

The peace-building role of local governments | *Kenneth Bush*

Summary

This chapter emphasizes the reality that any activity within a conflict-prone zone can either contribute towards peace-building or increase the likelihood of the conflict escalating: that is activities are rarely peace - or conflict - neutral.

In conflict zones, local government is often the most appropriate organized entity able to provide services such as healthcare, education, electricity and water to its citizens. Local government is often, literally, on the front line of violent militarized conflict alongside its citizens. Within this explosive context, anything it does will affect the dynamics of peace and conflict: decisions about the allocation of scarce public resources; the choice of beneficiaries; selection of contractors to undertake municipal work; hiring policies and practices; and so on.

The chapter illustrates with a hypothetical example of a water project, seen by its instigators in purely developmental terms, how unconsidered factors can result in a project contributing to peace-building or alternatively can sustain or even increase conflict.

Four real-life case studies are then considered and provide good examples of how various factors and decisions can influence the outcomes of projects and programmes in terms of their contribution to peace or conflict. Based on these and other experiences, the chapter ends with a graphic listing and explaining good peace-building practices.

A strong message to development practitioners is that while today it is becoming unthinkable not to consider the gender and environmental ramifications of any proposed project, this is rarely extended to the potential impact on peace versus conflict – and it should be.

Introduction

Anyone who has spent time in areas that do not enjoy peace and security knows why it is so important to make the connections between local government and peace-building. In conflict zones, local government is often the most appropriate (and sometimes the only) organized entity able to provide services such as healthcare, social services, education, electricity and water to its citizens. Local government is often, literally, on the front line of violent militarized conflict alongside its citizens. Within this explosive context, anything it does will affect the dynamics of peace and conflict: decisions about the allocation of scarce public resources; the choice of beneficiaries; selection of contractors to undertake municipal work; hiring policies and practices; and so on.

Unfortunately, in conflict zones, local governments are often unable to provide municipal services. Sometimes they are captured by extremist elements involved in the conflict who terrorize segments of the urban population. At other times, its workers are unable to enter conflict areas or are forced to leave. On occasions, the infrastructure needed for local governments to do their work is destroyed or looted by armed stakeholders (electricity pylons are destroyed, roads and fields are mined, transport routes are closed down). Escalating conflict challenges and strains the capacities of local governments at the very moment when such capacities are most needed. Or, put another way, the need for effective local government is greatest in those environments where its capacities are most stressed.

One of the key lessons that I have drawn from a study prepared for the Federation of Canadian Municipalities based on urban experiences in three countries (Philippines, the Palestinian Territories and Bosnia & Herzegovina) at different stages of violent conflict is that the most significant contributions to peace-building and conflict-dismantling may be found in the conventional, even mundane, work of local governments.¹ This is perfectly logical given that this is the level of government closest to the citizens and therefore most likely to be aware of, and responsive to, their needs. This covers their work in water and sanitation, health and social services, public safety, local transportation, public employment and local economic development. Within communities that have been terrorized, traumatized and factionalized, the way in which local government delivers public goods and services will have a far greater impact on their citizens' support for (or non-blocking of) constructive alternatives to fighting than say short-term, donor-driven, 'reconciliation' initiatives.

One fact needs to be central in discussions about city diplomacy²: in environments characterized by hyper-politicization or military volatility, the work of local governments will *inevitably and unavoidably contribute either to peace or to conflict*.

Failure to consider this, risks making city diplomacy a subset of the usual top-down (outside-in) work of the international development/peace-building industry. In so doing, we may miss opportunities to support the peace-building efforts and impacts of those local actors who were there before the arrival of the multilateral actors, and who will certainly be there long after their attention has moved on to the next crisis. We would fail to support that which is most unique about city diplomacy, and which is the foundation of any success it

¹ Bush (2004)

² Throughout this paper, city diplomacy refers to any and all initiatives between local governments that affect, directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, the local dynamics of peace or conflict – whether that conflict is violent, non-violent, or on the way to becoming violent.

achieves: the intimate people-to-people linkages involving communication, trust and co-operation that sustain long-term relationships. So, when officials from the Barcelona City Council were asked why the city supported Sarajevo so tenaciously during the Balkan wars, they simply answered: 'the people of Barcelona still remember the support of Sarajevo in our fight against Franco.'³ Within a global environment dominated by political actors who tend to suffer from selective amnesia and attention deficiency, this basic, human, underpinning of city diplomacy should not be overlooked.

