

# How Theories of Change Can Improve Education Programming and Evaluation in Conflict-Affected Contexts

Christine Monaghan & Elisabeth King  
Oct 2017

**Published as: Monaghan, C. and E. King. “How Theories of Change Can Improve Education Programming and Evaluation in Conflict-Affected Contexts.” *Comparative Education Review* 2018, 62(3): 365-384.**

ToCs are under-utilized in programming and evaluation, and seldom analyzed with regards to the challenges and opportunities they present, especially in conflict-affected contexts. We reflect upon the use of ToCs in UNICEF’s Peacebuilding, Education, and Advocacy (PBEA) program, based upon four studies we carried out in Ethiopia and Dadaab refugee camp. We found, by asking program planners and beneficiaries about ToCs and seeking to map outcomes we would expect to see if ToCs were materializing, that ToCs provide important insights for programming and evaluation, even in fluid contexts. We argue that routinizing use of ToCs, particularly what we might call “living ToCs,” that can inform responsive programming, presents challenges but also offers an important step towards understanding how education can mitigate conflict and conduce peace.

## I. Introduction

Wars, disasters, and other emergencies severely disrupt education for nearly 75 million children in at least 35 countries throughout the world (Nicholai et al. 2016). Scholars and practitioners widely acknowledge that in situations of armed conflict, education can be both lifesaving and protective (Nicholai 2005; Triplehorn and Chen 2006; Aguilar and Retamal 2009). However, questions persist regarding how to ensure the provision of education programming and what type of education programming may best contribute to building peace.

International education and development practitioners increasingly use theories of change (ToCs) in developing and conflict-affected contexts to implement and evaluate education programming (Stein and Valters 2012). However, routinizing the successful use of ToCs in programming (design and implementation) and evaluation in conflict-affected contexts remains a work in progress. We examined more than 250 articles, including experimental, quasi-experimental, and observational research designs, and found that only *six* articles—far fewer

than one percent—mentioned ToCs at all.<sup>1</sup> None of the articles utilized ToCs as a lens to evaluate programming. Further, when major donor projects use ToCs, there is little comprehensive documentation, reflection, or analysis of opportunities and challenges related to their use (Stein and Valters 2012).

Education in conflict-affected contexts may provide a “hard case” (Lijphart, 1971) for the use of ToCs. Conflict-affected contexts may pose particular challenges, including the need for very quick implementation, rapidly changing conflict and operational dynamics, many actors with different and sometimes divergent interests, inconsistent funding, and safe, routine access to program beneficiaries (Puri et al. 2015). Furthermore, the meaningful use of ToCs for peacebuilding education interventions in conflict-affected contexts may be hindered by the still-predominant belief that education is simply a social good, with little consideration of the ways in which it may contribute to peace, and even lesser consideration of its possibility to contribute to conflict (King 2014).

Yet, improved knowledge leading to responsive programming is critical. In part, this is because the protracted nature of armed conflict means that, far from being “short-term,” education interventions in conflict-affected contexts often continue for many years (Talbot 2015). Moreover, improved knowledge of “what works” is important because the need for material and human resources in conflict-affected contexts often exceeds supply; we need to know how to best direct scarce resources. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the outcomes that programming seeks to achieve—economic opportunity and durable peace—are crucial (see USAID 2017).

---

<sup>1</sup> We conducted a systematic key word search of all 251 articles included in Burde et al.’s 2015 study of education in conflict-affected contexts for the terms “theory of change,” “process tracing,” “log frame,” “logframe,” and “log-frame.” Including additional terms such as “program theory” may have yielded additional mentions of ToCs. We are grateful to Dana Burde and her co-authors.

To explore if and how ToCs may be useful in difficult and shifting conditions, as well as their use in education programming and evaluation, we collectively review and analyze evaluations of four distinct education interventions in conflict-affected contexts, two in Ethiopia and two in Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp, that we carried out in 2015. We also asked program planners and beneficiaries about the ToCs to map the observable implications we would expect if the ToCs were materializing. All focused on programming implemented between 2012 and 2015 as part of UNICEF's Peacebuilding, Education, and Advocacy (PBEA) program, also known as "Learning for Peace." The model underlying PBEA across all programs entailed (i) identifying conflict drivers, (ii) understanding the ways in which drivers interacted with education actors and institutions at different levels, (iii) designing education interventions that aim to address those interactions and (iv) transforming those drivers of conflict and facilitating peacebuilding (Novelli 2011; Smith et al. 2011; UNICEF, 2013). Several ToCs guided program decisions for each PBEA education intervention based on how different conflict drivers were affected by education or conversely how they affected education.

In this article, we argue that routinizing the use of ToCs is an important step forward for both education programming and evaluation in conflict-affected contexts. Through examples from our case studies, we show opportunities, but also significant challenges in practice for each of these purposes. We also show that what we call a "living ToC" can contribute to responsive and improved programming throughout an intervention's lifecycle, especially in conflict-affected contexts.

Of course, we do not claim that ToCs can do everything. No matter how good a ToC, if a program is not well implemented, planned outcomes are unlikely to follow. Likewise, even if one follows best practices for laying out a ToC that makes sense to key populations, and

implements the program as aspired, it still might not work. We simply argue that routinizing the use of ToCs – including a thorough conflict analysis, using the process of mapping ToCs to highlight and challenge program logic and assumptions, thinking through levels of intervention and impact, matching aspired outcomes to target populations, and monitoring and reflecting on unintended processes and outcomes – can help us towards the goal of learning “what works” and eventually better implementing education programs and serving beneficiaries in conflict-affected contexts.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, we review existing literature related to ToCs in programming and evaluation, with a parallel discussion of their use in the field of education in conflict-affected contexts. Second, we explain our choice to focus on PBEA as a lens through which to think about the contribution of ToCs, describe the four studies we carried out, and discuss our approach for this article. Third, we present our findings, supporting our overarching argument that routinizing the use of ToCs is a positive step forward in education programming and evaluation in conflict-affected contexts. Throughout, we consider the idea of “living ToCs” and the benefits and challenges that follow. We conclude by explaining how and why ToCs should be routinized in education programming and evaluation in conflict-affected contexts. Many of our findings also extend to broader international education programming.

