

Restorative practices: Designing a program

A Phased Framework for Peacebuilding Program Developers

This framework treats peacebuilding as the primary reference class. It is offered as a practical sequencing tool: a program developer can move through the four phases in order, returning to earlier phases as conditions change.

Guiding Principles

- Anchor the program in positive peace, not only the absence of conflict.
- Treat the liberal-peace critique and the restorative-veneer critique as structurally identical: both warn that the language of repair can mask unchanged power relations. Design against that risk from the outset.
- Build relational accountability into structures, not only into events.
- Center the people and communities the program serves as co-designers, not recipients.

The Four Phases

Phase	What to do	Key artifact
1. Assess	Map the conflict context, existing capacity, and stakeholders. Identify where structural violence is embedded.	Context and stakeholder analysis
2. Design	Define scope, program type, and roles. Decide whether restorative practice is a standalone offering, an embedded module, or a full concentration.	Program scope document and role map
3. Deliver	Train facilitators, run circles and conferences, establish practice sites and partnerships.	Curriculum, facilitator pool, partnership agreements (see programming examples)
4. Sustain	Evaluate against positive-peace outcomes, institutionalize practice, and build the next cohort of facilitators.	Evaluation framework and sustainability plan

Practitioner Roles

- Program lead: holds the design and the relationships.
- Facilitators: trained in the facilitation of circles and conferences; drawn where possible from the served community.
- Partner liaisons: maintain the practice sites and community access.
- Evaluator: tracks outcomes against positive-peace measures, not only activity counts.

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A Note on Sequencing

The phases are ordered, but not rigid. Assessment findings often reshape design; delivery surfaces needs that send a developer back to assessment. The discipline the framework asks for is that no phase be skipped, most program failures trace to a design built without genuine assessment, or a delivery launched without a sustainability plan.