers, core coordinating tutors, NGOs, UN agencies, and other key stakeholders in Kampala, April 2016 Meetings between research team, UNICEF, UNESCO, and government ministers to discuss use of evidence in teacher training and policy Dissemination of findings to teachers and communities in Karamoja Presentation of research to key stakeholders at the 2016 Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) Learning for Peace event with donors Pan-African peacebuilding event
	Outputs/activities	Publications including reports on Learning for Peace and AIR websites, in <i>Journal on Education in Emergencies</i> Presentation at 4+ international conferences Engagement on topic via social media Video documenting the program
	Inputs	UNICEF-AIR impact evaluation of the Gender Socialization in Schools and Communities pilot in Karamoja, Uganda. The evaluation adapted a collaborative approach and engaged key stakeholders in its design and findings

the design and logistics of the research and acted in an advisory capacity throughout the research process. Similarly, members of the local partner organizations, DRT and Fawe, were on the research advisory committee and reviewed the research plan, baseline, midline, and final reports as they were developed. This level of engagement ensured not only that key stakeholders were aware of the research process but that they had the opportunity to have their questions answered in the design and could facilitate the understanding of findings among their peers.

To examine research uptake, Morton's (2015) framework looks at the contributions of outputs, activities, and stakeholder engagement to the overall goal of the project. Many of the activities to engage research users with the research were quite traditional or academic, including publications and conference presentations. Using the *Learning for Peace* social media platform, the findings also reached a large number of followers via Twitter and Facebook and on YouTube. Approaches to targeting key research users were less academic and drew on UNICEF's wide networks and the local partners' knowledge of the political landscape to gain traction. The results were presented at several high-profile meetings with donors, UN agencies, academics, and advocates to raise the profile of the research. MoESTS representatives contributed to the presentations at all events, strengthening their involvement with the research outside of Uganda. Other stakeholder engagements were more local and in-depth, discussing the evaluation findings in more detail, and exploring the implementation of recommendations and next steps together. The role of UNICEF as the broker between the government and the research team was particularly helpful in ensuring the independence of each party's mandate.

19.3.5 Research Use

It is difficult to untangle the impacts of the research from the impacts of the actual pilot program on the gender- and peacebuilding-related knowledge and attitudes of MoESTS staff and other stakeholders. The engagement of the MoESTS core team in the design of the teacher training materials was a powerful tool for raising awareness and improving knowledge around important gender concepts and approaches. The research outputs, including the report, presentations, and discussions, communicated these concepts to a wider audience of stakeholders and equipped core staff from the Ministry with evidence to argue that school-based approaches to tackling gender inequality and conflict can be effective. Several core coordinating tutors were invited to present at the research dissemination workshops, increasing their ownership of the program and knowledge of the findings. Finally, shortly after the launch of the research report in Kampala, the research team and representatives from UNICEF met with MoESTS decision-makers to discuss the uptake of the findings, including the possibility of including some of the training materials in the national teacher curriculum. The evaluation process and the professional and independent manner in which the findings were presented seemed an important contributor to motivating the Ministry to act on the results and recommendations.

19.3.6 Research Impact

Without the proper research/evaluation process that normally underpins a research contribution analysis and includes interviewing key stakeholders and conducting questionnaires with research partners (see Morton & Casey, 2017), it is difficult to

make claims about how many of the “offshoot” initiatives were influenced by the evaluation itself. However, the evaluation recommended that the community and school governance bodies be included in future initiatives, and this approach was adopted in new programs that stemmed from the pilot. Following the evaluation, new capacity-building initiatives, sponsored by Irish Aid, were established in Karamoja to work with community members on issues of gender equality and conflict. The teacher mentoring model established during the pilot program and recommended to continue by the evaluation findings is also still in place, although it is not clear how well it is functioning without strong funding. Finally, some of the materials from the teacher training have been included in the national teacher curriculum, potentially influencing the knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of teachers around the country.

The long-term goal of the evaluation was to support equitable gender relations and social cohesion in Karamojong schools by examining what worked and what needed improvement in the pilot program. Several of the evaluation’s recommendations, including to involve the community and continue mentoring, have been adopted. Others, such as adjusting the logistics of the training program, became somewhat obsolete once the decision was made not to scale the program up from its pilot format. The long-term goal of improving gender equality and peaceful relations for children in Karamoja will require ongoing, concerted efforts, of which this initiative is just one important component.

