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# BLESSING OR BURDEN? THE IMPACT OF PEACE SERVICES ON PEACE AND VIOLENCE IN NEPAL

JEANNINE SUURMOND, ALEXANDROS LORDOS AND  
PRAKASH MANI SHARMA

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## Abstract

*Recent literature highlights the potential of infrastructures for peace for peacebuilding and violence prevention. An increasing number of studies examine cases of infrastructures for peace, yet little is known about the services individuals actually use when facing conflict. This study investigates local agency in the context of infrastructures for peace in Nepal. Adopting a quantitative approach, we explore the relationship between use of third party support for dealing with conflict ('peace services') and individual experiences of peace and violence. Results show that the more respondents reported use of services that actively engage their recipients in dealing with their conflicts, such as mediation, the more peace they experienced in different dimensions of their lives and the lower their propensity for violence was. In contrast, the more respondents reported use of services that require only passive involvement and do not directly focus on the conflict at hand, such as sharing information, the less intrapersonal and intercommunity peace they experienced and the higher their propensity for violence was. Encouraging the use of active peace services could allow more people to enjoy their benefits and ultimately prevent violence and strengthen peace. Future research could further explore the linkages between everyday use of third party support and people's experience of peace and violent behaviour, including direction of effect.*

**Keywords:** infrastructures, peace, violence, services, needs, agency, Nepal, quantitative, impact, peacebuilding

## Introduction

The concept of infrastructures for peace has gained traction with governments, academics, multi- and bilateral organisations, and practitioners (Giessman 2016; Van Tongeren 2013). It has been recognised and used as a framework to design peacebuilding and conflict prevention interventions. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for example, framed its crisis prevention and recovery activities towards building infrastructures for peace (UNDP 2013). Several governments, including those of Ghana and Nepal, integrated infrastructures for peace in national policies and plans.

The *who, what, why, when, where* and *how* of infrastructures for peace is a topic of ongoing discussion (Kovács & Tobias 2016). An often cited definition is the following: 'Infrastructures for peace are a network of interdependent systems, resources, values and skills held by government, civil society and community institutions that promote dialogue

and consultation; prevent conflict and enable peaceful mediation when violence occurs in a society' (UNDP 2013). Infrastructures for peace are said to be embedded in the 'local turn' in peacebuilding, which emphasises the importance of local agency, including customs, culture, structures, history, and practices (Richmond 2012). Few studies, however, investigate the local as having agency in its own right (Paffenholz 2015).

The present study aims to enrich the body of research by exploring local agency in the context of infrastructures for peace in Nepal. If we regard infrastructures for peace as

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infrastructures that deliver services to people with the goal of contributing to peace and preventing violence, it makes sense to ask which services people actually use to restore their sense of peace when they suffer from conflict and what their impact is on violence. More specifically, we hypothesise that the use of third party

support services for dealing with conflict increases people's experience of peace in various dimensions of their lives and reduces their propensity for violence.

Two key features of Nepal motivated the selection of the country as our case study. In 2013, the government of Nepal designated infrastructures for peace as one of the national development goals to garner support for strengthening peace and harmony in the country (Government of Nepal 2013). Yet little data, based on which the government and other stakeholders could track progress towards this goal, are available. Nepal is also home to a variety of infrastructures for peace at diverse levels of society. Among those are traditional justice mechanisms, community mediation committees, and pools of dialogue facilitators. Others were established as a result of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that formally ended the armed conflict between the government and the Unified Communist Party of Nepal in 2006, such as the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, the local peace committees, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Apart from a small number of studies on mental health care and traditional justice practices, we know little about the services the Nepalese turn to in practice when they struggle with conflict. Astrological predictions and advice, for instance, are frequently sought by Nepalese who face conflict, disease, disaster, or important life-decisions (Toffin 2014).

In this paper, we will first describe the 'peace needs–peace services approach' that forms the basis of our argument, followed by our operationalisation of the approach. We then show that individuals' experience of peace and propensity for violence varies with the type of support services they receive. Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings for infrastructures for peace theory and practice, and suggest avenues for future research.

## **'The Peace Needs and Peace Services Approach'**

The peace needs–peace services approach focuses on the support that people seek when they suffer from conflict. Market studies investigate the existing needs ('demand') and available offerings ('supply') in order to inform business development decisions. This type of research is interesting for peacebuilders too, because it can produce bottom-up data that help us better understand the challenges, resources, and choices of a population as a whole.

Infrastructures for peace are here defined as the ‘structures, resources, and processes through which peace services are delivered’; and peace services are those services ‘offered by peace service providers with the goal of addressing peace needs’ (Suurmond & Sharma 2013, 4).