This chapter is structured as follows. After this introduction, impacts of city diplomacy related to development, to peace and to conflict are defined and the implications of accepting this position will be explored in Section 2. Section 3 presents four mini-cases that illustrate dilemmas and surprises drawn from practice. These show that the development impact is not automatically associated with the peace impact, and that activities can inadvertently generate or increase conflict. While analyzing these cases, I will try to identify dangers, lessons to be learned, and best and worst practices in an effort to provide advice for future activities. Section 4 draws conclusions and outlines future steps.

By focussing on cases of success (those with a peace impact) and of failure (a conflict impact), we are better able to understand, in practical terms, what it is to do the right thing. Equally importantly, we also begin to see how to avoid doing the wrong things. It is particularly important that we understand when our initiatives are likely to create or worsen conflicts. If we ignore how municipal-level work interacts with the conflicts that affect every community, then all our positive work in peace-building and city diplomacy can be swept away during one bad night. In other words, *sustainable peace-building requires that we do more than just build peace; we need to, at the same time, unbuild or deconstruct the foundations of violent conflicts.*

'If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there.'
(Lewis Carroll)

Peace-building: where are we going?

As the quote from Alice in Wonderland suggests, unless we have a clear idea of where we are trying to get to, and what we are trying to achieve, we risk running in any and all directions in the mistaken belief that whatever we are doing is contributing to peace.

The term peace-building has been used in so many different ways that there is a danger that it may begin to mean everything and nothing. It may begin to lose its usefulness in helping us think about, and contribute to, a peace which is equitable, sustainable and fundamentally just. For example, soldiers in Afghanistan talk about their military missions as peace-building interventions, governments call development projects in Rwanda peace-building projects and so-called peace-building NGOs label everything they do (mainly workshops delivered by foreigners) as peace-building activities.

It is useful, therefore, to begin with a brief discussion of our objective – this thing we call peace-building.

³ This exchange took place at the International Conference, 'The Role of Local Governments in Peace-building' organized by the Barcelona Provincial Council and the Barcelona City Council, Barcelona, 6-7 September 2007.

The golden lesson: Peace-building is an impact As a (recovering) academic, I acknowledge the tendency of my profession to define, rather than to engage in, whatever issue is at hand. Nevertheless, I present a definition of peace-building for a reason: if we are not clear and consistent in our understanding of the much-used (often overused, sometimes misused) term peace-building, then we cannot start a coherent discussion on the roles of local governments in peace and development, let alone support and strengthen their peace-building capacities. It becomes a tower of Babel. Without starting with the basics, we have no idea where to look, what to look at or what to support. The ways in which we examine an issue will shape the conclusions and solutions that we derive.

In this paper, peace-building is used in its broadest sense to refer to those initiatives which foster and support sustainable structures and processes which strengthen the prospects for peaceful co-existence and decrease the likelihood of an outbreak, reoccurrence or continuation of violent conflict.⁴ This process entails both short- and long-term objectives such as short-term humanitarian operations coupled to longer-term developmental, political, economic and social objectives.

Peace-building, therefore, is a two-fold process of dismantling the structures of violence, and constructing the structures of peace. These are related but separate sets of activities which need to be undertaken simultaneously. Any intervention which includes one without the other is almost guaranteed not to have a net positive impact. Clearly, the instruments required for peace construction (such as for building trust within and between communities, governance capacity and institution strengthening) are different from those required for deconstructing violence (including, in broad terms, the demilitarization of society, the economy and the polity, as well as disarmament, demobilization etc.).

Any efforts to support the peace-building capacities of local government need to be conceptualized and operationalized alongside efforts to defuse the conflict-sustaining impacts of certain activities – summed up in the term ‘bad governance’. Thus, as noted above, it is not enough to do (or to support) the right thing; we also have to stop doing (and counteract) the wrong things.

