

Making Development Aid work: Ensuring conflict and peace sensitivity in development programming.
Seminar paper for Central Queensland University, July 26th, 2006

Dr Rebecca Spence
Centre for Peace Studies,
University of New England,
Armidale,
NSW
Rspence1@une.edu.au

Abstract.

The process of delivering humanitarian and development assistance in conflict prone and conflict-affected areas is fraught with difficulty. Unless assistance is given in a conflict sensitive fashion, it can be diverted to the war economy, can exacerbate the conflict and can have a variety of other negative impacts. However, if donor assistance is given with a longer-term peacebuilding process in mind, then the benefits can be substantial in terms of creating active peace constituencies and promoting alternatives to violence.

Using examples from post tsunami Aceh and the Solomons Islands, this seminar explores what can and does go badly wrong in development programming in conflict-affected societies; and what can and is being done to produce better peace outcomes through changes to development programming.

Introduction

The past decade has seen increasing intervention in conflict and post-conflict processes in the Asia-Pacific region. Australian Personnel are currently involved in operations in East Timor, the Solomons, and have been involved in Bougainville and Cambodia. The dynamics of revitalising conflict affected societies are everchanging and peace operations now incorporate a larger non-military element. This is in recognition that stable peace cannot be brought about by military intervention alone but is dependent on a complex range of humanitarian, socio-economic and socio-political processes. The facilitation and implementation of such processes in conflict-affected situations requires a variety of actors and interventions and increasingly the provision of resources and assistance from international organizations. The United Nations and its many agencies, the World Bank, other governments, international non government organizations and churches all play an increasing role in providing resources and personnel to facilitate recovery and a return to sustainable peace. Such international assistance can and does help create the initial peace, sustain agreements and accords and supplement the transition from

conflict. However, this increased intervention role that international agencies and governments have played has come with some significant costs. Over the last decade there has been a growing realisation that humanitarian and development assistance given in conflict prone and conflict affected areas sometimes feeds conflict rather than alleviates it.

In other papers (Spence 1999; Spence 2002; Spence 2006) I have identified three persistent errors that plague post conflict peacebuilding and development activities :

- a focus upon immediate tasks and short term projects,
- an emphasis on hierarchical political processes resulting in a reluctance to engage local participation, and
- a concentration on political and economic transition to the detriment of longer-term social and psychological transformation (Lederach 1997).

These I have argued impede the addressing of the root causes of the conflict, the mobilisation of indigenous resources; and, the development of alternative positive peace-promoting visions. For example, the introduction of hierarchical governance models imposed by the United Nations Transitional Authorities as witnessed in East Timor and Cambodia and the exclusion of local people in the design and implementation of peacebuilding projects as has happened in Bougainville perpetuate structural inequities by privileging external modes of intervention and externally designed systems over indigenous resources and governance models. Furthermore, peacebuilding and recovery processes can promote further conflict by unfairly distributing monies and projects so that community divisions are reinforced rather than healed such as witnessed in Somalia; by distorting the local micro economy as happened in Cambodia; by introducing and promoting systems of inequity where some are privileged over the majority; by creating a system of dependency; and by unwittingly engaging with belligerents rather than supporting local peacemakers.

Lack of cohesion between donors and recipients, between international and local NGOs, between governments and the people they purport to serve compounds this problem further. The right hand does not know what the left hand is doing so there are duplications of resources, foci and outcomes.

But it is not all bad news.

Realisation that despite the best of intentions, donor interventions were exacerbating rather than alleviating conflict, has led to the development of tools to understand

better the relationship between development programming and conflict, and, to my mind more significantly, the relationship between programming and peace.