Individuals, communities, and states have peace needs when they are destabilised by conflict and experience reduced negative and/or positive peace (Suurmond et al. 2016). Peace needs can arise in all the dimensions of human life in which negative and positive peace manifest. The dimensions in which conflict can occur are commonly categorised

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as intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup (see for example Cheldelin et al. 2003). Infrastructures for peace hence encompass a multitude of providers who service individuals or groups with various peace needs. Providers can offer their peace services within the framework of an

infrastructure for peace, such as dialogue facilitation offered by a truth and reconciliation commission to support healing and reconciliation, or independently, as in the case of a trusted elder providing advice to conflicting neighbours.

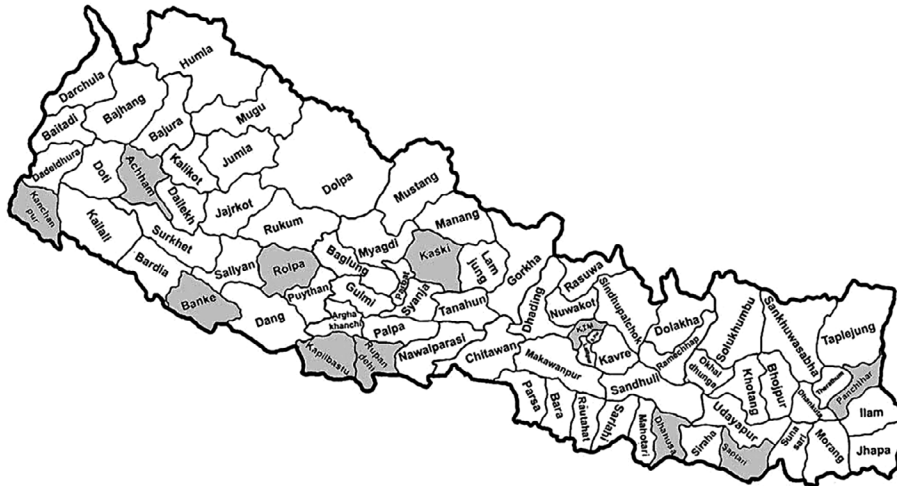
Studies and reports have linked peace services to increased peace and reduced violence, but, rather problematically, to the opposite too. On the one hand, peace services have mitigated peace needs and prevented violence. Peace education, for example, has been associated with reduced aggression and bullying in schools (Santos et al. 2011; Slee & Mohyla 2007). Restorative dialogue has been linked to decreased symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in victims of crime and recidivism rates of offenders (Sherman & Strang 2007). Mediation has been related to more equality and social inclusion in communities (Lederach & Thapa 2012), as well as to an increased likelihood of long-term reduction of tension between conflicting parties (Beardsley et al. 2006). On the other hand, peace services appear to have exacerbated peace needs and violence in some cases. In Côte d’Ivoire, for example, the services delivered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reportedly escalated tensions between opposing camps (IRIN 2014). In Nepal, traditional justice providers have allegedly reinforced patterns of exclusion and marginalisation (Coyle & Dalrymple 2011). In the next section, we explain how we investigated the relation between peace services, peace, and violence.

## The Sites: 40 Villages Across the Flatlands and Hills of Nepal

Data were collected through a survey implemented by the Nepalese NGO Pro Public with support from the Civil Peace Service programme of the German Agency for International Cooperation (ZFD/GIZ) in Nepal and the international NGO SeeD over the course of March and April 2015. The survey encompassed 40 villages and towns located in 10 districts across the country (Map 1).

We adopted a disproportionate stratified sampling approach, using the 2011 Nepal census as the sampling frame and the census enumeration area (EA) as the primary sampling unit. In total, 40 EAs out of 40,000 were used, and 30 households were selected from each EA based on their violence potential (high) and locality type (formal urban, formal rural, and informal areas, hill/flatlands, and East/West). The sparsely populated mountain districts were excluded due to budgetary reasons. We assessed violence potential using expert advice from the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office, the Department

Map 1: Sampling Districts



Source: Nepal Department of Measurement, 2016

for International Development-GIZ Risk Management Office, and the Nepal Institute for Conflict Management, Peace, and Development. Households were also selected (stratified) on the basis of their ethnic, gender, caste, political, and religious identity. We focused on those identity groups for which intergroup tensions had been reported in our conflict assessment. The secondary sampling unit was the household from which individuals were randomly selected on the basis of voter lists and data provided by local administrative offices. Suitable respondents were considered to be any capable adult member of the household.