Despite being a relatively small and short-term activity, the evaluation managed to influence stakeholders in the government, UNICEF, and community, as well as external donors. Much of this influence can be attributed to the consistent and non-tokenistic involvement of key stakeholders in the design of the program and its evaluation.

19.4 Inter-ethnic Peacebuilding Initiative: A Case Study from Cambodia

The second case study reflects on a locally led peacebuilding effort involving research that informed an inter-ethnic peacebuilding program that also included a peace education component. In contrast to the former case study, the research and peacebuilding program was led by a small, local NGO called the Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT), which was created in 1997 by a core group of local peacebuilders to identify contemporary Cambodian conflict issues and develop mechanisms to establish sustainable, positive peace. The second author came to learn of ACT’s work in 2003 and joined between 2004 and 2005 and recommenced from 2006 to 2007 as Technical Advisor on the inter-ethnic peacebuilding program. She remained engaged with the organization’s board and leadership for several years afterward. The research project intended to better understand the sources of conflict between Cambodia’s different ethnic groups and how this evidence base could help identify actions to reduce the identified conflict issues.

These reflections on the research and related programs are not complete, as the author recognizes there are gaps in knowledge about the various aspects of the programs development, its stakeholders, and funders over this period. Drawing on Morton's 2015 framework, this case study reflects on the research uptake, use, and impact activities that took place, highlights the importance of the engagement of key stakeholders across the research to action process, and details how these activities were used to enhance knowledge. The use of the research to influence and inform peacebuilding strategies and practice is articulated.

19.4.1 The Conflict Context

While Cambodia is a country most known for the period of the Khmer Rouge genocide, it has experienced long periods of civil conflict, intervention, and occupation. Historical conflicts and land losses from the Khmer Empire continue to influence contemporary Cambodian self-conceptualization and relationships, especially between the ethnic Khmer majority and the ethnic Vietnamese and Thai communities.

The 1991 Paris Peace Accords (PPA), negotiated by Cambodia's internal factions along with Vietnam, Thailand, China, the Soviet Union, and the USA, represented a turning point for Cambodia's transition from decades of violent conflict. The United Nations Transitional Authority (1991–1993) helped see the 1993 elections, which enabled the end of the civil and political conflict in 1998 and in turn Cambodia's post-war shift in the direction of peace (Miletic, 2016; Soth Plai & Miletic, 2009).

Under Hun Sen's continuing rule, many Cambodians have limited hope that the government will undertake necessary reforms, reduce inequalities, and entrench the rule of law. Amidst the range of international actors and international nongovernment agencies assisting Cambodia's development, its Cambodian actors have led peacebuilding efforts to help envision a peaceful future, through building relationships and adopting peace as an alternative to violence. As Cambodia looks forward, many are focused on youth (two-thirds of its population under 30 years of age) or "bamboo shoots" as the young are often called, to achieve the kind of positive peace that many Cambodians aspire to (Miletic, 2016; Soth Plai & Miletic, 2009).

19.4.2 Program Overview and the Research Activity

This case study shows how research informed and sustained an ongoing program of work affecting Cambodian society (Meas & Miletic, 2007). Given the interwoven historical, political, cultural, and economic context, the causes of prejudice, resentment, and violence in Cambodia are complex. ACT believed that these issues need to be explored and discussed with sensitivity to enable positive and useful developments for knowledge and practice. The initiative was self-described as peace

research – motivated to learn about the problems with a view to promote peace, not to exacerbate the problem (Soth Plai & Miletic, 2006).

The underlying rationale of the project was that there is value in understanding the issues, concerns, and aspirations of Cambodians in relation to identity, society, and state and that these are integral to developing Cambodian society. Its main components were to identify the problems and causes of ethnic conflicts in Cambodia through research, to generate empirically grounded information, and to examine the experiences of other countries in relation to diversity and multiculturalism to inform programs, policies, and curricula. Simultaneously, the project developed the capacity of peace practitioners engaged in conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding activities and facilitated youth and civil society actors to become advocates employing informed approaches to inter-ethnic peacebuilding in their own work.

The program was a locally driven peacebuilding approach, in which the people involved in, and most affected by, violent conflict work together to create and enact their own approaches to prevent, reduce, and/or transform the conflict with support from actors outside the conflict context (Purdue Peace Project, 2015). As a small, local NGO, ACT received funding by international and donor organizations who were sympathetic to and supportive of the research and the ways that research capacity and program development were occurring alongside this phase of the project.