Interventions now claim to be conflict and peace sensitive. That is they take into account the context of conflict in which they are operating, are aware of the potential positive and negative impacts of their interventions and seek to accentuate the positive whilst minimizing the negative. In other words they seek to Do No Harm. It is beyond the scope of this seminar to introduce you to plethora of tools and methodologies that have been developed to ensure interventions are more peace and conflict sensitive but here is a snap shot of a few:

Strategic conflict assessments are systematic analyses of the causes, actors and dynamics of conflict. They assist users to understand the context in which their program or activity is operating. They can be used to assess individual projects and programmes or to focus at a strategic level on a country or region. While a strategic conflict assessment is more often used to assess the main factors and trends contributing to the conflict it can also be used to analyse whether there are opportunities to promote policies and programmes that can actively contribute to building opportunities for conflict reduction and peace.

The *Local Capacities for Peace/Do No Harm* framework utilises a Strategic conflict assessment to encourage an active and mindful analysis of how development programming and projects affect and are affected by conflict. The key premise is to Do No Harm: to plan and implement programmes and projects so that they do not exacerbate already existent tensions, nor create new ones. The principles also recognise that, although conflict will have disrupted patterns of interaction, there will still be underlying ‘connectors’: Those people, systems, institutions, shared values that still prevail and that keep people connected. The reverse of this is also analysed; what people, systems, and institutions divide people, and how can these ‘dividers’ be worked around or transformed. The ‘dividers’ and ‘connectors’ are then used to establish how local communities might best disengage from the conflict and use their resources to deal with the issues that underlie the conflict (Anderson 1999).

A *Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA)* is a monitoring and evaluation process, similar to a Do No Harm Analysis. A PCIA (i) identifies and assesses the ways in which the peace and conflict environment may affect an initiative or project; and (ii) identifies and assesses the ways in which an initiative or project may affect the peace and conflict environment. It can be applied as

part of a design mission to gauge the level of conflict risk associated with the intervention and to plan conflict prevention and peace building measures to mitigate conflict risk and to build peace. It can be used mid-cycle to monitor the immediate impacts that the intervention is having on preventing conflict and building peace and how the peace/conflict dynamics are effecting the implementation of the program. It can be used post-program cycle to evaluate the overall impact of the program on the conflict and peace dynamics and conversely, how the program was affected by those same dynamics.

These methodologies and tools are the result of critical reflection and analysis by academics and practitioners in the field. They have trialed and modified over a number of years and are subject to an ongoing process of trial and improvement. The most basic premise of all of these tools is that in order to understand the context better, it will be necessary to consult with, interact with and learn from the experiences and perceptions of the people engaged in and affected by the conflict; the locals. This significant shift in approach recognises that community engagement and knowledge is integral to preventing conflict and building sustainable peace. It brings development interventions into conflict affected societies more into line with peacebuilding programs which recognise the fundamental importance of identifying, engaging with and building the capacity of peace constituencies. Peace constituencies are those members of society who are able through their knowledge and influence to create and enhance opportunities for movement away from conflict towards peace. They can be made up of clergy, of trade unionists, of influential politicians, of members of women's groups etc.

However, there are still stumbling blocks to producing more conflict sensitive, peace promoting outcomes and these have mainly to do with the tensions between the conditions that are regularly attached to development assistance and the longer time frames and flexibility required for peace and conflict sensitive programming . The frequency of the reporting necessary in many donor-driven projects to meet funding demands, and the efforts necessary to ensure that this is done in a timely and efficient fashion, can constrain activities that are truly responsive to changing conditions. The table below explores the differences between what could be termed “traditional development interventions’ and “peace through development interventions”

Table 1: Peace and Development Nexus

Peace through Development Approach	Traditional Community Development
Integration with economic, political and infrastructural peace building agendas	Stand alone intervention
Process oriented	Outcome oriented
Flexible and responsive in order to seize opportunities for peace.	Planned program of activities subject to monitoring and review – milestones, indicators and timeframes established at outset.
Higher risk exposure	Less risk exposure

For the rest of this seminar I want to discuss how Solomons to produce significant peace promoting outcomes, and how they have been under utilised in Aceh with subsequent negative results.