## **II. Design and Evaluation of Education Programming in Conflict-Affected Contexts and Theories of Change**

### *Theories of Change for Programming and Evaluation*

In simplest terms, a theory of change is an explanation of why and how a program works (Weiss 1995). Here, we define a ToC as “a set of assumptions [held by policymakers and

program planners] that explain both the mini-steps that lead to a long-term goal and the connections between these activities and the outcomes of an intervention or program” (Anderson 2004). Figure 1 represents the basic components of a ToC and how the components are intended to work together.

There remain a variety of views as to the concept and use of a ToC. At one end of a continuum, ToCs are described as a technical tool, and on the other end, an approach to developing a nuanced and complex understanding of how change happens in unpredictable settings (Stein and Valters 2012). Throughout this article, and our studies of UNICEF’s PBEA programs, we adopt a middle-ground approach and utilize ToCs as a “way of thinking about how a project is expected to work” (Stein and Valters 2012), and take this a step further to discuss the possibility of ToCs as “living.” In this sense, we can imagine an adaptive and iterative process, wherein, for example, intermediate outcomes affect rethought inputs, outputs affect the background/context, or the context simply shifts, requiring rethinking, as in Figure 2.

Stein and Valters (2012), in a review of practitioner-oriented literature, identified four broad purposes for ToCs: 1) strategic planning; 2) monitoring and evaluation; 3) description of program activities and achievements to internal and external partners; and 4) learning among program developers and implementers. We focus throughout this article on ToCs for *programming*, including (1) strategic planning and (3) description, and for *evaluation*, including (2) monitoring and evaluation and (4) learning in conflict-affected contexts.

While using ToCs is increasingly popular among international development and education practitioners (Stein and Valters 2012), the concept is not new. Their antecedent, Logical Frameworks, hereafter LogFrame(s), have long-been utilized as a tool for planning, managing, and measuring the effectiveness of development projects (Bakewell and Garbutt

2005; Harley 2005). Both approaches describe the ways in which programs do (or do not) produce the intended results, although scholars point to differences between the two. A LogFrame is typically linear—all activities lead to outputs, which lead to outcomes (e.g. “we plan to do X which will give Y result”) and are mainly used for program monitoring (Jensen 2013). In contrast, ToCs are more flexible and might include, for example, cyclical processes and feedback loops. Additionally, ToCs consider the “big picture,” including issues related to the context and operating environment that program designers and evaluators cannot control in evaluation. While the relative merits of each are still debated (Rogers and Weiss, 2007; Funnell and Rogers, 2011), the popularity of ToCs is growing because they are intended to be flexible and responsive to context. Indeed, these are precisely some of the features that make ToCs a well-suited tool to meet the challenges common to programming and evaluation in conflict-affected contexts.

### ***Programming***

According to best practices, ToCs should be agreed upon at the outset of a program by a wide range of stakeholders, such as program designers, implementers, funders, beneficiaries, evaluators and “be based on local knowledge and experience” (Stein and Valters 2012, 13). Achieving participation and consensus on ToCs across diverse constituencies can sometimes be challenging, particularly in conflict-affected contexts (King 2013). Another best practice, in “fragile” (i.e. conflict-affected) situations is a “thorough conflict (or structural) analysis...as well as an investigation of drivers of conflict” (Stein and Valters 2012, 13) as a basis on which to build the ToC. These best practices lay the foundation for implementation.

While much less discussed, these practices also provide a framework against which to integrate new information throughout the program cycle and facilitate reflexive changes to programming throughout implementation (Ramalingam et al. 2014; Wayrauch et al. 2016). For

example, changes to operational or conflict dynamics might occur from changing conditions on the ground, due to the project and/or wider events. Since PBEA tried to implement this reflexivity, our case studies offer insight into the challenges and opportunities of such a “living ToC” model.

### ***Evaluation***

Several organizations working to address economic inequality in developing contexts are committed to using ToCs in evaluation, including Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), Poverty Action Lab (JPAL), and the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie). These organizations, along with many scholars, have produced a good deal of literature outlining how ToCs can and should be used in evaluations. Looking across this literature reveals lively debate regarding approaches to ToCs in evaluations, including when the evaluation should be conducted—at the end of a program or at routine intervals during the program cycle; if ToCs must be articulated by program designers/implementers at program outset or if they can be determined through an evaluation that seeks to capture implicit ToCs; and if a credible counterfactual is necessary for a rigorous program evaluation or if a narrative evaluation of ToCs utilizing anthropological approaches is most appropriate for yielding insights into “what works”. We do not seek to resolve these debates. Rather, we acknowledge them and, in our findings, build on the literature we found most illustrative for how we analyzed our findings about the PBEA ToCs