A total of 1,177 respondents were included in the analysis.<sup>1</sup> The number of male and female respondents was roughly equal (52% men, 48% women). The majority of the respondents were of age 18 to 35 (44%) or of age 36 to 55 (41%) and 15% of the total sample was of age 56 and above. Overall, 29% of the respondents self-identified as belonging to the lower economic class, 69% as belonging to the middle class, and 2% identified themselves as upper class.

## Measuring Peace Services in Multiple Dimensions

The use of peace services was assessed with questions inquiring whether respondents seek support from someone external to their situation for dealing with painful emotions such as confusion, shame, regret, guilt, stress, anxiety, and depression (intrapersonal peace service use) and conflicts with family and friends (interpersonal peace service use). Intercommunity peace service use was assessed slightly differently in order to include the perceptions of respondents without personal experience of this type of conflict. Respondents were asked about their impression of how conflicts between members of their community are usually resolved. Again different questions were developed to assess peace services for the citizen-state dimension, for the reason that conflicts between citizens and the state transcend the personal relationship.<sup>2</sup> Services for this dimension were excluded from our analysis however, due to the qualitative nature of the corresponding set of answers.

Those respondents who affirmed that they seek external, third party support for dealing with painful emotions subsequently were asked to indicate what this third party does to support them, choosing from a list of services. Conflicts with family and friends were assessed in a similar way. Respondents who reported that community conflicts are usually resolved through third party support also reported what such a third party does to help warring community members. It was possible to answer these questions for a maximum of three third parties.

The list of peace services from which respondents could choose focused on services for acute conflict situations. Although no exhaustive inventory of services that can be delivered through infrastructures for peace yet exists, we derived clues from current definitions. Services that have been mentioned include dialogue, consultation, mediation, capacity-building, advice, coordination, and monitoring (UNDP 2013; Hopp-Nishanka 2013). Moreover, we included services based on our review of general peacebuilding literature (partly discussed in the approach), and mental health care and traditional justice practices in Nepal (e.g. World Health Organization [WHO] & Ministry of Health 2006; Upreti 2014).

Technical terms were translated into lay language. The service of mediation, for example, was described as 'helping everyone find a solution together' and the service of arbitration as 'making decisions'. Assuming that conflicts on different levels would call for different peace services, we developed separate lists for each. All lists included an open response option and respondents could select multiple services from each list.

For services to restore intrapersonal peace, respondents could report that their supporter 'just listens to me' (listening); 'tells me what to do' (instructing); 'helps me understand my problem better' (deepening understanding); 'gives me information' (sharing information); 'connects me with other people who have similar experiences' (connecting); 'forecasts my future' (forecasting the future); 'gives me medication' (supplying medicine); and 'tells me what I should do to avert bad luck' (advising on averting bad luck).

Service options for interpersonal peace were 'just listens to me' (listening); 'tells me what to do' (instructing); 'helps me find a solution together with my family/friend to our conflict' (mediating); 'gives me information' (sharing information); 'forecasts my future' (forecasting the future); 'connects me to others with similar experiences' (connecting); 'helps me to talk to my family/friend without shouting' (facilitating dialogue); 'suggests ways to avoid bad luck' (advising on averting bad luck); 'teaches me how to resolve conflicts without using violence' (teaching conflict resolution); and 'teaches me how to communicate more effectively with my family/friend' (teaching effective communication).

For intercommunity peace services, respondents could choose between 'just listens to all parties' (listening); 'makes a decision' (arbitrating); 'gives advice' (giving advice); 'helps everyone to talk to each other in a constructive way' (facilitating dialogue); 'helps everyone understand each other better' (deepening understanding); 'brings the case to court' (litigating); and 'helps everyone find a solution together' (mediating).

## Measuring Peace Needs in Multiple Dimensions

In order to operationalise our definition of peace needs, we drew inspiration from the goals of infrastructures for peace repeatedly cited in the literature:<sup>3</sup> peace, violence prevention, reconciliation, constructive relations, resilience, security, inclusion, justice, and

social cohesion (e.g. Kovács & Tobias 2016; Giessman 2016; Unger et al. 2013; Lederach 2012). Galtung (1996) suggests that, just like health is an ideal state of being, dependent on the absence of disease and the presence of a well-functioning immune system, so is peace dependent on the absence of violence (negative peace) and the presence of well-being, non-violent conflict resolution skills, harmony, and order (positive peace).