First to the Solomons where I want to examine a large donor intervention aimed to contributing to restoring the peace after the outbreak of tensions in 1998. The goal of Community Peace and Restoration Fund was to contribute to the overall process of restoration of peace and development in Solomon Islands through assisting communities to pursue peaceful resolutions to disputes and to address priority community needs. It was to do this by providing support for small-scale, community-based initiatives, which met reintegration, resettlement and rehabilitation needs of affected populations in a manner that promoted self-reliance and peace.

The fund was set up in 2000 after the Townsville Peace Agreement but operated during a period of ongoing lawlessness and tensions through until 2003 when the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands intervened. The Fund promoted peace and helped prevent further conflict in several ways. First it attempted to address both the root causes as well as the consequences of the ongoing tensions one of the main causes and consequences of the tensions was the unequal and inadequate distribution of resources and delivery of services. The Fund increased access to resources by successfully implementing more than 800 projects throughout the Solomon Islands, putting a project in every ward to ensure as equal a distribution as possible. A number of CPRF projects addressed some of the other direct

consequences of the tensions. For example it catered to the needs of internally displaced people and provided trauma counselling.

Tables 2 and 3 below show in more details how both the *activities* and the *processes* of CPRF impacted upon the *consequences* and *underlying causes* of the tensions.

Table 2: Consequences of the conflict

Consequences of the conflict	CPRF Activities	CPRF Processes
Internally displaced people	Providing funding for water tanks, schools, clinics Relief supplies	IDPS contributed to the implementation of the projects Coordination/collaboration with Nat Disaster Council and Nat Disaster Management Office, and other relief NGOs (Red Cross, World Vision)
Ex-combatants	Peace building workshops	Ex-combatants contributed to the implementation of the projects
Trauma	Trauma counselling workshops	Workshops run in the communities by local people
Intra and inter-communal hostilities	Construction of public resources: schools, aid posts, clinics, water tanks etc.	Rebuilding of trust and confidence, restoration of damaged relationships
Damaged infrastructure	Rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure	Community involvement in process
Hiatus in donor engagement	Co-funding activities and initiatives, completing unfinished donor initiatives.	Providing support to other donors through Provincial Coordinators, facilitating transport and communications.

Table 3: Causes of the conflict

Causes of the conflict	CPRF Activities	CPRF Processes
Lack of access to public resources	Building of public resources	Wide geographical distribution Work closely with communities to identify, plan and implement public/community infrastructure
Corruption and poor governance	Modelling good practice by demonstrating trust and accountability in all funding procedures.	Maintaining neutrality by bypassing mechanisms of provincial government or engagement with technical officers when necessary. BUT Lack of engagement meant lack of a coordinated multi-sectoral approach to the tasks of recovery and peace building Lack of engagement with government structures may miss opportunities for governance strengthening
Breakdown in non-violent conflict management	Peace building and restorative justice workshops	Modelling and encouraging non-violent mechanisms for resolving conflict i.e. negotiation and consensus seeking.
Breakdown in customary authority	Support for traditional leadership strengthening	Provincial Coordinators recognise and respect traditional authority structures when negotiating with communities about projects
Land issues	Support to 'Land and You' radio program	Working in cooperation with Department of Lands Only undertake projects where no land dispute or no start until resolved
Youth unemployment and alienation (more than just unemployment issue)	Youth specific projects and youth involvement in building of community resources	Assisting youth-specific needs Engagement with Save the Children Engagement with/ assistance to National Youth Congress