Most education programs in conflict-affected contexts are not formally evaluated by any means (Wright 2010). Nevertheless, there is widespread agreement among scholars and practitioners on the need to conduct *more* evaluations, and more *rigorous* evaluations, on the impact of development and other types of international programming (Levine and Savedoff 2006; Ludwig, et al. 2011; Burde, et al. 2015; Donaldson, et al. 2015). Of programs in conflict-

affected contexts that are evaluated, Wright in a 2010 review of “education in emergencies” research, states that descriptive single or comparative case studies that rely upon one-on-one or focus group interviews have been, and continue to be, the predominate mode of formative and summative program assessment. However, this approach to research has been critiqued for lacking “methodologically sound research practices” (Wright 2010, 23), because recommendations lack transferability or generalizability. Similarly, Burde et al. reviewed more than 250 academic articles, finding “an absence of robust evidence” despite “a large number of strong observational designs,” including detailed ethnographies and case studies (2015, v). Burde suggests that qualitative research can be paired with randomized control trials to “provide additional contextual detail [on] ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions to explain findings” (2012, 454) in ways that experimental or quasi-experimental approaches alone cannot. Here, we explore if and how ToCs may be an important part of implementing these suggestions to move the field forward. We also consider the challenges a “living ToC” can present for researchers, like us, or practitioners engaged in evaluation in conflict-affected contexts.

### **III. Case selection and study methods**

UNICEF’s PBEA program is a particularly relevant case to examine the opportunities and challenges for iteratively using ToCs in programming and evaluation, especially in conflict-affected contexts. It was exemplary, at least in its intention, in making ToCs central to programming and evaluation (Herrington 2015). UNICEF implemented PBEA programs in 14 countries<sup>2</sup> between 2012 and 2016, with the aim of strengthening resilience, social cohesion, and human security in fragile and conflict-affected contexts by improving policies and practices for education and peacebuilding (UNICEF, 2012). The program recognized the “two faces of

---

<sup>2</sup> Burundi, Chad, Cote D’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya (Dadaab refugee camp), Liberia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Palestine, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen.



education” (Bush and Saltarelli 2000), that education can contribute both to peace and to conflict—a crucial, but not yet mainstream, understanding (King 2014). PBEA also made learning a core priority, setting out to “generat[e] Evidence and Knowledge” as one of its five goals. We evaluated four different PBEA interventions, two in Ethiopia and two in Kenya’s Dadaab refugee camp. Table 1 provides a summary of each PBEA program we studied and a summary of data collection from each site.

In Ethiopia, PBEA was implemented in the four Developing Regional States (Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz, Afar, and Gambella), prone to frequent natural disasters and affected by longstanding conflicts fueled by volatile situations in border countries. The four regions are characterized by weak governance systems with low capacity to deliver social services, including the planning, provision, and management of education (UNICEF, 2014). We evaluated the Alternative Basic Education (ABE) program in the Somali region. This program aimed to increase access for pastoralist children to quality, relevant education through the construction of ABE centers in remote pastoralist communities and flexible scheduling of classes (King and Monaghan 2015). We also studied in-school and after-school Civics and Ethics education programming for children and adolescents in Benishangul-Gumuz (Monaghan and King 2016a), which aimed to strengthen social cohesion among different ethnic groups through Ethiopian history and governance programs and providing opportunities for civic engagement in their communities.

We also studied two programs in Kenya’s Dadaab refugee camp, home to almost 350,000 registered refugees, approximately 50 percent of whom were children and youth at the time of the study. 97 percent of refugees in the camp were from Somalia, however in the years preceding the study, the UNHCR had also settled in Dadaab refugees from other countries throughout East

Africa. The UNHCR and its implementing partners provide food, water, shelter, healthcare, and primary schooling to refugees. Yet service provision, including basic schooling provided to refugees across Dadaab's five sub-camps has continually faced significant challenges. These include high student to teacher ratios; shortages of textbooks, desks, and other school supplies; and lack of funds to provide maintenance and upkeep of schools (Monaghan 2015). We evaluated a vocational and life skills program entitled the Youth Education Pack (YEP) (Monaghan and King 2016b). The program aimed to increase livelihood opportunities for Somali youth upon repatriation to Somalia by providing four-month skills courses and Somali language and literacy courses. We also studied two models of peace education (King and Monaghan 2016). The first model aimed to promote more peaceful attitudes and behaviors writ large in the camp through peace education courses taught once per week to children enrolled in the camp's primary schools. The second model was sports for development and peace (SDP), an extra-curricular program for youth from the camp and the host community.

Insert Table 1 here

In each study, we used a similar approach to data collection and analysis. The PBEA team and its partners produced the ToCs and implemented associated programming. We, as external researchers, conducted an evaluation using the ToCs to examine the extent to which what was happening in the field was consistent with the declaration of the ToCs, and if and how the ToCs had been, or should be, revisited in the goal of improving programming and outcomes.

We spent approximately two weeks in each site, conducting one-on-one interviews and focus groups with program planners and implementers at UNICEF country and field offices, Ministry of Education (MoE) staff at regional and local offices (Ethiopia), and implementing partner international non-governmental organizations (Dadaab). We also conducted site visits to interview parents, teachers, students, and other program administrators. Where possible, we drew

upon Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practice (KAP) surveys, administered separately by UNICEF and its partners over an 18-month period, to collect data for each program throughout implementation. In our analysis, we drew upon the logics and techniques of process tracing (George and Bennett 2005). We charted the observable implications, or identifiable features, one could expect to see if the ToCs were materializing. We also considered in each study if and how the ToC effectively addressed specific conflict drivers, as identified by PBEA. Additionally, we directly asked program-level interview participants what they believed the ToC to be, to see if it matched intended processes and outcomes. We asked all participants, program-level and intended beneficiaries, indirect and direct questions related to the presence of the observable implications of each element of the ToC.

