



KROC SCHOOL
Institute for Peace and Justice

STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT

2021-2023



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At the Mexican-US Border, Dana Thonglyvong
Woman Peacemakers 2019 and city landscape, Kroc Institute, Institute for Peace and Justice
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Our Mission

Together with partners, we develop and champion evidence-based, justice-centered solutions to ending cycles of violence.

We pursue this mission through our work with partners in the San Diego-Tijuana region and around the world, and as part of the Kroc School of Peace Studies at the University of San Diego. The Kroc IPJ is proud to be the bridge between theory and practice at the Kroc School, driving forward the School's mission to equip the next generation of changemakers to shape more peaceful and just societies.

The Current Moment

The moment we are living through calls for an ambitious strategy. With the rise of authoritarianism around the world, the challenge of recovering from the COVID pandemic, the urgent threat of climate change, and the fundamental racial and political reckoning in the United States, the work of the Kroc IPJ has never been more important.

This moment requires the Kroc IPJ to fully live into both the peace and the justice in its name, both within the United States and globally. It means working to reduce violence and build more peaceful societies. It also means taking a justice-centered approach to our work and ensuring we don't create a false peace for some at the cost of justice for all.

Our Approach: *Learning With*

The Kroc IPJ has its greatest impact when it shifts policy and practice toward more effective approaches to preventing and reducing violence. We do this through an approach we call “Learning With.” Learning With means co-creating actionable research that:

- Is deeply grounded in, and informed by, the lived realities of our partners who are working in their own communities and beyond to end cycles of violence;
- Is made rigorous by our place within a university ecosystem; and
- Creates new understanding of, and practical strategies for, ending cycles of violence.

Learning With means combining evidence and relationships to create positive change.

It is a collaborative, dynamic process where we learn with partners and those partners learn alongside one another in order to develop and apply effective solutions in their work.

We learn with a wide range of partners. In our externally facing efforts, we work with community-based organizations, local government officials, national policymakers, international NGOs, global/multilateral organizations, and more. At the Kroc IPJ, we are open to working with any partner that can create actionable learning and can help leverage that learning to drive forward positive change.

We also take a Learning With approach to fulfilling the academic mission of the Kroc School. We learn with students, faculty, our colleagues within the University of San Diego, and members of the broader San Diego community. The research of our colleagues in the Kroc School informs the work of the Kroc IPJ and the learning we produce is integrated back into the Kroc School courses and curricula.

Our approach has four components that show up differently across our work, though always in ways that reinforce one another:

- **We convene and strengthen networks**, bringing together network members physically (making use of our space in San Diego), virtually, and in hybrid formats. We also work to develop and strengthen networks of partners over the longer term.
- **We co-create actionable learning**, either conducting research along with partners or serving as a conduit for knowledge generated elsewhere.
- **We accompany partners** as they leverage evidence to design, test, and scale solutions. We serve as trusted thought partners and engage over the long term.

We communicate ideas to policymakers and practitioners within and beyond our immediate networks and to students and other members of the Kroc School community. We aim to shift the way individuals and organizations think and operate on key issues, such as the value of inclusion in peacebuilding processes or the risks of securitized approaches to addressing threats of violence.

Our Work

Across all of our work, the core of the Kroc IPJ's mission remains the same: to end cycles of violence in ways that advance justice for all. This mission is inspired by Sustainable Development Goal 16's call to significantly reduce all forms of violence and to build more peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. The Kroc IPJ focuses in particular on situations where communities are suffering from politically, socially, and economically disruptive violence. This is violence that impacts whole communities or groups within a community, prevents communities from reaching other important social goals, and prevents individuals from living lives free of fear.

Current Initiatives

Three interconnected thematic areas make up the current work of the Kroc IPJ:

Cross-Border Initiatives: From our location in the San Diego-Tijuana metropolis, we engage in action-oriented research and meaningful community partnerships to strengthen peace and justice at the U.S.-Mexico border. We work with local scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to reduce violence and to counteract vulnerabilities for women, provide opportunities for = youth, and protect migrants.

Urban Violence and the Role of Cities in Reducing Violence Globally: There is a wealth of knowledge and tools on how to prevent violence in cities, where the majority of humanity resides and where violence tends to concentrate (killing four times as many people as wars each year). But this knowledge is not sufficiently well-known or deployed. We work to develop and amplify evidence-informed practice, spreading it through peer and advocacy networks that can simultaneously apply incentives and accountability to ensure good practice is used to save lives.