It engaged with and used local people in every aspect of the Fund. CPRF did promote promising peace building methods at community and provincial levels. The decision to decentralise the Fund's management structure by employing Provincial Coordinators in every province was a very wise one. The PCs played a key role in contributing to building peace at a micro community level. They initiated the idea of community mobilisation, encouraged the practice of working together, monitored activities to ensure that communities were working together, mediated disputes, and negotiated solutions to community conflicts that arose during the project's implementation. Guided by the Do No Harm /Local Capacities for Peace principles, PCs encouraged good practice by modelling a conflict sensitive/peace promoting way of interacting with communities. They were sensitive to potential micro conditions of conflict and actively worked to ensure that correct customary channels for negotiating access were adhered to from the outset. At a macro level, they provided the link between development organisations, provincial government (where possible) and communities through their transport and communication networks. They acted as conduits between RAMSI and the communities. Their networks and knowledge of local community needs ensured wide geographical distribution of funds. Through the modelling function of female Provincial Coordinators, the inclusion of women in community decision making processes, and projects that benefited women's groups specifically, CPRF had a significant positive impact on raising awareness of gender issues.

Within communities, CPRF contributed to the rebuilding of associational life in three ways. Its projects built upon and strengthened existing community networks, the projects concentrated on projects that were of benefit to the entire community, and it helped to rebuild trust and confidence. On the Weather Coast, CPRF also helped to bridge inter-community divisions. The CPRF approach also resulted in an increase in community confidence, as many communities are making further future plans, emboldened by the success of completing the CPRF activity. CPRF also supported the creation of networks of traditional leaders in both Malaita and Central Province.

Because CPRF was structured as a fund instead of a pre-designed project, it was able to display significant flexibility. After initially focusing on Guadalcanal and Malaita only, the Fund spread its projects throughout the Solomon Islands. It was also able to

seize upon opportunities for peace building, such as in the work on the Weather Coast that was initiated through RAMSI.

The Fund wound up in late 2004 and I was employed in early 2005 to conduct a peace and conflict impact assessment on the outcomes and impact. To this end I interviewed beneficiaries of the fund, government departments, the employees and the implementing agencies. All were convinced as I was that CPRF has had a significant effect on promoting peace and conflict sensitivity and in capturing the opportunities for building longer term peace. They did this by listening to and engaging with the needs and visions of the local population, by encouraging local engagement at all levels and aspects of the project; by being flexible; by employing conflict sensitive peace promoting approaches and by being aware of and focusing upon the causes as well as the consequences of the tensions.

And so to Aceh where in late 2004 a devastating earthquake tsunami swept the coastline resulting in 130, 00 deaths, 37,066 people missing and 123, 000 houses destroyed. 85% of the administrative district of Aceh Jaya was destroyed. Aceh had been involved in a thirty-year war of independence when the tsunami hit. The society was already conflict damaged.

In response to the manifold images of the devastating effects of the tsunami the international community responded with a hitherto unseen generosity. Millions upon millions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of seasoned humanitarian response personnel flooded the province and a myriad of relief, reconstruction and development efforts were planned and are now in the process of being implemented. It is beyond the scope of the paper to discuss all or even several of these efforts. For readers wishing to find out more about the reconstruction efforts the papers and sites listed at the end of this paper provide excellent coverage and analysis. However, I want to investigate more closely the processes by which these reconstruction and development efforts were implemented and the subsequent outcomes.

The excellent report *Eye on Aceh; A people's agenda: Post tsunami Reconstruction Aid in Aceh*, (*Aidwatch 2006*), identifies four main areas of concern that demonstrate that the interventions to date have not been planned in a conflict sensitive manner.