The studies share limitations affecting our ability to draw conclusions. We participated as external, independent consultants and began our time-limited engagement with each program at least a year after it started. As a result, the study design did not allow for pre- and post-comparisons of participants or comparison to control groups. We were therefore unable to carry out robust impact evaluations (White 2011), although the organizations wished we would make stronger impact statements. At the same time, logistical and safety issues presented challenges in access to sites and participants.<sup>3</sup> Many of these limitations are typical to evaluations of education programming in conflict-affected contexts while others need not be so; for instance, we recommend sustained engagement with researchers from the beginning of projects.

We reflected upon our experiences and learning across the four studies. Because ToCs were central to UNICEF's PBEA program, and to our studies, an examination of the four PBEA interventions offers the opportunity to explore some of the reaches as well as limits of ToCs for education programming and evaluation in conflict-affected contexts. The purpose of this article

---

<sup>3</sup> Additional details in Monaghan and King 2016b.

is not to discuss the findings of our studies per se, but to present illustrative examples from our case studies that illuminate the lessons we learned – about opportunities, challenges, and “living ToCs.”

#### **IV. Findings**

We highlight five insights into opportunities and challenges of utilizing ToCs in programming and evaluation that may be useful to others endeavoring to design, implement, and/or evaluate education programs in conflict-affected contexts. Therein, we provide examples of findings that should inform programming going forward that we would not likely have discovered without asking program planners and beneficiaries about perceptions of ToCs and mapping observable implications in our evaluations of the PBEA programs.

##### **I. *Comprehensive context analyses should inform programming***

A thorough examination of context is key to developing ToCs for program design and implementation (White 2011). Likewise, according to UNICEF, understanding how interactions between actors and institutions across sectors and levels drive conflict, and if and how these interact with education, is central to the development of education interventions intending to address and ultimately change those drivers of conflict.

In the Somali region, where we studied the ABE centers, the context analysis identified specific manifestations of inter-clan conflict (lack of or inequitable political participation); intra-clan conflict (scarcity of resources), inter-regional/inter-state conflict (again, scarcity of resources); and tension between pastoralists, agro-pastoralists, and the government (King and Monaghan 2015, 6). Although the program did not directly tackle these conflicts, the analysis also emphasized that “inequity is a main driver of conflict in Ethiopia and is a result of weak

service delivery capacity” (BDS, 2015, 10). Thus, focusing on the provision of education to excluded populations was a contextually-informed programmatic decision.

Putting comprehensive context analyses into practice, however, is not always straightforward. In Ethiopia, where the program aims to support the MoE in strengthening resilience, social cohesion, and improving equity in the four Developing Regional States, UNICEF and the MoE worked with the Centre for Federal Studies at Addis Ababa University to conduct a “context analysis” in 2013 in each of the four regions. The MoE insisted that the term ‘context’ replace the term ‘conflict’ since none of the regional governments considered their regions ‘conflict-affected’ (King and Monaghan 2015, 6). We learned through interviews with program planners that these concerns delayed the context analysis process. Thus, the context analysis was finalized in concert with the PBEA implementation, rather than preceding and informing programming as intended.

The issue was even more problematic in Dadaab, where PBEA programming was informed by only a “light conflict analysis” (UNICEF, 2013). It identified some conflict drivers such as “low quality and relevance of education” which fuel economic and social vulnerability (UNICEF, 2013, 3), though inter-ethnic conflict or inter-national conflict were not explored or analyzed, despite their clear existence in Dadaab (King and Monaghan, 2015, 8). Absent a thorough conflict analysis, programming was essentially built on normative goals.

It became clear that the Kenyan government, a key stakeholder in the program, had become concerned, after the Westgate shopping mall attack in 2013, that out-of-school refugee youth in the camp were being radicalized and recruited into armed groups in Somalia, particularly Al Shabaab. Such changes in priorities and assumptions, common to conflict-affected contexts, made it difficult, according to PBEA staff, to plan responsive programming. It was thought that

the already designed and in-progress youth skills and employment program could help stem these processes, as well as other types of conflict, though PBEA staff recognized that a conflict analysis would have allowed for development of better programming. They also identified a lack of a dedicated experienced conflict analysis or peacebuilding officer within the Kenya office as part of the problem.

Too often when it comes to education programming in conflict-affected contexts, “conflict” becomes the context. “Conflict-affected context” is a widely used term – admittedly one we utilize throughout this article – and seen as explanatory in-and-of itself. While a wide range of drivers (e.g. resource scarcity, disputes over land ownership) cause conflict of various type and scale, these are still often specified with insufficient detail. Designing targeted programming necessitates knowing what specific conflicts the program is intended to address. Thinking through the components of a ToC, including a comprehensive conflict analysis that may change with time, is an important part of this goal.

## ***II. The process of mapping ToCs should highlight and challenge logic and assumptions***

The process of mapping ToCs should make explicit and even challenge program logic and assumptions. With regards to the Sports for Development and Peace (SDP) initiative in Dadaab, for example, PBEA funded two different models: ‘The Talent Academy’ in 2013 and 2014 brought refugee and non-refugee youth together for a stand-alone two-week program centered around sports; in 2015, the program shifted to extra-curricular inter- and intra-school/camp sports programs for refugee youth in secondary school. The ToC for both earlier and later programs, without distinction, was *“that if schools become violence free zones and teachers use positive classroom management techniques, the social norms on the acceptance and use of*

*violence will be reduced and promote constructive dispute resolution methods among communities and greater social cohesion*” (UNICEF, 2014). However, the later program was an extra-curricular program and teachers did not receive training in positive classroom management techniques. Both programs employed the same ToC, intended for use *in schools*, though the later programs were either after or outside of school. The different programming models also did not specify whether they were to address different types of conflict. Given these inconsistencies, as well as the high level of generality of the ToC, it was difficult to break it into meaningful, observable implications for evaluation. In this case, it would have benefited both programming and evaluation to discuss and develop an accurate program-specific ToC, based on a thorough conflict analysis, prior to dedicating inputs and implementation.