The above informed our selection of indicators to capture the experience of negative and positive peace. The indicators represent our operationalisation of peace needs in each of the intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup dimensions. Casting the net as wide as possible within the limitations of our research, we identified indicators relating to social cohesion, human security, and reconciliation (SeeD & UNDP 2015); social psychological obstacles and catalysts of negative and positive peace (Cohrs & Boehnke 2008); conservation of resources

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theory (Hobfoll et al. 2006); mental health (Anderson & Kiehl 2014; Coid et al. 2013; Morley 2015); and resilience (Wagnild & Young 1993; Van Metre 2014).<sup>4</sup>

As can be seen in Table 1, this resulted in a total of 58 indicators: 21 indicators for the intrapersonal dimension, 10 for the interpersonal dimension, 17 for the intercommunity dimension, and 10 for the citizen-state dimension<sup>5</sup> (totalling 31 reverse indicators for negative peace and 27 indicators for positive peace). Each indicator was assessed with a total of three to five relevant questionnaire items. Because the concept of negative peace is characterised by the absence rather than the presence of distinguishing features, it was measured through reverse indicators. All instruments were contextualised to the context of Nepal.<sup>6</sup>

In order to explore the relation between peace service use and violence prevention, we assessed people's propensity for violence independently of their peace needs. To this end, we used a violence index created on the basis of three different questions. Conceptualising violence as harming or hurting (Galtung 1996), the questions were: 'Are you willing to use violence in order to change the conditions in your community or broader society?'; 'To what extent do you feel like causing harm to this group or their possessions?'; and 'Do you sometimes hit another person?'

## Translations, Data Collection, Analysis

The questionnaire was translated from English into Nepali, Maithili, Awadhi, Tharu, and Limbu. The translations were checked by professional translators and different versions piloted in the demographically distinct areas of Kirtipur, Samakushi, and Kalanki (Kathmandu); Kupondole (Lalitpur); and Katungi (Bhaktapur). Lessons learned from these pilots were reflected in the final survey design.<sup>7</sup>

Thirty researchers participated in four days of training prior to conducting the survey. Each research team consisted of one researcher from Kathmandu and two researchers from the district. At least one of the team members was female and one a native local-language speaker. The questionnaire was administered face-to-face in the mother tongue of the participants, by researchers who are also native speakers over the course of on average 2.5 hours. The lead researcher assigned an interviewer to make the first contact with each of the selected households by personal visit or by phone. The research teams

**Table 1: Indicators and Instruments**

		Positive peace		
	Negative peace	Indicators	Instruments	
Intrapersonal dimension	-Anxiety	Adult Self Report Inventory	-Mindfulness -Self-kindness -Common humanity	Self-Compassion Scale
	-Depression			
	-PTSD			
	-Substance use			
	-Anger	Buss Perry Aggression Questionnaire	-Problem-solving -Behaviour regulation -Emotion regulation	Barkley Deficits in Executive Functioning Scale
	-Frankness			
	-Argumentativeness	Self-Report Psychopathy Scale	-Personal life satisfaction	SCORE Index
	-Psychoopathic traits	Self-developed. Sample item: 'Are you currently in a situation in which you have feelings of anxiety?'	-Optimism	Life-Orientation Test Revised
	-Negative affect	Life-Orientation Test Revised		
	-Pessimism	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	-Self-esteem	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
-Self-deprecation	SCORE Index			
-Personal insecurity	Self-developed. Sample item: 'Have you ever been the victim of assault?'	-Compassion	Interpersonal Reactivity Index	
-Victimisation	Buss Perry Aggression Questionnaire (hostility items)	-Spouse social support -Family social support -Friends social support	Perceived Social Support Protocol	
-Sense of injustice	Thomas Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument	-Collaborative conflict style	Thomas Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument	
Interpersonal dimension	-Competing conflict style		-Social competence -Family coherence	Resilience Scale for Adults

(Continued)





**Table 1: (Continued)**

		Positive peace	
	Negative peace	Indicators	Instruments
Intercommunity dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Passive discrimination</li> <li>-Social threat perception</li> <li>-Social distance</li> <li>-Dehumanisation</li> <li>-Intergroup anxiety</li> <li>-Negative stereotypes</li> <li>-Cultural distance</li> <li>-Positive attitudes towards violence</li> <li>-Intergroup mistrust</li> <li>-Social exclusion</li> </ul>	SCORE Index	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Positive feelings towards outgroups</li> <li>-Intergroup contact</li> <li>-Positive attitudes towards forgiveness</li> <li>-Tolerance of diversity</li> <li>-Village social support</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Community conflicts</li> </ul>	<p>Self-developed. Sample item: 'How frequently have you personally experienced disputes over money lending your community?'</p> <p>SCORE Index</p>
Citizen-state dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Perceived corruption</li> <li>-Political insecurity</li> <li>-Economic insecurity</li> <li>-Food insecurity</li> <li>-Health insecurity</li> </ul>	SCORE Index	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Support from local government institutions</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Trust in government institutions</li> <li>-Civic engagement</li> <li>-Civic life satisfaction local</li> <li>-Civic life satisfaction national</li> </ul>

Note: \*References for each instrument are mentioned only once for purposes of clarity.

rotated the role of interviewer to match the gender of the respondent in order to increase comfort. All respondents provided informed consent before participating in the survey and statements to this effect were read before the interview started. A coding system was used to maintain the anonymity of the respondents. Every research team was visited at least once by the Pro Public monitoring team.