The research team primarily involved the lead and a research assistant, along with the technical advisor. Data collection was undertaken in collaboration with partner organizations, trained in survey methods by the core research team. Partners from across the country trained by ACT project staff learned from this engagement, which provided a thorough understanding of the research and the issues it was examining. The surveys were conducted with 1100 participants across ethnic groups in 16 provinces over 47 districts, 133 communes, and 214 villages. Participants were asked about their experiences and views on ethnic tensions and relations. The responsibility for data management, transcription, and entry was the primary focus of the ACT research team.

19.4.3 Research Uptake

From the beginning, the research team engaged and collaborated with key peacebuilding actors and donors and later with government officials. The research design was developed by the research team, with input from a working group of 11 stakeholders, including donors, researchers, youth organizations, and individuals. Those selected to the Working Group on Ethnic Conflict Transformation (WG-ECT) had an interest in the topic of inter-ethnic relations and nationalism, were committed to regular meetings, and had expertise to support the project. They met monthly, provided support to deal with a range of research design considerations, and engaged to develop the research and to build a shared understanding of its purpose. The research (and subsequent initiatives) were at times seen as threatening where issues

such as fear of land loss, discrimination, and concerns regarding immigration were prevalent in communities. The organization had to collaborate with staff from MoI and at the local and provincial levels to enable authorization and access for surveys to be conducted across the country. ACT staff also saw this as an opportunity to further develop understanding of the aims and purpose of the research.

Many of the traditional “output” activities to engage research users with the research such as publishing reports online, writing journal articles, and presenting at conferences were intentionally avoided. The findings relating to inter-ethnic relations and nationalism in Cambodia raised concern within the organization and stakeholders that they could be misused, and the question of their communication required sensitivity. It was decided to limit the publications to an English report intended for use by the peacebuilding community in Cambodia and to package the knowledge generated from the research into workshop and training materials to more actively engage with the findings and its users. In this way the research uptake activities begin to reflect Morton’s description of research use.

Research workshops and trainings were used to disseminate key findings and promote greater understanding to targeted peacebuilding organizations and were used by ACT and the WG-ECT to develop a range of activities and initiatives that became an ongoing central program of ACT’s work. Despite the report being limited in its distribution, and with targeted promotion of it within the peacebuilding community, it still had some (surprising) reach. For example, it stimulated discussions and advocacy in relation to citizenship issues within Cambodia. Another example was when the US Obama Government came into power, the author and her colleagues were asked to brief the team from the US State Department with a conflict analysis during their visit to Southeast Asia. We walked into the Embassy to find the team sitting with our 2007 research report marked full of tabs.

Table 19.2 outlines a summary of the research uptake, use, and impact following for the second case study, following the format in Table 19.1 above.

19.4.4 Research Use

As raised in relation to the first case study, it can be difficult to make claims about how many of the initiatives that followed were influenced by the research activity, especially in the case of partner organizations’ activities. The research findings led ACT to consider youth and the education system as important foci for action and the peacebuilding community as requiring knowledge and skills to lead work on these issues. The IEPB project developed its program with the view that the engagement and involvement of young Cambodians was an especially important constituency for peace and the creation of a peaceful multi-ethnic society. Following the published report in 2007, and through partners who had engaged in the research workshops, ACT’s IEPB launched a peace camp bringing youth from diverse ethnic groups together for a week to discover both their own prejudices, shared interests, and concerns. The research findings were also used to shape the topics discussed, though the focus on the camp was to hold an intentional space for young people to

Table 19.2 Research contribution analysis for the evaluation of the inter-ethnic peacebuilding program in Cambodia