We also found that inconsistencies existed between different stakeholders’ understandings of the ToC for the same program. In the Somali region of Ethiopia, ABE programming aimed to increase access to education through ABE centers in remote communities and offer flexible programming, an important feature given that most people in the Somali region have never participated in any type of formal schooling, and only 8.6% have completed grade four (EPA, 2011). A PBEA ToC guided programming: *“by providing marginalized communities access to flexible and safe learning spaces with culturally and economically relevant curriculum, excluded communities will be more resilient to shocks and stresses resulting in greater social cohesion and resilience*” (UNICEF, 2013). There was also an ABE-specific ToC: *“if access to education as well as relevant and appropriate education is improved through ABE centers, intra and inter-clan conflicts caused by inequity in access to social services will decrease and social cohesion will increase*” (UNICEF, 2013). UNICEF officials echoed these ToCs.

In contrast, local government officials who implement the program stated that by changing livelihoods through ABE, from pastoralist to sedentarist, drivers of conflict related to mobility and scarcity of resources, would be reduced or eliminated altogether. In the view of some of our interviewees, this contested ToC was particularly significant because the potential challenges and negative impacts on pastoralists, such as limited employment opportunities, increased perceptions of pastoralist livelihoods as ‘backward’, were not desired outcomes of the PBEA program design. This ToC, and associated processes, were routinely rejected by UNICEF staff, with concerns about anti-pastoralist biases and “cultural violence” against pastoralist groups (UNICEF, 2015). Yet, they were consistently repeated by representatives of local and regional MoE offices in Ethiopia interviewed for our study.

This example points to the importance of using ToCs during the project to revisit logic and assumptions throughout to improve programming and results. UNICEF PBEA staff reacted to this example, as we have written it here, as a part of the ‘learning’ process central to PBEA and that different sets of practitioners had to undergo. Updating the ToC, and consequently programming and evaluation, to incorporate these learnings is a good example of what a “living ToC” and responsive programming might look like.

Finally, we found that programming did not always match goals or that goals were inadequately specified. Such circumstances may reflect the challenges of working in a shifting policy context, as was the case with the Kenyan government. Nonetheless, we found that explicitly returning to ToCs can be a way to uncover, and perhaps address, such shortcomings that negatively impact program outcomes. For instance, according to program planners, the PBEA program in Dadaab was designed following an announcement in 2013 that the government would close the camp and repatriate refugees. Program planners were concerned



about conflict in Somalia if repatriated refugees did not have appropriate livelihood skills to support themselves. They noted the livelihood strategies needed in the peri-urban environment of Dadaab differed significantly from those needed in Somalia where most livelihood strategies remained focused on agriculture and pastoralism. Yet, in the program design and ToC, it was not clear where the program impacts – social cohesion and increased resilience – were ultimately meant to transpire, in Dadaab or Somalia, affecting both program design and the ability to evaluate success. Consequently, four-month vocational courses were developed and implemented, in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). Somali language was included as a component of all courses to help with repatriation. However, most of the courses matched skills and needs in Dadaab rather than those needed in Somalia. While this is a useful example of the potential of ToCs to highlight and usefully query program logic, it also illustrates the challenges of working in a shifting policy context where the “goal posts,” as one UNICEF PBEA staff member put it, are always changing.

***III. Programming should consider how different interventions might affect different target populations***

A well-designed ToC also helps to identify specific populations targeted by the intervention in question, and considers if and how different components of the intervention are, or are not, intended to differentially impact these populations. However, even if the target population is specified in the ToC, the program might fail to adequately direct programming (an implementation concern) and/or the ToC may not include other populations that receive programming (a theoretical and programmatic concern). In the Dadaab YEP program that aimed to increase livelihood opportunities for Somali youth upon repatriation, we found that many program beneficiaries were not Somali. Given the recent influx of East African refugees, some

youths participating in the short skills courses were from Burundi, the DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Sudan. That these participants were not Somali complicated the evaluation of the ToC and the ultimate achievement of some of the Somalia-based goals of the program: voluntary repatriation and the prevention of radicalization/recruitment into armed groups.

Incidentally, the inclusion of non-Somali youth may have facilitated the achievement of one of the PBEA program's high-level goals—increased access to quality, relevant, context responsive education (UNICEF, 2014). Respondents, for instance, discussed the ways in which the YEP program helped to provide access to education for youth from South Sudan and other countries throughout East Africa, besides Somalia, whose academic credentials do not transfer to camp schools. One graduate of the YEP program from South Sudan, who had been within months of graduating from secondary school when he was forced to flee the country, explained that the YEP program offered him the chance to continue his education and earn an income. His story is illustrative of the ways in which YEP programming is one of the only means through which youth belonging to non-Somali groups—because of historic issues with transferability of education achievement from home country to Dadaab —can continue their education and create income generating opportunities. It is a positive example of how PBEA YEP addresses issues of youth exclusion in the camp. However, we again note that non-Somali youths are not the primary intended beneficiaries of PBEA YEP for some of the outcomes.

Focusing our attention on the ToC allowed us to account for non-Somali youth and to think through the ways in which the program impacts them. UNICEF PBEA staff explained that tensions with host communities was another concern that explains why at least some of the vulnerable youth from other groups were allowed in the program. These shifting logics point to

the importance of responsiveness with a ToC, and how program planners and implementers can map, disseminate, and respond to changing contexts over multiple years.