Raw scores for peace services, peace needs, and propensity for violence were calculated per respondent. To create the variables for the predictive analysis, we conducted factor analyses to determine underlying patterns among the different peace services and peace needs, and constructed a violence index. The resulting independent variables of active and passive peace services and the dependent variables of four peace dimensions as well as the violence index, were then utilised in structural equation modelling in order to determine what relationship existed, if any, between them. In all cases, a 99% confidence level was used to assess the significance of the findings. The results of the factor analyses are presented below.

## Constructing the Peace Service Dimensions

By adding up the number of times respondents reported a certain type of support, we calculated scores for each of the peace service items. We then ran an exploratory factor analysis including peace services from all levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intercommunity.<sup>8</sup> Factor analysis makes underlying patterns in the data visible so that relationships between data can be interpreted and understood. This statistical technique clusters together items or indicators that vary in tandem into overarching dimensions, while allowing for the possibility that the dimensions themselves are partially correlated. Items which failed to significantly contribute to any peace service dimension were sequentially excluded from the model, until all remaining items were significant. Only those were included in further analysis. A two-dimensional solution emerged that was based on the content of the peace service, rather than the level at which they were offered.

Table 2 shows both dimensions with 11 items each and the strength of their relationship to the underlying dimensions. 'IntraPS', 'InterPS', and 'ComPS' stand for 'intrapersonal peace service', 'interpersonal peace service', and 'intercommunity peace service' respectively. The closer the value of the indicator is to 1, the stronger the relationship to the underlying dimension.

Looking at the nature of the items, the first dimension seems to refer to a more top-down style of support that does not require the user to become actively involved in resolving his or her conflict. For this reason, we labelled it 'passive peace services'.

The second dimension appears to relate to a more deliberative, problem-focused style of support that actively engages the user, and was therefore labelled 'active peace services'.

In conclusion, in seeking third party support for dealing with painful emotions and conflicts, participants tended to differ not on what level they seek services (e.g. whether they seek services to mitigate intrapersonal emotions or community conflict), but rather on the nature of the services being sought (e.g. whether they were services that encouraged active or passive engagement with the issue at stake). The resulting two variables, active and passive peace services, were used as independent variables in the predictive analysis.

**Table 2: Exploratory Factor Analysis of Peace Services**

	Passive peace services	Active peace services
InterPS Advising on averting bad luck	.86	
InterPS Forecasting the future	.84	
InterPS Connecting	.84	
InterPS Sharing information	.83	
InterPS Teaching conflict resolution	.79	
InterPS Teaching effective communication	.78	
IntraPS Forecasting the future	.74	
IntraPS Connecting	.74	
IntraPS Supplying medicine	.72	
IntraPS Advising on averting bad luck	.68	
IntraPS Sharing information	.65	
InterPS Mediating		.84
InterPS Instructing		.77
IntraPS Deepening understanding		.55
ComPS Deepening understanding		.53
ComPS Mediating		.51
IntraPS Listening		.51
IntraPS Instructing		.49
ComPS Giving advice		.46
ComPS Arbitrating		.46
InterPS Listening		.35
ComPS Listening		.25

### Constructing the Peace Dimensions and the Violence Index

After checking the internal consistency of the scale of each indicator (Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the items comprising the indicator; values greater than 0.65 were considered acceptable), we tested whether our selection of indicators, representing peace needs, to measure the intrapersonal, interpersonal, intercommunity, and citizen-state dimensions indeed empirically contributed to four separate dimensions, using the same procedure as described above.

Table 3 shows the results of the exploratory factor analysis. As can be seen, the analysis yielded a four-factor solution, including dimensions for intrapersonal, interpersonal, intercommunity, and citizen-state peace. The closer the value of the indicator is to 1 or -1, the stronger the relationship to the underlying dimension. A negative value indicates an inverse relationship to the dimension.

Thirteen indicators contributed to the first dimension. Looking at the characteristics of the indicators, it appears that all 13 relate to the extent that one is at peace with oneself. This includes being in a sound mental and emotional state and feeling included and fairly treated. In an attempt to best represent the indicators, we therefore labelled this dimension ‘intrapersonal peace’.