Peace-building is not about imposing solutions, it is about creating opportunities. The challenge is to identify and nurture the political, economic and social space within which indigenous actors can develop and employ the resources necessary to build a peaceful, prosperous and just society. In other words, genuine peace-building requires the increasingly top-down and controlled approaches to be inverted. Ultimately, peace-building entails the strengthening or creation of structures and processes that are democratic, fair and responsive to the needs and concerns of an entire population, from its weakest members to the most powerful. That is, institutions which protect and advance the political rights and responsibilities of the state and civil society, and which strengthen human security through the promotion of robust and sustainable economic, judicial and social practices.

This extended definition is meant to guide our thinking, not to constrain it. The principal or cardinal concepts that guide our work should be revisited regularly. Unfortunately, this has not been the case with the international peace-building dialogue; instead ‘peace-building’ as a term, has become infinitely elastic and applicable to just about any activity that will enable an organization to liberate resources in a tight funding market.

⁴ Winter (1996) pp. 49-69

It cannot be over-emphasized that, in essence, *peace-building is an impact or outcome rather than an activity*. This, for me, is the 'Golden Rule' of peace-building. Over the last few years, peace-building has been a label attached to such activities as dialogue projects, human rights projects, security sector reform, democratic institution strengthening, public sector reform and, even more nebulously, good governance projects. While such activities may have positive impacts on peace and the conflict environment, there are also many examples where they have had negative impacts.⁵

In practical terms, this means that we should not limit our focus to the clearly labelled peace-building projects – dialogue projects, community based conflict resolution and so on. All initiatives focusing on violence-prone regions should be seen as possessing the potential to either build peace or exacerbate violent and non-violent conflict – private sector investments, education projects, health projects and so on. Not only are such initiatives and instruments far more prevalent than 'peace-building' projects, they are also less likely to be viewed as being overtly political and therefore are less likely to encounter political flak. If we understand peace-building as an impact, then it is necessary to distinguish the peace-building impact of an initiative from its developmental, economic, environmental, gender and other impacts. When we do so, we see that positive humanitarian or developmental impacts are happily, at times, coincident with a positive peace-building impact but, disturbingly, sometimes that they are not.

Development does not always lead to peace One of the most common misconceptions that we still hear today is that development equals peace and, therefore, that all development work contributes to peace. If development equals peace, then conflict should decrease as a country or region 'develops'. Clearly, this does not always happen and, in fact, we usually see that violence increases if the living conditions of only some groups in a region improve. In many cases, development itself creates conflict such as when groups fight each other for the benefits of a project, or for access to municipal services.

Further, genuine development inevitably challenges existing social, economic and political structures – and by challenging these structures and the old rules of the game, conflict is almost certainly created.

The critical issue is whether conflict created (or aggravated) by developmental interventions is resolved violently or non-violently. This is one place where local government clearly comes into the equation. Will those individuals or groups in conflict approach local government to address the conflict? If so, do local governments possess the means to address and resolve these conflicts non-violently?

It is fair to say that development initiatives sometimes contribute to peace and sometimes contribute to conflict. The challenge, as is discussed below, is to ensure that a municipal project or initiative does not lead to violent conflict, and, as far as possible, makes a positive contribution to peace. A positive and sustainable developmental impact may be dependent on achieving a positive peace-building impact.

The need to differentiate between development impacts, and peace/conflict impacts In order to clarify the differences between development, peace and conflict impacts, it is useful to begin with some hypothetical examples. Once these distinctions have been

5 Bush (2004)

delineated more clearly in our minds, we can then turn our attention to specific examples outlined in the following case studies. The examples below illustrate how it is possible for a project to *fail* according to limited developmental criteria (such as irrigation targets, healthcare delivery, literacy levels) but to *succeed* according to broader, peace-building, criteria, and vice versa.

EXAMPLE 1: DEVELOPMENTAL FAILURE, PEACE-BUILDING SUCCESS

An education project may *fail* to produce students able to pass national exams (its developmental goal), but *succeed* in reducing tensions between particular social groups by creating and institutionalizing a non-threatening and constructive environment that increases contact and decreases misunderstanding by dispelling stereotypes and misconceptions. Unless there is sensitivity to the peace nurturing achievements of such a project, it would be seen as an unsuccessful project. That is, its failure to achieve the specified developmental impact would eclipse its positive peace-building impact.