#### ***IV. Levels of intervention and outcome should be consistent***

Literature devoted to ToCs recommends comprehensively considering the *relationship* between all elements from start to finish, including the program ToC, the intervention ToC, inputs, outputs, and impacts. Doing so allows us to consider if and how the components of the ToC follow logically, and if the levels of intervention and outcome – individual, school, group, community – are consistent across the reasoning.

When programming aims are multi-levelled, the ToC may highlight inconsistencies that affect programming and likely evaluation results. For example, we found in both the peace education programs in Dadaab that there were inconsistencies in the ToC regarding levels of aspired outcomes. Program literature clearly stated that peace education intended to facilitate *community*-level changes. However, for both programs, in literature outlining intended outcomes and ToCs, the ways in which *school*-level programs and aspired-for changes would facilitate changes in social cohesion and resilience at the *community*-level were unclear.

These inconsistencies may transpire as programs shift between funders and implementers, common in conflict-affected contexts, and between emergency and development phases. UNICEF PBEA assumed funding responsibilities for the Peace Education Program in 2013, though continued working with the National Church Council of Kenya, who had implemented the program since 1998, and did not make any changes to programming (e.g. curriculum, program structure). As per the ToC quoted above, despite being school-based, the program ultimately aimed at “promot[ing] constructive dispute resolution among *communities* and greater social cohesion” (UNICEF, 2014). PBEA-funded Peace Education Program activities included

annual training workshops for teachers, once-per week peace education classes for primary school students, after-school peace clubs and in-school Girl Guides clubs for female students (King and Monaghan, 2016, 15). We found several anecdotal examples of students demonstrating non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms and strategies in school (King and Monaghan 2016, 18-22). Specific community impacts of PEP remain unclear, though possibilities include, according to PBEA staff, program spill-over to community social activities and reactions to the program. In theory, it may also be that children grow up with a different set of skills and values than their parents, though this is a long-term ToC. It is therefore useful to specify connections between different levels of outcomes, and the time-frame along which the ToC is thought to materialize, as well as if and how these dimensions may change as anticipated outputs materialize (or not), and unanticipated ones appear.

#### *V. Unintended processes and outcomes should be considered*

Finally, understanding unintended consequences are important in conflict-affected contexts (Puri et al. 2015). In interviewing program planners about how they understood the ToCs, we found several previously unidentified pathways through which various programs may be working. Building these originally unintended processes and outcomes into a “living ToC” may improve programming and evaluation.

For instance, in the ABE programs in Ethiopia, one emerging pathway through which the program may be effecting change, separate from the main ToC, was by bringing children from different ethnic groups together in the same learning space. We also found examples of ways in which parent-teacher associations provide opportunities for ethnic groups to work together to solve school-based problems. This process resonates well with contact theory (Allport 1954), where under the right conditions increased contact and interaction between members of different

groups is effective at reducing prejudice (Pettigrew 1998). A second emerging pathway was that by following a daily routine and adhering to school rules and guidelines, drivers of conflict related to undisciplined and youthful behavior may be reduced. Both unintended processes are important areas of further investigation and could offer opportunities for program planners and implementers to intentionally structure future programming to this effect (e.g. by providing more teacher training on behavior management and multi-grade teaching).

An additional intermediate outcome, the improved ability of beneficiaries to advocate for other social services, was identified during the research on ABE, although not included as a program goal. Facilitators explained that PBEA-supported ABE centers helped communities understand the process of advocating for social services by submitting a request for consideration for an ABE to their Woreda Education Office. PBEA-supported ABE was often the first time that communities had received access to rights from the Ethiopian government. Another facilitator explained that through claiming their rights to schools, communities were realizing their rights to other social services (e.g. health clinics, water). These may be important for peacebuilding since the context analysis identified inequitable distribution of government resources and social services across clans and communities as a source of conflict (King and Monaghan 2015, 8).

Acknowledging and learning from these unintended processes, part of a “living ToC,” may improve programming and our knowledge about *how* programs work, which might be through very different mechanisms than originally anticipated. Better understanding these unanticipated processes is also crucial for the potential transferability of programming.

## **VI. CONCLUSION: ToCs and Living ToCs in Conflict-Affected Contexts**

In this article, we argued that ToCs are an under-utilized, though well-suited, approach to education programming and evaluation in conflict-affected contexts. We showed that asking program planners and beneficiaries about the ToCs and seeking to map expected, observable outcomes can provide useful and important insights for programming and evaluation.

Beyond making the case for routinizing the use of ToCs though, our experiences also lead us to explore the importance of a “living ToC” and, in turn, responsive programming throughout a program’s lifecycle. This was what UNICEF PBEA endeavored to do. Their experience provides insights into challenges and opportunities. Given that education interventions in conflict-affected contexts continue for years, we propose the “living ToC” for programming, and to inform evaluation. A “living ToC” might involve conducting regular evaluations either similar to studies we conducted on the UNICEF PBEA program or, better yet, in ways that might allow for more robust conclusions to be drawn regarding program impact. The information can then be used to revise the ToCs and adjust programming accordingly. Such a view of ToCs distances them from the more linear ideas originally underpinning LogFrames and moves them more towards an embrace of feedback loops, non-linearities, and multiple pathways to the same outcomes. Of course, the logic underpinning programming and the aspired outcomes of a program cannot, for any practical programming or evaluation purposes, change constantly. Finding balance between acknowledging and addressing fluidity and enough stability for ToC-informed programming and evaluation is imperfectly resolved here.