**Table 3: Exploratory Factor Analysis of Peace Needs**

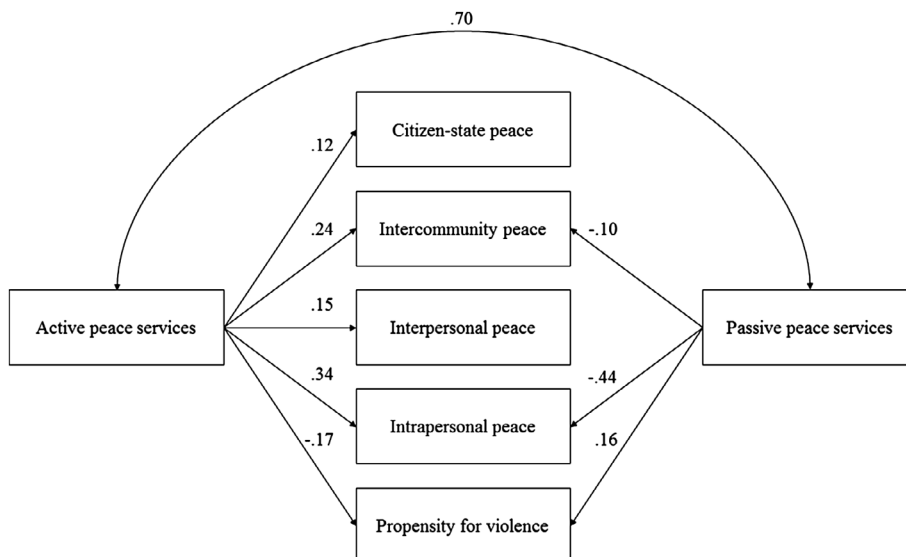
	Intrapersonal peace	Interpersonal peace	Intercommunity peace	Citizen-state peace
Depression	-.81			
Anxiety	-.76			
Emotion regulation	.66			
Sense of injustice	-.59			
Behaviour regulation	.59			
Anger	-.51			
PTSD	-.51			
Argumentativeness	-.46			
Self-esteem	.45			
Problem-solving	.43			
Social exclusion	-.41			
Negative affect	-.40			
Psychopathic traits	-.28			
Village social support		.73		
Neighbouring village social support		.67		
Friends social support		.55		
Civic engagement		.43		
Social competence		.42		
Mindfulness		.33		
Frankness		.33		
Family social support		.30		
Compassion		.27		
Intergroup anxiety			-.74	
Negative stereotypes			-.72	
Dehumanisation			-.67	
Intergroup mistrust			-.59	
Positive feelings towards out-groups			.53	
Social threat perception			-.49	
Civic life satisfaction national				.88
Civic life satisfaction local				.66
Perceived corruption				-.30
Trust in government institutions				.25

Nine indicators contributed to a second dimension, pertaining to how one relates with other individuals in one's own environment, to the psychological qualities that enable peaceful interpersonal relations and to whether one is supported by the members of one's environment. This dimension was labelled 'interpersonal peace'.

The six indicators that contributed to the third dimension refer to how open one is to peaceful relations with members of other groups and/or communities. This dimension was labelled ‘intercommunity peace’. Four indicators contributed to the final, fourth dimension. Because this dimension relates to the nature of the relationship between the citizen and the state, we labelled it ‘citizen-state peace’. The factor analysis thus confirmed that most of our selected indicators, or peace needs, cluster into four categories. These peace dimensions were used as dependent variables in the predictive analysis. The fifth dependent variable for this analysis was the violence index. Scores for each of the questions relating to the propensity of an individual to display violent behaviour were aggregated into an average overall score.

To test our hypothesis that the use of peace services would increase people’s experience of peace in various dimensions of their lives and reduce their propensity for violence, we used structural equation modelling (SEM). SEM is a technique for representing, estimating, and testing a network of relationships between variables (e.g. regressions, correlations). In this case, both active and passive peace services were modelled as independent variables and the different peace dimensions and the violence index as dependent variables. We furthermore assumed that active and passive peace services would be correlated, insofar as respondents were likely to utilise both categories of services in their daily lives. The results are shown below in Figure 1. The figure shows a structural equation model of peace services, peace dimensions, and propensity for violence (standardised estimates; N = 1,177). The single-headed arrows represent regression coefficients, the double-headed arrows represent correlation coefficients. The closer the value of the coefficients is to -1 or 1, the stronger the negative or positive relationship between the variables (all significant at  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Figure 1: Peace Services, Peace Dimensions, and Propensity for Violence**



The specified model was found to display excellent fit ( $\chi^2 = 3.39$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.49$ ). The non-significance in this case implies that the specified model does not significantly differ from the underlying structure of the empirical dataset.<sup>9</sup> As can be seen, the use of peace services significantly predicts people's experience of peace and propensity for violence. Specifically, the more respondents report active peace services use, the more intrapersonal, interpersonal, intercommunity, and citizen-state peace they experience and the lower their propensity for violence is.