The report identifies a lack of communication and consultation with Acehnese beneficiaries of the assistance, resulting in alienation from the reconstruction process, frustration being passive observers and witnessing easily avoidable mistakes being made which would not have occurred had there been any consultation process. Many of the people interviewed stated that there was no relation between what they identified as being needed and what was in the end delivered. Secondly, there has been disparity in the provision of assistance. Unequal levels of assistance between and within communities has led to micro level conflicts. Different donors have given different levels of housing resulting in social jealousies arising. There is tension between tsunami and non tsunami affected areas, between tsunami affected and conflict affected areas where communities feel that others are being privileged when they too have genuine needs and concerns which are being ignored. The cash for work scheme has resulted in a widening of the poverty gap in some areas and in migration to the tsunami affected areas by people seeking work for cash. The influx of monies and foreigners has led to a significant distortion of the micro economy. Furthermore donors seem more focused on their short term need for outcomes and visible results to satisfy the donor communities than the longer term need of engaging with and building the capacity of the Acehnese to run the reconstruction process. All this is not new as I have shown above but it seems extraordinary that such liberties are still being taken with people's hopes, and aspirations and the Acehnese resilience and capacity is being steam-rolled in the rush to show how monies are being spent and to produce tangible products. Similar concerns have been raised in other evaluation reports and academic papers, a list of which is below.

Had due care been taken at the beginning to include local communities in a process of needs assessments, design and implementation of the many projects, then it is very likely that more successful outcomes would have been achieved, and instead of a feeling frustration and despair, Acehnese communities would now be feeling a sense of achievement and vision, something that is desperately needed in this conflict – affected society. A simple Do no harm analysis at the beginning of the process would have immediately identified the dangers of not including people, and the subsequent benefits of inclusion. It would have been sensitive to the micro conflicts that can be produced when new resources are brought into a community and could have identified the potential impacts of these resource transfers. An on- going peace and conflict

impact monitoring and evaluation process would have picked up on any emerging tensions and could have modified program objectives to counter these.

So where to from here? How do we encourage better interventions to produce better outcomes? One way is to cross-reference: To learn what has and hasn't worked in other conflict affected societies and to transfer and adapt those learnings. But to do that we need efficient and effective means of gathering data and monitoring impacts so as to produce reflective learning. This takes time and careful planning and goes against the quick response mechanisms that are the essence of conflict and disaster management today. However, there are now programmes and centres and organizations devoted to research and practice in peace and conflict development programming. Their research is developing a raft of new programmes, tools and methodologies to produce more effective outcomes for development interventions. The Search for Common ground has just produced a 200 page manual: *Designing For Results: Implementing Monitoring and Evaluation In Conflict Transformation Programs*. The Collaborative for Development Action has produced a manual: *Confronting War: Critical lessons for Peace Practitioners*. These products and the many others demonstrate that there is a will to transform and improve our interventions.

References.

Aidwatch, *A People's Agenda? Post Tsunami Aid Reconstruction in Aceh*, Eye on Aceh, Aid watch, Sydney, 2006

Anderson, Mary B., Lara Olsen and Kristen Doughty, *Confronting War: Critical lessons for Peace Practitioners*, CDAInc, Washington, 2003.

Anderson, M. *Do No Harm. How Aid can Support Peace-or War*, Lynne Rienner, Colorado, 1999.

Cosgrave, John, *Tsunami Evaluation Coalition: Initial Findings*, Tsunami Evaluation Coalition, published on www.alnap.org/tec, December 2005

Easton, Matthew, *Civil Society and Human Rights in Aceh after the Tsunami*, Members Briefing Paper prepared for the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, February 10, 2005.

Kenny, Sue, 'Reconstruction in Aceh; building whose capacity?' *Community Development Journal*, 2005

Lederach, John Paul, *Building Peace. Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington DC, 1997

Spence, Rebecca, and Iris Wielders, 2006, *Conflict Prevention in the Pacific*, AusAID and ANU.

Spence, Rebecca, and Iris Wielders, 'Community Peace and Restoration Fund, Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment, AusAid, 2005.

Spence Rebecca, and Jason McLeod, 'Building the Road as We Walk it: Peacebuilding as Nonviolent Revolutionary Praxis', *Social Alternatives*, Vol 21, No 2, Autumn 2002.

Spence, R., 'The Centrality of Community-Led Recovery', in G. Harris, (ed.), *Recovery from Armed Conflict*, Routledge, London, 212 – 240, 1999.