EXAMPLE 2: DEVELOPMENTAL SUCCESS, PEACE-BUILDING FAILURE

The converse of the above is equally possible, a project can *succeed* according to established developmental criteria but *fail* in terms of peace nurturing. To use a similar hypothetical example to the one above: an education project may indeed succeed in increasing the number of students passing exams. However, if the bulk of those students are (or are perceived to be) members of one particular social or ethnic group then the project may exacerbate inter-group tensions by creating/reinforcing the perception that one group is being privileged at the expense of the other.

As the development assistance industry is currently configured, the second project is more likely to have its funding renewed than the first unless the created tensions in the second scenario lead to it being decided that continuation is too risky for project staff. Further, in this situation, the postponement/termination of the project would be blamed on the impact of the conflict on the project rather than the impact of the project on the conflict!

EXAMPLE 3: DRINKING WATER PROJECT – THE NEED FOR MULTI-DIMENSIONAL EVALUATION

Imagine a municipal water project that seeks to improve household access to clean water in an area where there have been tensions between communities. The project, supported by an international donor, extends the municipal water network to selected households.

We could say that this initiative has had a positive peace-building impact if:

- it helped to bring members of the communities together because of their shared interest in clean water and the benefits this has for public health and the general quality of life.
- it created communication channels and opportunities enabling diverse members of different communities to work together on issues beyond water management.
- it increased the inclusion and participation of both women and men from violence-affected groups in decision-making at the community level on issues they consider a priority.
- professional or interpersonal relationships began to grow across community lines and perhaps encouraged communities to work together in other areas of activities.

That same water project could have a conflict-creating impact if:

- one community starts to think that the other community is benefiting more than its own, or worse, if it believes that the other community is benefiting by ‘stealing’ its water.
- if the decision-making process is seen to be politicized or corrupt.
- if the international actor supporting the project is demonized by some elements of the community (raising questions over motives, control and so on) regardless of whether this is justified or not.

This hypothetical case illustrates how easily a development project could help peace-building efforts but, just as easily, could raise tensions and have just the opposite effect. It highlights why we need to apply a two-level analysis to our work if we are to identify the many ways in which the work of local governments affects peace and conflict. In order to identify and understand the overall peace or conflict impact of such an example, we must ask different questions to the ones that usually get asked about the impact of initiatives. We need to know more than just the total number of beneficiaries, or the increase in water access or the decreased costs. We need to develop ways to think about, carry out and evaluate work in conflict-prone areas so that we can reinforce peace-building impacts and avoid the conflict-creating impacts.

- When municipal governments are located in conflict-prone areas, all decisions, all services, and all projects will unavoidably affect the peace and conflict dynamics because of the volatility/explosiveness of the environment.
- It is not what you do, but how you do it that will determine whether you end up supporting peace or sustaining conflict.
- We can only begin to systematically understand peace and conflict impacts when we ask the right questions before, during and after a project. In other words, we need to integrate the consideration of peace and conflict impacts into our planning and programming just as we do (or should do) when it comes to environmental and gender impacts.

‘It’s a poor sort of memory that only works backwards.’
(Lewis Carroll)

Case studies: learning from experience

This section consists of four mini-cases, drawn from a variety of different countries and contexts. These are intended to sharpen our understanding of the ways in which initiatives can affect the dynamics of peace or conflict within conflict-prone settings. Particular emphasis is placed on municipal-level initiatives. In the pursuit of brevity, interesting details have been sacrificed to keep the cases relatively short and focussed on the objectives of this chapter. In practice, attention to such details is absolutely essential if one is to respond effectively and avoid/reduce conflict and optimize possibilities for peace. Nevertheless, space constraints have forced me to prioritize explanation over description.

**CASE 1: WATER TANK REHABILITATION – THE DANGER
OF BUSINESS AS USUAL**

A development agency from a rich developed country decided that it would like to help rebuild water storage facilities⁶ in a war-affected country. The water reservoirs had broken down long ago, but had never been repaired during 20 years of war. However, peace talks had now created an opportunity to do some much needed development work in areas that had been impossible to reach for many years.

