EVERYDAY PEACE INDICATORS

WHAT ARE EVERYDAY PEACE INDICATORS?

The Everyday Peace Indicator framework is a new approach to understanding and tracking changes in difficult-to-measure concepts like peace, reconciliation, governance and violent extremism. Instead of ‘experts’ and ‘scholars’ developing indicators of success, communities themselves are asked to establish their own everyday indicators, which are then measured longitudinally to assess changes in community views of peace. This approach is driven by the premise that communities affected by war know best what peace means to them and therefore should be the primary and first source of information on peacebuilding effectiveness.

Emerging from a long history of critical scholarship in international relations and peace and conflict studies, the EPI framework is sympathetic with bottom-up, participatory approaches. As such, it is tool that seeks to assist communities, practitioners, and policymakers to question the assumptions that lie behind the existing peacebuilding measurement systems that may promote an over-dependence on external interveners. The approach assumes all societies are hybrids and are based on long-running processes of negotiation and adaptation.

Therefore, Everyday Peace Indicators seek to complement, not replace, orthodox or top-down indicators as community-level approaches are negotiated and harmonized with macro-approaches in order to more effectively measure peace. Ultimately, by systematizing a process for having community-sourced indicators to guide the development and evaluation of programs and policies, the EPI framework fosters learning for both outsiders and locals that moves toward more emancipatory peacebuilding and conflict transformation in realizing sustainable peace.
**WHAT IS THE EPI PROCESS?**

**STAGE 1: DEVELOP**
Local partners conduct representative focus group discussions and generate a long list of indicators that people are already using in their daily lives to measure their own peacefulness, rather than try to gather indicators related with a particular intervention or project.

**STAGE 2: VERIFY**
Participants follow a two-step verification process where they first refine the original lists by adding or subtracting indicators, then rank the indicators by voting with additional community members to identify the most representative indicators of the community.

**STAGE 3: ANALYZE**
Local partners and program managers use the everyday indicators as a diagnostic tool to understand community priorities and design projects and programs in a grounding process to meet the needs of communities to foster greater ownership and sustainability.

**STAGE 4: SURVEY**
Local fieldworkers survey the community using mobile phone applications with the refined list of indicators. Surveys are repeated several times to be able to track whether or not people’s perceptions of peace and safety in their communities have changed.

---

**WHY EVERYDAY PEACE INDICATORS?**

There is growing recognition in the policy and practitioner communities that there are limitations to the existing suite of indicators for a wide range of concepts related to recovery from conflict and disasters. The following are only some of the limitations of orthodox indicators the EPI approach responds to:

**Accuracy:** Orthodox indicators tend to measure proxies of the concepts of interest, such as peace and reconciliation, rather than peace and reconciliation themselves.

**Scope:** Many indicators are limited to project or program evaluation which may tell us little about the wider dynamics of the transition society.

**Ownership:** Current indicator exercises are often top-down and originate from the global north, with outside actors initiating, organizing and designing surveys.

**Empowerment:** The marginalized position of community members may be reinforced by the ways indicators are represented and disseminated, for example, the statistical rendering of data may not be the lens through which communities see themselves.

**Scale:** Many existing indicators are unable to see the differences, often subtle, within and between communities.

Because major policy assumptions and decisions are based on indicator systems that give a partial, rather than full, picture of the reality on the ground, it is possible that flawed evaluation methods lead us to set and pursue the wrong goals and targets. This ultimately undermines peacebuilding efforts by failing to meet the needs and expectations of the very people transitioning from violent contexts. However, there are also limitations with using strictly bottom-up indicators including issues with access, credibility, and comparability. Since, conflicts as phenomena are necessarily complex and unlikely to be rendered accurately through a single methodological, ontological, and epistemological lens, EPI addresses the limitations of orthodox, as well as purely bottom-up indicators, by offering a hybrid approach to measuring social change.
ARE EVERYDAY INDICATORS RIGOROUS?

The Everyday Peace Indicator framework recognizes that conflict-affected societies do not constitute a laboratory and thus we cannot expect scientific purism. Such expectations can lead to indicators being ‘precisely wrong’ by having methodological rigor, while being inaccurate or meaningless to those experiencing conflict. However, the EPI methodology reconciles the desire to capture local voices, while meeting the demands of rigor expected by donors and the peacebuilding community by attending to standards of data quality. Since the EPI methodology is a hybrid framework of measuring change, it may not appease methodological purists of either top-down or bottom-up camps, but the following standards take precedence in EPI’s approach:

**Internal Validity:** Using inductive methods, the EPI framework aligns the representation of the dimensions of peace to a particular community or culture, instead of the available literature review or proxy indicators coupled with outside expert opinion.

**External Validity:** Using two-level theory, the EPI framework codes and categorizes everyday indicators into emergent dimensions of peace that can be used to address the issue of the incompatibility of granular indicators across different contexts.

**Reliability:** EPI employs tools such as randomization, Likert scales, verification focus groups, and enumerator monitoring to ensure methodological reliability, while also allowing indicators to be adaptable and reflexive to the changing dynamics of conflicts.

**Precision:** By using indicators identified by communities in their own words, EPIs can reveal sub-state variations in data and more accurately reflect the on-the-ground situation in a textured way that is meaningful to local communities.

**Integrity:** The EPI framework addresses the manipulation of data by primarily ensuring indicators are representative of the community as a whole and not individual opinions of community elites or local NGO staff, thereby mitigating some of the elite capture that often comes with program implementation.

**Timeliness:** Surveys are repeated over time and can be administered as frequently as the dynamics of the conflict dictate and based on the management needs of peacebuilding programs.

COMMUNITIES AT THE HEART OF MEASUREMENT

The Everyday Peace Indicator framework is driven by the premise that beneficiaries are best placed to determine the effectiveness of external interventions, the policies, programs, projects designed to benefit them. However, little concern is paid to interrogating whether the results from top-down, technocratic measurement and evaluation systems are measuring outcomes based on the values and needs of donors, governments and other elite interests, or whether they reflect those of the people the interventions are actually intended to assist. Using people’s own indicators of peace and reconciliation in communities affected by violence is an innovative alternative to existing measurement systems and addresses several of the unanswered questions and criticisms about how the international community can more effectively support localities emerging from conflict to work towards peace and reconciliation.

If you’d like to learn more, or work with us to integrate EPI into your design, monitoring and evaluation systems, visit our website at everydaypeaceindicators.org, or contact principal investigator, Pamina Firchow, at pfirchow@gmu.edu.