Women, Peace, and Security: Together with local women peacebuilders and international partners, the Kroc IPJ identifies the most critical peacebuilding challenges facing women leaders around the world. We then co-develop applied research to identify evidence-based solutions to those challenges and work with peace leaders around the world to put those solutions into action.

While the above represents what we currently do, we remain open to evolving our work and developing new initiatives and thematic areas in order to maximize our impact.

Commonalities and Differences Across our Programs

All of our work...	But with variety in...
Takes a “Learning With” approach.	The mix of the four components mentioned above (convening, co-creating learning, accompanying, and communicating).
Has the ultimate goal of reducing violence.	The pathways from our work to that goal.
Is attuned to the role of justice in ending violence.	How much we focus on violence directly or work on broader systemic and structural issues.
Works with a range of actors and organizations.	Which mix of actors and organizations we engage.



Pathways for Change

Our work to reduce cycles of violence through our Learning With approach creates change through a variety of pathways. Some of our work focuses on inclusion of marginalized groups in peacebuilding processes in order to improve the results of those processes. Other work bridges divides across sectors (e.g. from actors focused explicitly on peacebuilding to other fields) to improve program effectiveness, mutual learning, and collaboration. Other work engages partners with evidence to shift a critical mass of policymakers toward better approaches or might create new constituencies to pressure policymakers and politicians to pursue more effective or more just policies.

This diversity of causal pathways is core to our work. Violence can’t be ended through a single method or a linear process. We do not have a full understanding of the most effective pathways, nor are effective pathways consistent from place to place. This requires us to experiment, innovate, and advance learning across multiple approaches.

Kroc School Initiatives

In addition to our programmatic initiatives, the Kroc IPJ works to support the academic mission of the Kroc School. This includes:

-  Integrating Kroc School students into our programmatic work as Practice Fellows, interns, or through other short-term opportunities.
-  Designing and implementing a wide range of events for the Kroc School and San Diego community.

- Hosting the inaugural Activist-in-Residence during Fall 2021 and future Activists-in-Residence.
- Staff members teaching as professors of practice or participating in Kroc School service committees.

The primary additional goal the Kroc IPJ will pursue under this strategy is to integrate the learning being produced by the Institute in a more systematic way into Kroc School courses, curricula, and other elements of the Kroc School degree programs.

Results: What Success Looks Like

It is important to put down clear markers of success at both the level of our initiatives and of our organization. As an organization we measure success in four ways, all tied to our Learning With approach.

Outputs: The first step in assessing success is setting clear targets, both for the quantity and quality of our outputs. We acknowledge that outputs do not necessarily create change in the world, but our ability to continually create high-quality learning outputs is a foundation for everything we do and an indicator that our organization is functioning at a high level.

Impact: The second and more difficult step is assessing whether those outputs create impact. Are we seeing identifiable shifts or improvements in policy or practice as the result of our work? Our assessment of impact is guided by the change pathways we have identified for our work. So, in assessing impact, we will ask the following impact questions:




1. Has our work contributed to policymakers and practitioners learning what approaches to violence reduction are effective, as well as how to implement those approaches?
2. Has our work facilitated ongoing peer-to-peer learning among those working on violence reduction?
3. Has our work contributed to the formation of new, more interdisciplinary, more inclusive coalitions of actors working on particular problems of violence reduction?
4. Has our work created new constituencies that support more effective approaches to violence reduction?
5. Has our work “changed the conversation” or created space for new items on the policy agenda in ways that create more effective approaches to violence reduction?

These are hard questions that defy clear and definitive answers. Nonetheless, they will serve as a guide as we systematically gather evidence to document our impact.

Profile: Raising the profile of the Kroc IPJ advances our impact by extending the reach of our work, by allowing us to reach new audiences, and by creating possibilities for new partnerships and funding. It is also an important proxy indicator for the impact we are having: if people are paying attention to you and know the work you are doing, it is more likely that the work matters.

We aim to raise our profile in a series of concentric circles beginning with the Kroc School community, and moving outward to the University of San Diego, the broader San Diego community, and finally to key stakeholders in the broader fields in which we work. These concentric circles will also be used as the basis to measure whether we are succeeding in our efforts to raise our profile.