So, following its usual rules, the development agency did what it always does: it asked interested companies to send in proposals to rebuild a particular reservoir in a rebel-controlled area. After reviewing all the proposals, the agency chose the lowest bid – which was in fact half the price of any other bid. Eight months later, the agency received a report informing them that the project had been completed in line with the proposal. The company was paid in full, and the agency was happy in the belief that it had completed a cost-effective water project that would benefit the local community. However, when the rainy season arrived the rebuilt reservoir completely fell apart! What had gone wrong?

The company which had won the bid was controlled by the main rebel group. One of the reasons that it was able to do the work so cheaply was because the project used ‘volunteer’ labour – farmers who owned tractors were forced to donate their time and equipment, and villagers were forced to work for free. None of the labour costs included in the project budget went to the labourers. Furthermore, the reservoir was not reconstructed according to the technical plan in the proposal. It did not include the waterproof lining needed to ensure it held water! When the original engineer refused to sign off the project as satisfactory, the rebels simply found another engineer who was more pliable.

112

In the end, contrary to the positive assessment of the development agency, the outcomes of the project were:

- a significant financial contribution to the rebels
- a strengthening of the rebels’ authoritarian control over civilians
- the abuse of the rights of the labourers and children who were forced to work on the project
- no positive or sustainable developmental impact

In short, the project had negative developmental and peace-building impacts. Did this project really take place? Yes, it did.

Lessons:

- Sometimes, in order to have a positive peace-building impact, we have to modify the standard rules by which we operate. In this case, the priority placed on financial cost-effectiveness blinded the decision-makers to the conflict-sustaining impacts of the project. A peace-sensitive project may be more expensive than one driven by the standard rules of financial efficiency. So, for example, to promote peace it may be necessary to start infrastructure work in the most war-affected areas, rather than in those areas where you initially appear to get more value for your financial input.
- Sustainable peace-building impacts require as much attention to be paid to process (transparency, accountability, legitimacy, sustainability) as to product (reservoir reconstruction/development outputs).

⁶ These were artificial lakes or reservoirs used to store irrigation water for later use.

CASE 2: THE 3000 HOUSE PLAN – WHEN EQUAL ISN'T FAIR

The case of the 3000 houses is one where the arithmetic of a municipal project appeared clear and straightforward. This project was set within the context of two decades of war in eastern Sri Lanka, and sought to provide 3000 houses in a community consisting of equal percentages of displaced Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslim populations.⁷ The decision by the municipal planners, in consultation with the affected communities and under pressure from the donor, was to allocate 1000 houses to each group. While there were some complaints about this decision, it was accepted by the community as a whole and the houses were built.

This case illustrates how the communities made an explicitly political decision about the allocation of development resources based on the ethnic geography. However, here is the complication: each community had not been affected equally by the violence. Some communities clearly had greater need for housing. In this case, the principle of equity (needs-based allocation) was subordinated to the political expedient of equality (arithmetic allocation). We have to ask ourselves, despite the decision being made in consultation with the communities themselves, whether this development project reinforced politicized ethnic boundaries and the divisions between the communities? In some ways it did, but was there an alternative? Perhaps an example of greater success in such a project would be if the communities themselves had allocated the houses on the straightforward criteria of need. The issue that confronts us is how to get from where we are to a situation where such an approach would be possible. This case, like the one above, illustrates how it might be better to subordinate standard developmental practices (spreadsheet-based decisions; efficiency-driven logic; product-oriented rather than process-oriented approaches) to peace-building objectives.

Lesson

- This project provides an insightful micro-level example of complex interconnections between developmental interventions and the dynamics of peace and conflict. In a more practical vein, the example emphasizes that we might have to do our work differently if we want to consciously reinforce peace-building incentives through our municipal programming. Importantly, the example also highlights some of the trade-offs that may be required in order to increase the likelihood of constructive peace-building outcomes.