Research impact	Final outcomes and contribution	The research directed initiatives that could contribute to more positive multi-ethnic relations, including informing ACT's IEPB Program, development of workshops and training, and motivating partner initiatives
	Changes in behavior/practices	The research provided information to better understand ethnic relations and nationalism in the Cambodian context Development of a peace education initiative in secondary schools, with support from government actors Peacebuilding actors involved in the IEPB project integrated and developed programs related to the research The education system was adapted to include peace education curriculum, and staff were trained to deliver it, with government support
Research use	Changes in knowledge/skills	Ability to engage more openly on the topic of ethnic relations and nationalism among target groups increased At ACT, the IEPB project developed from research to a focus on the promotion of a positive, inclusive vision of Cambodian national and ethnic relations through training, education programs, research, and cultural exchange The MoEYS and other related government stakeholders supported and collaborated on the integration of peace education materials and training for secondary schools Other peacebuilding and youth organizations have integrated a focus on the promotion of inter-ethnic peacebuilding into their programs Ongoing monitoring and evaluation indicated an increase in knowledge and skills to support inter-ethnic relations
	Reactions of research users and changes in awareness	Participants in IEPB-led initiatives formed a coalition that became the Council for Inter-Ethnic Peace Government stakeholders' engagement and support for initiatives became more positive over time
Research uptake	Engagement/involvement	Research users participated in ongoing workshops and training and accessed resources Collaboration between ACT and key peacebuilding actors, donors, and later government actors to better understand inter-ethnic relations and nationalism in Cambodia – primarily achieved through IEPB participatory workshops and training ACT's IEPB-developed initiatives bringing youth from diverse ethnic groups together and joined with other NGO events Engagement of government staff supported the development and implementation of Peace Education Curriculum and Teacher Trainings Materials Behavior and practices by teachers and students are monitored through reporting and roleplaying
	Outputs/activities	Publication in English targeted peacebuilding organizations Findings disseminated through workshops and seminars to raise awareness among target actors and engage with government ministries
	Inputs	Key partners from civil society, peacebuilding organizations, donors, and government participated in a Working Group for Inter-Ethnic Peace during the research design, development, and implementation phases. Training workshops held in the first 2 years to meet capacity needs (knowledge and skills and research training) extending to partners across Cambodia Research engaged local, provincial, and national government actors to support the research implementation and at later stages the implementation of initiatives

build connections and understanding. ACT partnered with another 12 NGOs (who had engaged with the research) to organize a camp that moved and was hosted across several communities. This coalition of youth-oriented NGO leaders who had participated in and organized the camps formed another coalition that became known as the Council for Inter-Ethnic Peace. The Council became a network mechanism, which for several years continued to run workshops and forums and develop activities that related to the promotion of positive multi-ethnic social relations across Cambodia.

ACT believed that building the capacity of key people, namely, “NGO community leaders, youth leaders, teachers, and MoEYS staff” was the best way to reach young people and students in the promotion of a positive, inclusive vision of Cambodian society. ACT used CDA Collaborative Learning Project’s (CDA, [n.d.](#)) Reflecting on Peace Practice Matrix and methodologies to help strengthen their peacebuilding effectiveness, influencing change through their efforts by targeting “key people” to reach “more people” (CDA, [n.d.](#)) and link this with the school system and education policies at the sociopolitical level. To reach students, the project team began developing an informal peace education curriculum that specifically promotes a peaceful multi-ethnic society (ACT, [n.d.](#)). The curriculum provides teachers and students with a factual basis for forming their views, countering here-say and myth which dominates in the absence of content in the formal education system.

The peace education curriculum also demonstrated how a locally led initiative by a relatively small organization, through ongoing engagement and collaboration with key stakeholders, ultimately led to changes in the education system’s policies and practices. In 2008 ACT held national workshops to bring together project staff, educators from the public education system, and trainers from peacebuilding organizations to discuss integrating research findings and peace education relating to positive inter-ethnic relations into the education system. The core components of the peace education curriculum covered 14 topics under “Conflict causes” and “Peacebuilding” that could be adapted to local contexts and needs. That year saw the commencement of teacher training delivered by ACT in cooperation with staff from the MoEYS. This included skills in facilitation and addressing challenges that may arise, such as managing rumors. Funding was sought to provide ten schools with financial and technical support to develop and deliver the curriculum. ACT conducted surveys with students, parents, local authorities, and teachers to explore changes in how communal conflict issues were perceived in the three districts where the curriculum was delivered (ACT, [n.d.](#)). ACT also engaged in regular monitoring and evaluation of the peace education project and related external processes.

19.4.5 Research Impact

The research met its internal aim to provide information to understand ethnic conflicts and nationalism in Cambodia and to identify peacebuilding initiatives that could contribute to more positive multi-ethnic relations. The research informed

ACT's IEPB Program, was used in capacity-building and awareness-raising workshops, and motivated other partner initiatives that related to inter-ethnic relations. The ability to discuss and engage constructively on the once-sensitive topic of conflicts relating to ethnicity and nationalism have transformed from latent to more open among its target groups, though the ability to "take account" for the initiatives of others is not possible. The peacebuilding actors involved in the IEPB project have integrated and developed programs that relate to the research. A focus of this chapter was how the education system was adapted to include peace education curriculum, and the training of staff to deliver it, with support from the government.