In marked contrast, the more respondents report passive peace services use, the higher their propensity for violence is and the less intrapersonal and intercommunity peace they experience. Passive peace services do not predict any change in the levels of interpersonal peace and citizen-state peace.

The correlation between active and passive peace services suggests that most people report use of both kinds of services. The benefit of active peace services, however, seems to be partially cancelled out by the negative impact of passive peace services, as demonstrated by the negative relationship between passive peace services use and intrapersonal peace, intercommunity peace, and propensity for violence.

## Discussion

This study demonstrates that people in Nepal use services that can be delivered through infrastructures for peace, such as mediation and consultation, to more or less effectively restore their sense of peace when facing conflict. We can therefore say that people in Nepal exercise agency in the context of infrastructures for peace.

The specific purpose of this research was to test the hypothesis that use of third party support for dealing with conflict would increase people's experience of peace in various dimensions of their lives and reduce their propensity for violence. Our findings confirm the hypothesis, albeit with an important qualification. The more respondents reported the use of services that actively engage their users in dealing with their conflicts, the more intrapersonal, interpersonal, intercommunity, and citizen-state peace they experienced and the lower their propensity for violence was. Remarkably, the more respondents reported use of services that require only passive involvement and do not directly focus on the issue at hand ('passive peace services'), the less intrapersonal and intercommunity peace they experienced and the higher their propensity for violence was. It seems that active peace services are a blessing for their users because they effectively meet peace needs, whereas passive peace services aggravate peace needs and in so doing add to their users' burdens.

An explanation for the difference in impact between passive and active peace services could lie in their content. Passive peace services, including advising on averting bad luck, forecasting the future, connecting, sharing information, teaching conflict resolution, and teaching effective communication, have in common that they do not require users to actively attend to their own conflicts. By contrast, active peace services, including mediating, deepening understanding, giving advice, instructing, listening, and arbitrating, more deliberately encourage users to engage with their issues. The role of the user, passive or active, as well as the focus of the service, directly on the problem or not, thus varies depending on the service category.

The findings can be understood in the light of literature on individual agency. Agency is an actor's or a group's ability to make purposeful choices (Samman & Santos 2009). The relationship between agency and well-being in multiple dimensions of life is well established (Welzel & Inglehart 2010). Lack of agency, or external locus of control, has been linked to reduced psychological well-being (Griffin 2014), as well as to dependent and fragile societies (De Coning 2016). Perhaps

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**The effectiveness of peace services, and therefore infrastructures for peace, may thus depend on their ability to increase the agency of the individuals, communities, or countries they aim to serve.**

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active peace services have a beneficial effect because they increase the ability of their users to imagine constructive alternatives to violence as a means for achieving one's goals ('conflict literacy' (Galtung 2000)). In other words, having agency in conflict may be conducive to increased peace with oneself and others. The effectiveness of peace

services, and therefore infrastructures for peace, may thus depend on their ability to increase the agency of the individuals, communities, or countries they aim to serve. A first step in exploring this relation in more detail could be to review case studies of infrastructures for peace from the perspective of agency.

Alternatively, the difference in impact between peace services might be due to their focus of attention. Active peace services appear to be oriented towards tackling their users' challenges head on. Possibly, they are effective simply because they resolve the problem. Passive peace services, which do not appear to concentrate on the issue at hand, may leave people's problems unaddressed or addressed insufficiently, with undesirable outcomes as a result.

The finding that passive peace services include 'advising on averting bad luck' and 'forecasting the future' suggests that people turn to traditional service providers for support. This is in line with previous studies that identified traditional healers and religious leaders as primary mental health care providers in Nepal (e.g. Pradhan et al. 2013). As with peace services, no systemic data regarding the effectiveness of such mental health services in Nepal are available (Luitel et al. 2015). Because our results show that traditional methods for mitigating emotional turmoil and conflict may do more harm than good, it is worthwhile to further examine this link given their widespread use.

Unlike use of active peace services, passive peace services use did not predict interpersonal and citizen-state peace in our sample. In the case of interpersonal peace, it might be due to competing effects of passive peace services, where the mere act of interacting with the passive service provider provides a boost to interpersonal functioning, which is then lost due to the detrimental effects of problem avoidance, as earlier discussed. In the case of citizen-state peace, the lack of association may be due to lack of relevance. Perhaps these passive services are meant for private issues and do not extend towards the domain of state-related grievances. It remains to be seen whether results would be similar if peace services specific for the citizen-state dimension are included in the analysis.