**CASE 3: THE GAL OYA WATER PROJECT – SUCCESSFUL
PEACE-BUILDING FROM A CASE WITH ALL THE INGREDIENTS
FOR FAILURE**

The Gal Oya water project was, and is, one of the largest and most complex water schemes in Sri Lanka. It faced daunting obstacles – physical, infrastructural, bureaucratic and political. To top it all, the project was confronted with an ethnic dimension: the upstream areas were inhabited by members of a Sinhalese group, whereas the downstream allotments were held by Tamil-speaking farmers. In other words, the Tamil-Sinhalese divide at the national level was paralleled at the local level of the project. In the context of ethnic tensions, if water did not reach the Tamils, there would be every chance that this would be attributed to the ‘maliciousness’ of the Sinhalese rather than to geographical or other factors. *In other words, the context within which the project was set was not conducive to co-operation between the communities; if anything quite the opposite.*

⁷ This displacement was caused by war, not the 2004 tsunami.

The project was not consciously designed to perform a peace-building function or to achieve peace-building objectives. Nevertheless, it is an example of a development project with noteworthy peace-building spin-offs. So what does the Gal Oya teach us about development assistance and peace-building? It appears that some of the factors that contributed to its success as a development project may also have contributed to its success in peace-building. The fact that it is a thoroughly participatory development project may be an important factor in explaining its success in both areas. The emphasis on promoting participation (as both a means and an end) generated a number of operating principles which have clear peace-building implications:

- ensuring continuity of personnel to make a learning process more feasible
- having a network of supportive, committed people in a variety of positions
- avoiding partisan political involvement
- attracting and retaining the right kind of community leadership
- going beyond narrow conceptions of self-interest

Particularly relevant to the argument that peace-building requires a strong participatory dimension is Uphoff's observation that: 'more important than knowing *how much* participation is occurring is knowing *who* is or is not involved in different kinds of participation. Which groups are less involved in different kinds of decision making, or in different kinds of implementation, or in different kinds of benefits, or in different kinds of evaluation? Women? Youth? Ethnic minorities? Persons living in remote villages? Insecure tenants? Is it being done at the initiatives of officials, an NGO or the villagers themselves? With a monetary incentive, or voluntary, or through coercion? In an organized manner or on an individual basis? Directly or indirectly? On a regular or ad hoc basis? Is the process continuous, intermittent, or sporadic? With a degree of empowerment – how much?'⁸

114

It is possible to identify lessons from Gal Oya which can be generalized and applied in order to explicitly cultivate a peace-building dimension in development projects:

Lessons

- emphasizing capacity-building to enhance local capabilities for self-management and self-reliance in both resource use and communal relations is beneficial
- the project benefited from being participatory from the start, and it incorporated learning from experience throughout the project
- one should avoid too much government involvement
- the project benefited from 'accept[ing], genuinely and fully, that intended beneficiaries have intelligence and social skills, not just labour and funds, that can be useful for project design and implementation. The poor can even usefully comment on technical design questions, but more important, they can help to plan and carry out the management of project activities'⁹

Although some of the factors which contributed to the development success of the project may also have contributed to its peace-building success, there is still a need for a distinct set of criteria to assess the peace-building impact of the project. That is, the criteria used to assess the efficacy of a development project are not necessarily suitable for assessing the efficacy of peace-building activities

8 Uphoff (1992a) p. 141

9 Uphoff (1992a) p. 143

CASE 4: CANADA-BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA LOCAL AND CANTONAL GOVERNMENT CO-OPERATION PROGRAMME – PEACE AND UNITY THROUGH RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING

The Canada-Bosnia & Herzegovina local and cantonal government co-operation programme (CBiHCP) was a capacity-building programme which sought to improve urban management in the Tuzla Canton of Bosnia & Herzegovina. The main focus of the programme was to provide the assistance needed to enable local governments to ‘open up decision-making in developing and implementing solid plans to guide growth and development’.

While the primary programme partners were the Tuzla Canton and the constituent municipalities (including the City of Tuzla), the experiences coming out of the programme created model approaches for other local governments to follow in both the Federation and in Republika Srpska. Through demonstration projects, partnerships were established with civil society groups active in the canton – non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and private sector associations. The rationale for this project was based on the need to promote good governance in Bosnia & Herzegovina within the context of an emerging democratic system and market-based economy.