Beyond programming and evaluation specific to individual education interventions in conflict-affected contexts, routinizing the use of ToCs and embracing more “living ToCs” offers the possibility of increased knowledge regarding “what works.” Over time, developing an

evidence base of education programs designed and implemented utilizing ToCs across conflict-affected contexts would allow for scholars and practitioners to comparatively consider (different) programming and (similar and different) outcomes, and subsequently the conditions under which policies and programs developed and implemented in one context might be appropriately transferred to others.

## **Figure 1: Theory of Change**

Figure 1 demonstrates the different components of a ToC and how the components are intended to work together (Allen, Cruz, and Warburton, 2017, p. 4).



## **Figure 2: “Living’ Theory of Change**

Figure 2 illustrates some of the ways in which a ToC can be “living” during the project cycle

## References

- Aguilar, P., and G. Retamal. 2009 "Protective environments and quality education in humanitarian contexts." *International Journal of Educational Development* 29 (1): 3-16.
- Allport, G. W. 1954. *The Nature of Prejudice*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Amnesty International. 2015. *Theory of Change Summaries: 2016-2019*. London: Amnesty International.
- Anderson, A. 2004. "Theory of change as a tool for strategic planning: A report on early experiences." *Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change*: 1-32.
- Bakewell, O., and A. Garbutt 2005. *The Use and Abuse of the Logical Framework Approach: A Review of International Development NGOs' Experiences*. Stockholm: Swedish International Development Agency.
- BDS Centre for Development Research (2015). *Innovation in Delivery of Better Basic Service: Challenges and Opportunities in Ethiopia*. Addis: BDS
- Brock-Utne, B. (2007). "Worldbankification of Norwegian development assistance to education." *Comparative Education Review* 43 (3): 433-449
- Burde, D. 2012. "Assessing impact and bridging methodological divides: Randomized trials in countries affected by conflict." *Comparative Education Review* 56 (3): 448-473.
- Burde, D, O. Guven, J. Kelcey, H. Lahmann and K. Al-Abbadi. 2015. *What Works to Promote Children's Educational Access, Quality of Learning, and Wellbeing in Crisis-Affected Contexts*. London: DfID.
- Bush, K.D., and D. Saltarelli. 2000. *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: Towards a Peacebuilding Education for Children*. 45. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.
- Donaldson, S. I., C. A. Christie, and M. M. Mark (Eds). 2014. *Credible and actionable evidence: The foundation for rigorous and influential evaluations*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Funnell, S. C., and P. J. Rogers 2011. *Purposeful program theory: effective use of theories of change and logic models* (Vol. 31). San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
- George, A. L., and A. Bennett 2005. *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. MIT Press.
- Harley, K. 2005. "Learning from logframes: reflections on three educational development projects in East and Southern Africa." *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 35 (1): 27-42.

- Herrington, R. 2015. *Emerging Practices in Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation for Education for Peacebuilding Programming*. 1st ed. Washington DC: Search for Common Ground.
- Innovations for Poverty in Action. 2016a. *Guiding your Program to Build a Theory of Change*. Washington DC: IPA.
- Innovations for Poverty in Action. 2016b. *Theory of Change and Program Design*. Washington DC: IPA.
- King, E. 2013. A critical review of community-driven development programmes in conflict-affected contexts. London and New York: Department for International Development (DfID), Research for Development and International Rescue Committee (IRC).
- King, E. 2014. *From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- King, E, and C. Monaghan. 2015. *Pastoralist Education and Peacebuilding in Ethiopia. Results and Lessons Learned*. Nairobi: UNICEF.
- King, E., and C. Monaghan. 2016. *Peace Education and Peacebuilding in Dadaab Refugee Camp. Results and Lessons Learned*. Nairobi: UNICEF.
- Levine, R., and W. Savedoff. 2006. The evaluation agenda. *Rescuing the World Bank: a working group report and selected essays*. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development.
- Ludwig, J., J. Kling and S. Mullainathan. 2011. “Mechanism Experiments and Policy Evaluations”. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. 25 (3): 17-38.
- Monaghan, C. 2015. “Educating for durable solutions: Histories of schooling in Kenya’s Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps” PhD. diss., University of Virginia.
- Monaghan, C., and E. King 2016a. *Civics and Ethical Education for Peacebuilding in Ethiopia: Results and Lessons Learned*. Nairobi: UNICEF.
- Monaghan, C., and E. King 2016b. *Youth Education Programming and Peacebuilding in Dadaab Refugee Camp: Results and Lessons Learned*. Nairobi: UNICEF.
- Nicolai, S. (2005). Education that protects. *Forced Migration Review*, 22, 11-12.
- Nicolai, S., et. al., 2016. *A common platform for education in emergencies and protracted crises: Evidence paper*. London: ODI.
- Novelli, M. 2011. *The Role of Education in Peacebuilding: Methodological Framework for Three Country Case Studies*. New York: UNICEF.
- Overseas Development Institute. 2016. *Education Cannot Wait: Proposing a Fund for*

*Education in Emergencies*. London: ODI.

Pettigrew, T. F. 1998. "Intergroup Contact Theory." *Annual Review of Psychology* 49 (1): 65-85.

Poverty Action Lab. 2014. "Training course: Methodology overview: What is evaluation?"

Poverty Action Lab. <http://www.povertyactionlab.org/methodology/what-evaluation/impact-evaluation>

Puri, J., A. Aladysheva, V. Iversen, Y. Ghorpade, and T. Brück. 2015. *What methods may be used in impact evaluations of humanitarian assistance?*. IZA Discussion Papers, No. 8755.

Ramalingam, B., M. Laric. and J. Primrose. 2014. From best practice to best fit. *Understanding and navigating wicked problems in international development*. Overseas Development Institute.

