COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECTS

HOW TO MAKE AID MORE EFFECTIVE FOR PEOPLE AFFECTED BY CONFLICT AND FRAGILITY

As signatories to the *Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation* and the *New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States*[1] discuss how to make aid more effective in countries affected by conflict and instability, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects offers some practical guidance based on nearly two decades of evidence gathered by listening to people in communities who have lived through conflict and who are working to support peace. Based on their experiences and judgements about the effects of the international aid efforts meant to support peace and development, people in recipient communities suggest to:

ACT ON THE COMMITMENT TO "DO NO HARM." [2] Most governments and aid agencies have acknowledged that aid can exacerbate tensions and divisions in societies—or support local capacities for peace.[3] However, international aid is still provided and utilized in ways that continue to reinforce divisions and which miss opportunities to help promote peace and sustainable development.

- **Context matters.** Understanding actual and potential drivers of conflict—and how aid may affect them— can help prevent negative effects and violence in ALL situations, not just in fragile and conflict-affected situations. In Kenya before the last presidential elections, one international aid agency stopped requiring regular conflict analysis in response to pressures from donors to use other planning frameworks despite the warning signs of impending political crisis. Important opportunities to address growing tensions and to prevent post-election violence through conflict sensitive aid were missed.

- **Relationships matter.** Recipients of aid at the community level stress that HOW aid providers work is equally important as WHAT they provide. They suggest that development processes and results, at both national and local levels, hinge on respectful relationships and partnerships between aid providers and aid recipients. Transparency and open dialogue—with citizens, not just governments--about differing agendas and priorities can increase trust and engage people in decisions that directly affect their lives.

LINK CONFLICT ANALYSIS WITH POVERTY ANALYSIS. When poverty and conflict analyses are linked, the result is a more complete understanding of the structures and institutions that maintain inequalities and contribute to conflict. Over the long term, when these factors are not addressed, the effectiveness of poverty reduction and development efforts can be undermined. Rwanda's economic growth in the 1960s and '70s and the large presence of international development actors in 1990s did not help prevent the genocide. In Cote d'Ivoire, Yemen and Sri Lanka, insufficient attention to the societal divisions and potential causes of conflict led the international aid community to invest in programs that exacerbated conflict factors.

- **Determine poverty reduction strategies with conflict reduction in mind.** Conflict analysis is essential for all country-wide assessment processes and must influence poverty reduction strategies. Further, when done well, joint conflict analyses that involve a broad array of international, national and local stakeholders not only lead to better planning and more sustainable development results, but also provide forums for conflicting parties to engage in mutual dialogue and to develop a shared understanding of conflict and poverty drivers that undermine long-term development efforts.

- **Measure impacts on factors that drive conflict, not just development outcomes.** Aid that contributes to measurable development outcomes can reinforce divisions and contribute to future conflict—or support

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[1] **http://www.aideffectiveness.org/busanhlf4/images/stories/hlf4/OUTCOME_DOCUMENT_-_FINAL_EN.pdf** and **http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/35/50/49151944.pdf**

[2] For more information on the Do No Harm framework and project, see the CDA website **www.cdainc.com**

[3] **http://www.oecd.org/document/12/0,3343,en_2649_33693550_42113676_1_1_1_1,00.html**

local capacities for peace. Using locally defined indicators can help to capture the effects of programs and policies on inter-group relations and local conflict dynamics and to document the impact of aid on drivers of conflict. In several post-conflict countries, such as Burundi and Liberia, reforms in the security and justice sectors have resulted in better functioning police and courts, but these outcomes are not sufficient indicators of durable progress. When a particular societal group continues to be marginalized, persecuted, and/or disproportionally hired and promoted within these newly reformed institutions, the legitimacy and effectiveness of these institutions is undermined and tensions can be exacerbated.

ENSURE STATEBUILDING AND PEACEBUILDING STRATEGIES ARE MUTUALLY REINFORCING. Governments in conflict-affected states are often simultaneously development actors and parties to conflict. Therefore aid providers in these contexts should ensure that aid is not manipulated for political advantage, and that it is contributing towards a more peaceful society. A number of strategies and approaches have proven helpful.

- **State-centric aid can feed into conflict dynamics by privileging particular groups or agendas.** The work of building and reforming state institutions is inseparable from redistribution of power and influence. In many post-conflict situations, state and local elite rivalries remain deeply entrenched in the local political culture. In Mozambique, people describe a zero-sum mindset in which political parties vie for total control over the state, in order to perpetuate the entrenched patron-client system. A similar picture emerges in post-conflict Liberia, Burundi and Tajikistan, where elements of the political elite have captured parts of the state to further their political goals and economic benefits. Hence, an analysis of political relationships and dynamics among elites, as well as connections between other power brokers and groups in the society is essential. Based on this knowledge, the way aid is given should be adjusted to avoid reinforcing one group's agenda or feeding into destructive relationships that can undermine the prospects for peace in the long-term.

- **Achieving stability is essential but not sufficient for lasting peace.** Minimalist political goals of achieving stability have been met in several places, but too often these approaches reward unrepresentative governments, entrench preexisting power dynamics and marginalize key domestic actors (including civil society). Case studies of the peace processes in Cambodia and Tajikistan reveal that many local people accept an autocratic regime because it brings stability—for them a higher priority than democracy after decades of war—but it has not increased their ownership of peacebuilding and development efforts.

- **Political problems require political solutions.** Effective conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts have to address key drivers of the conflict, which are often political. In order for peacebuilding aid to make a difference and for peace to be sustained, it must address the fundamental political issues driving conflict. As a Lebanese NGO director in Beirut said, "Conflict resolution concepts don't work in Lebanon—it's not about two people not liking each other; you need a political solution. Aid money for preventing violence is promoting a false reality."

MAKE LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS TO ACHIEVE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT. Too often, rapidly shifting political agendas and funding priorities can result in fragmented and incomplete peacebuilding and development efforts. When donors change their priorities too quickly, ending funding for one type of programming and taking up another or switching from one set of local institutions to another, it produces diffuse action, promotes competition between local actors, and undermines effectiveness. Such rapid swings reveal a strategic failure as donor governments react to new fashions in aid or assume that changes in the phase of conflict represents progress on addressing fundamental conflict drivers and sources of violence. Evidence shows that donors often presume that the signing of a peace agreement means that funding of peacebuilding efforts can be rapidly brought to a close. Sadly, this is rarely the case. Peacebuilding should not be seen as a transitional stage between conflict and development, but should be a lens for assessing all continuing development efforts, whether or not there is overt violence.

December 2011