Specifically, the project sought the following:

- to help find innovative ways to make the decentralized governance system decreed by the Dayton Accords operational and effective
- to develop mechanisms for intergovernmental co-operation at the local level
- to develop a better understanding of the principles and practices of governing democratically among local authorities (cantonal and municipal)
- to improve revenue generation opportunities for local governments
- to establish effective and up-to-date methods of delivering local services
- to find ways to improve local decision-making to enhance the strategic expenditure of limited resources in tackling the reconstruction of basic infrastructure and housing, and providing key social services

The project mainstreamed some good practices. According to project documents, the project tried to establish mechanisms that would integrate the project management structure into local decision-making processes (in the Institute for Urbanism at Tuzla, as well as in the Municipality of Tuzla and in the Tuzla Canton). This is good practice because it helps ensure that the project is driven by local priorities and context. Equally important, it contributes to the sustainability of the project and the transfer of expertise.

Another good practice was the use of study tours. CBiHCP made extensive use of study tours in building capacity. On one level, the specific capacities relevant to the project are technical: that is, skills and expertise related to strategic planning. However, study tours can also make important strategic and catalytic contributions to peace and unity by nurturing personal and professional relationships across barriers created by war. Such barriers may be physical, geographical, psychological, political or organizational.

Study tours may also remove people from the stresses of working and living in highly politicized and segregated environments. Individuals, who might not otherwise meet, are brought into a neutral environment of professional development and learning. Such professional space is inextricably nested within personal space. Success within the former is contingent upon the construction of collaborative modalities within the latter. Dialogue at the professional level is the first step towards understanding, reconciliation and, ultimately, peace and unity within these groups.

In addition to study tours to Canada, there was an interesting East-East element in the CBiHCP study tour programme. An exchange with Hungary enabled Bosnian participants to learn more about Hungarian efforts to join the EU, an objective shared by many within Bosnia & Herzegovina. Concrete contributions to peace and unity which might grow out of this include a network of collaborative institutions, within and between the Federation and the Republika Srpska, which will be necessary for launching successful bids for EU membership; and incentives for peace and unity, and disincentives for violence and disunity, as members of the EU.

A full assessment of the extent to which study tours contribute to peace and unity requires the measurement of attitudinal and behavioral changes as well as the tracing of subsequent communication and contact networks.

A final good practice was the responsiveness to, and cultivation of, local initiatives. Also noteworthy in CBiHCP has been the recent development of a local development fund. Ten percent of the overall budget has been set aside for this purpose. The fund invites innovative project proposals from local-level actors. Through the strategic allocation of seed money, the fund hopes to build positive momentum and energies that might otherwise never be encouraged, developed or harnessed. This constitutes a contribution to governance capacity-building within civil society.

Lessons:

- ‘Champions’ are important and useful. A critical ingredient in the ultimate success of the programme was the presence of a champion – someone who is willing to defend and to promote a project or programme. In this case, an important champion was the Mayor of Tuzla, the leader of an inter-ethnic party with inter-ethnic goals and aspirations. This is particularly important in environments characterized by distrust such as post-conflict settings. In such settings, the trust that a group or individuals has in the champion may be ‘lent’ to a project. That is, if people trust the champion, they are willing to trust his or her judgment in promoting a particular project. A champion is usually someone who already has a positive profile in the community. It may be anyone who feels strongly about a project and who is able to persuade others to support it. It is someone who knows the rules of the game and wants to change them in ways that contribute directly and indirectly to peace and unity. A champion may be a political leader or a community leader.
- Demonstrating ideals and unity in practice helps. In addition to the inter-ethnic platform of the Mayor of Tuzla, other principal partners were also inter-ethnic in composition and orientation. Thus, for example, the staff of the municipality and the Urbanism Institute were made up of people from the three ethnic groups. Even the cantonal government, which was controlled by the Muslim party (SDA), sought to maintain Tuzla’s reputation as an island of relative tolerance in a country driven by inter-ethnic tension.
- Developing mentoring relationships helps. Throughout the project, strong personal and professional relationships developed between Canadian and Bosnian partners that had a positive impact on peace and unity to the extent that similar mentoring relationships were cultivated among professionals and decision-makers across ethnic divides.
- Opportunity missed: despite requests by project partners to build a reflective learning component into the project so as to identify and learn from their successes and mistakes, the principal donor declined to do so, despite claiming to give priority to governance, as well as peace and unity, issues. While such critical self-reflection is important for any project, it is especially important for projects and programmes set in conflict-prone settings. It is bad practice to decline the opportunity to collect, analyze and learn from project experience. All projects in conflict-prone areas should monitor and document the