Contributing to Kroc School Success: In achieving success, the Kroc IPJ also contributes to the Kroc School achieving its strategic goals. Three of the school's strategic goals are of particular relevance:

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 Accelerate Impact: The Kroc IPJ will contribute to this goal by increasing the impact of its programming and better documenting that impact.
- 
 Grow With Quality: The Kroc IPJ will contribute to this goal by creating opportunities for students, such as the Practice Fellows initiative, that support the recruitment of top students to the School.
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 Enhance Visibility and Reputation: The Kroc IPJ will contribute to this goal through its work with partners in San Diego and globally, as well as by creating compelling stories to tell through the work it does.

Assessment Strategy

The Kroc IPJ's strategy to assess its success has a monitoring and an evaluation component.

Monitoring Strategy: Within three months of releasing this strategic plan, the Kroc IPJ will develop a monitoring strategy that describes how it will track progress on outputs, impact, profile, and contribution to Kroc School goals. The monitoring strategy will be used to track progress biannually. Based on the biannual monitoring reports, the Kroc IPJ team will have reflection sessions to understand what has worked, what has not, and what course corrections are needed.

Evaluation: The Kroc IPJ will complete a holistic evaluation of the Institute by the end of calendar year 2023. The evaluation will be guided by the impact questions laid out above.

Resources, Growth, and the Team

The Kroc IPJ is privileged to be funded by an endowment. The endowment provides resources which allow us to be strategic and intentional about what we do and how. Nonetheless, it is important, and the responsibility of every team member at the Institute, to raise external funds to support our work. It is important because it allows us to expand our impact and because it holds us accountable for producing high-quality work to those outside the Institute.

To meet the ambitious goals laid out in this plan and to be a more resilient organization, the Kroc IPJ will raise sufficient funds to increase its core staff by 50-100%. This would mean Kroc IPJ would grow from a core team of six to a core team of 9-12 staff members.

As the Kroc IPJ grows, it will:

- Increase the diversity of core Kroc IPJ staff. Of particular importance is increasing ethnic, racial, and country-of-origin diversity on the team, and increasing the range of socio-economic backgrounds on our team.
- Meet the fundraising goals given to the Kroc IPJ by the Kroc School and the University of San Diego.
- Stay authentic to our mission, our strategy, and our values while raising funds. We will not raise funds for the sake of raising funds, raise funds for programs that take us off strategy, or raise funds that in any way compromise our values.

Finally, as the Kroc IPJ grows, we will strengthen the unique nature of our team. The Kroc IPJ team embodies the Learning With approach. Our team has deep programmatic experience, understands how to develop authentic partnerships, and has expertise in conducting actionable, applied research. Most importantly, every team member thinks flexibly, creatively, and holistically about how to leverage evidence to drive positive change.

Our To Do List

There will be many things to do in order to implement this strategy. Below we list just some of the specific actions we will take to push it forward.

- *Increase Opportunities for Outside Researchers and Thinkers at the Kroc IPJ:* As a small institute located far from many of the other institutions in our field, there is always a risk that the Kroc IPJ could become isolated and insular. To counter this risk, the Kroc IPJ will increase the number of opportunities for outside researchers and thinkers to engage with the Institute through mechanisms like visiting scholar appointments, non-residential fellows, “in-residence” programs, and so on. The newly-developed “Activist-in-Residence” program provides one example.
- *Implement Changes to Strengthen Kroc IPJ as a Learning Organization:* As we learn with others, we must ensure that the Kroc IPJ is itself a “learning organization”. To do this, we will implement organizational changes such as: dedicating time for reflection on substantive issues; finalizing our monitoring plan and using it for regular reviews of our work; and dedicating resources to experimentation and innovation.
- *Infuse Kroc School Degree Programs with Kroc IPJ Learning:* Students participate as fellows and interns in Kroc IPJ programming and Kroc IPJ staff engage with students in a myriad of ways, including teaching, planning events, guest lecturing and so on. Less has been done to connect the learning produced by the Kroc IPJ with the Kroc School. Under this strategy, the Kroc IPJ will undertake a more systematic effort to integrate the learning the Kroc IPJ produces into the curricula of the Kroc School.

Photo credit: Adobe Stock

Conclusion

The generosity of Joan B. Kroc provides the Kroc IPJ both an opportunity and a responsibility. To honor her generosity, fulfill that responsibility, and drive forward her vision, the Kroc IPJ must rise to meet the moment we are in. With our partners, we must use all of the resources and capacities we have to build peace with justice. This document provides the blueprint to do just that.