A memorandum of understanding with the Government of Cambodia was signed to have the program introduced across secondary schools in Cambodia, along with the secondment of Ministry of Education staff to help implement the curriculum development. By 2010, ACT had developed and published a Peace Education Curriculum Teacher Training Manual and Student Book. Workshops were held with MoEYS and other related ministries. Understanding the particular issues facing the diverse provinces in Cambodia also led to ACT working with provincial and commune leaders to support their capacity to manage conflicts and tensions peacefully. ACT's IEPB project is no longer resourced as a key program area. Despite the commitment of key stakeholders over the years, including the Ministry of Education and teachers engaged in the teaching of the peace education curriculum, the project is not continuing in the long term for a range of reasons, including project evolution and lack of ongoing funding.

The focus of the research process on strengthening capacity to undertake research, which was one of the perceived challenges to locally led peacebuilding initiatives, was also approached. External or technical advisors, like the author, were often brought into projects when it was perceived that technical capacity to develop and design research was needed. Beginning in 2005, the former Director of ACT, with the author, developed and delivered a course on introducing peace research methods to people working in the field who may not have a background in social sciences research (Soth Plai & Miletic, 2006). The book and practical week-long course commenced in 2006 in Cambodia and extended to run in Myanmar, Orissa (India), Kenya, and elsewhere (CPCS, n.d.). The longer-term focus on capacity building of staff also enabled the former Research Assistant at ACT to later become the IEPB Project Manager and ultimately a Co-Director of the organization.

The learnings from comparing these two research/evaluation activities of peacebuilding programs for young people have emphasized the importance of participatory approaches to increasing impact through the engagement of key stakeholders and relationship building. Morton's (2015) Research Contribution Framework allowed an examination of the research processes, in particular how the research uptake activities could be considered to have contributed to use and an impact. Of interest in the presented case studies is the emergence of a range of factors for both researching and implementing the programs that can be considered as the "spaces in between."

19.5 Discussion: The Spaces in -Between

The research to action process is not straightforward, hence our use of the term “The Spaces in -Between.” In both cases the morphing of research into actions and the creation of initiatives were at times based on emergent findings as well as the need to adapt and respond to needs that arose from the research process itself. As a result, the research process became a form of “action,” especially in terms of responding to capacity building that underpins these efforts.

In both cases the research process itself presented opportunities to recognize the importance of early stakeholder engagement in the uptake of research and in laying dynamic foundations for increasing participation in the use of the research. It was also important to see how the research process provided different stakeholders with the ability to use the research to influence changes at different levels of society. In the first case, the research began with high-level support by relatively powerful stakeholders and then deepened its participation with local stakeholders and research users. The second case in contrast began with local engagement, which deepened and diversified, while increasingly developing meaningful and supportive engagement with government over time. The engagement of key stakeholders at different points in the process was integral to increasing knowledge and ownership of the findings in both cases.

In the Ugandan case, the research/evaluation process was influential in facilitating change because key stakeholders from the government and community were included in shaping its objectives and research questions, facilitated data collection, and reviewed the draft reports to assist with the interpretation of findings. Their participation in shaping the program and its evaluation meant that they were familiar with the objectives and the results and could respond to them, explain them to others, and convince their peers of their significance. In the end, the pilot version of the program was not scaled up; rather some of the materials were used in the national teacher curriculum and in a community program. While this is a positive result, its caveat is that research results obtained in one setting may not translate to another.

In the Cambodian case, the research was led by ACT but was expanded through the consistent engagement of the working group and partner organizations, whose participatory engagement in the research design often ran parallel with engagement in capacity-building and awareness-raising activities. The ability to undertake the research, to extend the timeframe, and to flexibly adapt the research was enabled through the participation of key stakeholders (such as donors) throughout the process. The level of such participation was not without challenges, including managing its vast scope and decision-making along the way. The motivation to engage with the research was also evident in how a range of initiatives began during the early phases and led partner organizations to develop their own initiatives.

In both cases, developing and implementing the peace education curriculum went hand in hand with the need for ongoing teacher capacity building. The subjects of gender socialization and inter-ethnic peacebuilding were topics that the teachers needed to understand deeply and have the capacity to deliver to the students. Teachers were generally overworked and under-trained but were committed and engaged.