A role for infrastructures for peace in peacebuilding and violence prevention hence seems to lie in the delivery of active peace services. Our study provides empirical evidence for the theory that mediation, arbitration, and consultation and counselling, in as far as they encompass giving advice, listening, instructing, and deepening understanding, are services to be delivered by infrastructures for peace. Moreover, our results raise questions about the value of passive peace services in responding to acute contexts. It is important to recall here that our methodology focused on situations in which active peace needs

required immediate relief. It is plausible, and studies confirm, that passive peace services such as 'teaching conflict resolution' do in fact contribute to violence prevention, provided that they are offered in less pressing circumstances.

Based on our findings, policy-makers, practitioners, and donors in Nepal are advised to shift the balance between the use of active and passive peace services in favour of the former. Allowing more people to experience the benefit of active peace services could prevent violence and increase the experience of peace of Nepalese citizens. Such a shift

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**Based on our findings, policy-makers, practitioners, and donors in Nepal are advised to shift the balance between the use of active and passive peace services in favour of the former.**

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can be encouraged by establishing referral systems between passive and active peace service providers (e.g. astrologers and mediators), increasing access to active peace services; and lowering the barriers to active peace services through financing and marketing campaigns. The continuation of community mediation in the villages and

municipalities seems warranted. When determining the impact of peace services, individual agency and service focus could be included as indicators in monitoring and evaluation plans.

A key limitation of this research is that it is not possible to establish direction of effect. Our data could tell the reverse story: individuals who already enjoy high levels of peace, and are not predisposed to violence, use active peace services more frequently than individuals with the opposite profile, who resort to passive peace services. Should this be the case, an explanation could be that individuals who experience high levels of peace are less afraid to directly tackle their conflicts than individuals experiencing low levels of peace, who may fear increasing their discomfort this way. In order to conclusively clarify the direction of effect, additional investigation and in particular longitudinal research is recommended.

This study has gone some way towards enhancing our knowledge of the peacebuilding landscape in Nepal, including individual preferences in terms of when and where people seek support for dealing with conflict, which local peace capacities exist, and whether the received services are effective. Replications of this research in other countries could test the robustness of our peace needs–peace services approach and operationalisation, and assess the generalisability of the findings. Some of the passive peace services in this study, such as fortune-telling, are perhaps typical for Nepal. It would be interesting to see whether similar results are found in countries where, for example, the Catholic practice of 'hearing confessions' is used to address personal matters of conflict and peace.

There is much still to learn about everyday peace services use and violence. To more conclusively establish the relation between third party support and violence prevention, self-report data like ours could be triangulated with behavioural data from criminal records and studies on the belligerence of communities and countries. Expanding our knowledge of people's experience of peace and violent behaviour on the one hand and the impact of peace services on the other, so we believe, is a promising avenue for deepening our understanding of infrastructures for peace.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The original sample size was 1,200, but 23 interviews were lost due to the Gorkha earthquake. This earthquake struck Kathmandu and surrounding districts on 25 April 2015. With a magnitude of 7.8 on the Richter scale, it killed 9,000 people and destroyed more than 500,000 homes. Hundreds of aftershocks with a magnitude higher than 4 followed.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, we asked which institutions help to prevent violence in the community; who in the community is advocating against discrimination and exclusion; and how many times the respondents experienced a dispute with a government agency in the last two years.

<sup>3</sup> We did not identify a previous operationalisation of the 'for peace' part of 'infrastructures for peace' (the needs-side) in the literature on infrastructures for peace.

<sup>4</sup> Two well-known instruments, the Global Peace Index and the Pillars of Peace framework, measure negative and positive peace from the national rather than individual perspective.

<sup>5</sup> We changed the wording of the two categories 'intragroup' and 'intergroup' dimensions of human interaction identified by Cheldelin et al. (2003) to 'intercommunity' and 'citizen-state' to more adequately capture the content of the indicators.

<sup>6</sup> This included adjustments to the wording of items to ensure that they would be effectively understood. For example, the Buss-Perry aggression scale item 'some of my friends think I'm a hothead' was rephrased to 'some of my friends think I quickly become angry'.

<sup>7</sup> For example, we transformed all self-report statements to interview-style questions because the former created confusion, and offered the respondents financial compensation to prevent impatience with the duration of the questionnaire from becoming a problem in the main study.

<sup>8</sup> Using Maximum Likelihood Estimation with Promax Rotation.

<sup>9</sup> Additional statistical information is available from the authors upon request.

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