Rogers, P. J., and C. H. Weiss. 2007. "Theory-based evaluation: Reflections ten years on: Theory-based evaluation: Past, present, and future." *New directions for evaluation* 2007 (114): 63-81.

Smith, A., E. McCandless, J. Paulson and W. Wheaton. 2011. *The role of education in peacebuilding: Literature review*. New York: UNICEF.

Talbot, C. (2015). *Education in Conflict Emergencies in Light of the post-2015 MDGs and EFA Agendas*. Network for international policies and cooperation in education and training (NORRAG) Working Paper, 3.

Tetlock, P. E. 1996. *Counterfactual thought experiments in world politics: Logical, methodological, and psychological perspectives*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Triplehorn, C., and C. Chen. (2006). "Layers of support". In *A World Turned Upside Down: social ecological approaches to children in war zones*, Eds. N. Boothby, A. Strang and M. Wessells. Bloomfield CT: Kumarian Press, 223-242.

UNHCR. 2013. *The Challenge of Education*. Geneva: UNHCR.

UNHCR 2015a. *Global report 2014-Kenya*. Geneva: UNHCR.

UNHCR. 2015b. *Voluntary Repatriation of Somali Refugees from Kenya Operations Strategy 2015-2019*. Nairobi: UNHCR.

UNICEF. 2009. *Children and the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami: Evaluation of UNICEF's Response in Sri Lanka (2005-2008)*. New York: UNICEF.

UNICEF. 2012. *Conflict-Sensitivity and Peacebuilding in UNICEF. Technical Note*. New York: UNICEF.

UNICEF. 2013. *Peacebuilding, Education, and Advocacy in Conflict-Affected Contexts Programme 2012 Annual Consolidated Report*. New York: UNICEF.

UNICEF. 2014a. *Context Analysis for the Developing Regional States of Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa: UNICEF.

USAID. 2017. Education in Crisis and Conflict. Available at: <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/education/crisis-conflict>

Weiss, C. H. 1995. "Nothing as practical as good theory: Exploring theory-based evaluation for comprehensive community initiatives for children and families." *New approaches to evaluating community initiatives: Concepts, methods, and contexts* 1: 65-92.

White, H. (2011). Achieving high-quality impact evaluation design through mixed methods: The case of infrastructure. *Journal of development effectiveness*, 3(1), 131-144.

Wright, L. 2010. *Education in Emergencies: Research Methodologies Identifying Successes and Gaps*. Washington, DC: INEE.

Table 1: PBEA Programs, ToC, and Data

<b>Program Intervention</b>	<b>Area of Implementation</b>	<b>Conflicts</b>	<b>UNICEF PBEA Intended Outcome</b>	<b>UNICEF PBEA ToC</b>	<b>Program Specific ToC</b>	<b>Data</b>
Community Education	Somali Region, Ethiopia	Inter-clan conflict; intra-clan conflict; inter-regional;/ inter-state conflict/ tension/ conflict between agro-pastoralists and government	Increase access to quality and relevant conflict-sensitive education that contributes to peace	<b>Education for Peacebuilding ToC:</b> By providing marginalized communities access to flexible and safe learning spaces with culturally and economically relevant curriculum, excluded communities will be more resilient to shocks and stresses resulting in greater social cohesion and resilience	<b>ABE ToC:</b> If access to education as well as relevant and appropriate education is improved through ABE centers, intra and inter-clan conflicts caused by inequity in access to social services will decrease and social cohesion will increase.	<b>48</b> participants in one-on-one and FGD interviews; Site visits to <b>3</b> ABE centers; KAP dataset
Peace and Education	Benishangul Gumuz Region, Ethiopia	Inter-ethnic conflict; Intra-ethnic conflict; Inter-regional;/ inter-state conflict; tension between indigenous and settler groups	Increase the capacity of children, parents, teachers, and other duty bearers to prevent and reduce violent conflict and promote social cohesion	<b>Behavioral Change Theory ToC:</b> If teachers, parents, children, and community members are equipped with skills and knowledge for managing disputes and promoting peaceful relations, community resilience against stresses and shocks will be increased, leading to increased social cohesion and resilience		<b>28</b> participants in one-on-one and FGD interviews; Site visits to <b>2</b> PBEA supported schools; KAP dataset
Education (Primary School Program; Skills for Development and Peace)	Dadaab Refugee Camp, Kenya	<b>Conflict Drivers</b> Low quality and relevance of education; routine violence in schools; excluded adolescents and youth recruited for violent causes	Increase the capacity of children, parents, teachers, and other duty bearers to prevent and reduce violent conflict and promote social cohesion	<b>Education for Peacebuilding ToC:</b> If schools become violence free zones and teachers use positive classroom management techniques, the social norms on the acceptance and use of violence will be reduced and promote constructive dispute resolution methods among communities and greater social		<b>35</b> participants in one-on-one and FGD interviews; <b>1</b> Site visit; KAP dataset

				cohesion		
inical ational cation ning	Dadaab Refugee Camp, Kenya	<b>Conflict Drivers</b> Low quality and relevance of education; routine violence in schools; excluded adolescents and youth recruited for violent causes	Increase access to quality and relevant conflict sensitive education that contributes to peace	<b>Education for Peacebuilding ToC:</b> By providing marginalised youth with access to relevant life skills and vocational training opportunities and creating space for constructive engagement in social and cultural activities, patterns of youth exclusion fueling grievance and violent conflict will be reduced and will result in greater social cohesion		<b>50</b> participants in one-on-one and FGD interviews; <b>1</b> Site visit; KAP dataset