The importance of strategic partnerships was evident. The engagement of key stakeholders was important in the design of both programs and simultaneously enhanced decision-makers' understandings of the research, along with opportunities and motivation to use evidence. The motivation to use research was enhanced by involving key stakeholders early on in the conceptualization of the projects and throughout its implementation. A focus on relationship building with strategic partners was integral in the Cambodian context, where trust and cooperation were needed to conduct the research and support the implementation of subsequent initiatives. In the Ugandan case, it was the impact evaluation results and the impracticality of scaling up a pilot program that led to a questioning of its sustainability. In the second case, it was the lack of ongoing funding and resources, not the potential scalability, that led to the discontinuation of the program.

Given the difference in the two cases, are there reflections we can make on whether the "locally led" element was more or less valuable in either of these two peacebuilding efforts? Both cases recognize that (re)building trust, engaging in inclusive processes, and strengthening social cohesion are central to peacebuilding efforts. These elements to peacebuilding are most powerful when they are designed and driven at the local level with the commitment of those local to the context which the program seeks to influence. While local peacebuilding often costs less than peacebuilding designed from afar, the second case showed that high engagement of key local actors without adequate funding can be undermined. As CDA research (CDA, [n.d.](#)) suggests, local peacebuilding effectiveness often necessitates that certain conditions exist such as linkages between what is focused on at the local-level and national-level dynamics; local- and national-level peace work; and those approaches that target "more people" and those that target "key people." Both cases, in describing their peacebuilding education programs, try to reflect on these conditions toward peacebuilding effectiveness.

In both cases, the focus on research user engagement with key stakeholders required longer timeframes. Co-development requires time to build understanding and can influence the design and implementation of the research. The ability to avert risk and redirect efforts is an important aspect of engagement, and the timeline in both cases needed adjustment to work with perceived risks – to the feasibility or conduct of the research – or to conditions in the sociopolitical environment. Moreover, if research to action is desired for longer-term change, then longer-term commitment should be a consideration from the outset.

19.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided a reflective comparison of two programs which used education as a platform for peacebuilding. One was a UN pilot, carried out in collaboration with the government as part of an internationalized program of work. The other was a long-term, locally led peacebuilding initiative. Both allowed for the spaces in between research and practice to provide learning and adaptation; and often these led to a context-appropriate way of responding to the lessons learned from the programs.

The two case studies reflect the aspirations of the international peace and development field to conduct research to apply its findings to improve the lives of people in need. We used Morton's (2015) Research Contribution Framework to structure our reflections on how the research and practice involved in the two contexts attempted to impact on the lives of young people through peace education. Although originally developed as a rigorous methodology for assessing the impact of research, we found the framework useful as a conceptual tool for retrospective reflection on how certain outcomes and impacts were achieved as part of the research process. While a more rigorous assessment of research impact is preferable to ensure less biased conclusions, it is often not possible due to lack of time, funding, and skill to carry it out. In such instances, the reflexive approach that we adopted in this chapter may be useful for drawing out lessons and opportunities for improvement. The framework could also be adapted at the outset of research, as a planning tool for research uptake activities.

The case studies also reflect the broader challenges to contributing to positive, sustained change in societies where there is or has been violent conflict. Contemporary peacebuilding theory and practice recognizes the need to work at multiple levels of society (Ramsbotham et al., 2016) and the importance of local-level peacebuilding within such efforts (Ernstorfer, Chigas & Vaughan-Lee, 2015; Lederach, 1997). Peacebuilding efforts, especially those seen as “local”- or “grassroots”-level interventions (often referred to as *Peace Writ Small*), raise questions of how and when they contribute or add up to broader society-level peace or “Peace Writ Large” (CDA, n.d.) toward collective impacts in peacebuilding (Chigas & Woodrow, 2018). Similarly, the challenges of externally led peacebuilding efforts, where meaningful and sustainable local engagement is absent, raise concerns and undermine peacebuilding effectiveness in the longer term.

The similarities of both cases are reflected in their shared approaches which emphasize linking community change focused on young people with the socio-political systems and structures of their contexts. While we, nor the initiatives we reflect on, suggest that these discrete projects alone “add up” to the longer-term change sought, it is likely the research processes contributed to gradual changes in policy and practice in their respective contexts. Moreover, the contextually appropriate and participatory engagement of stakeholders was central to achieving this outcome.

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