- impact of the project on peace and conflict, in a systematic, structured and on-going way.
- Lessons may be learned or spurned: governance and peace-building initiatives take a long, long time. Nothing will work unless it is built upon a foundation of trust. It takes time to develop trusting relationships between project partners; between partners and communities; within and between governments; between governments and civil society; and between groups within civil society. A critical element in the trust-building process is physical presence – ‘being there for the weddings and the funerals’ as a colleague of mine once said in eastern Sri Lanka. Dipping in and out of a project site limits the ability to build deep-rooted trust. Long-term commitment is as important as physical presence. Most residents in conflict-prone areas have seen humanitarian and development actors come and go; projects begin and end. The people of Bosnia & Herzegovina are perhaps more aware than other war-affected communities of the capriciousness of donors (in terms of diplomatic, military, developmental and humanitarian commitments). Adopting long-term perspectives may be difficult for donors. Funding and project cycles require them to force organic, long-term, responsive visions into the narrow mechanistic, short-term, structures of the development industry.

Now what?

Drawing this chapter to a close, we have a list of lessons drawn from some brief descriptions of various case studies – advice about what seems to work and what does not in particular circumstances. Over the past few years, there has been a vigorous debate and many efforts to strengthen the peace-building impacts of conventional development work, including at the local level through city-to-city initiatives. The central challenge has been to develop and apply peace- and conflict- sensitive planning, monitoring and evaluation tools.

While there are limits to how far one can generalize and apply the lessons generated from one context to another, the scheme at the end of this chapter suggests some specific best practices drawn from the case studies. It suggests where to look, how to look, and what to support in efforts to strengthen peace-building and conflict-resilience within cities and municipalities. It tells where and how to look to determine the likely impact of a project or programme on peace and conflict.

The scheme suggests a practical analytical lens that can be applied to the work of local governments in conflict-prone areas. It identifies a number of areas with potential peace and conflict impacts - both positive and negative - in municipal-level projects. Although it has been applied in assessing conventional development projects and peace-focused projects in conflict-prone areas around the world, it should not be applied rigidly or mechanistically in planning and monitoring. Rather, it should serve as a starting point for identifying and supporting existing peace- and conflict- sensitive mechanisms being used with local governments. It is more of a guide to interpretation than a recipe.

Peace-building is not something that can be pre-processed and imposed from the outside. Individuals, communities and organizations living and working in conflict-prone settings have already developed their own peace-building and conflict-avoidance techniques and mechanisms. This is the only way that they can survive and work under such difficult and explosive conditions. The role for foreign local governments is not to introduce or impose foreign or abstract peace-building techniques, it is to identify, support and, most importantly, systematize existing peace- and conflict-sensitive practices that have grown in the very specific conditions (social, political, economic, military, organizational etc.).

Applying this analytical lens to projects and programmes begins the process of drawing out their various impacts. The case studies in this chapter show not only that projects have multiple impacts on different levels, but that unless we have a systematic means of anticipating, monitoring and evaluating peace and conflict impacts, we are likely to miss them and, in missing them, we may well end up doing more harm than good.

Next steps

In light of this discussion, where should we be placing our emphasis? In my opinion, the foregoing analysis suggests the following.

We should cultivate *patient and collaborative working relationships with partners in conflict areas*. These can form the foundation for learning from their experiences with formal and informal peace-building initiatives (both successes and failures), for understanding how they can be supported and how knowledge and experiences may be spread through our relationships with communities in other conflict settings. It cannot be over-emphasized that genuine partnerships are possible, but only if they are built on respect, true collaboration and long-term relationships. More often than not, participation is forced onto agendas that are defined by foreigners, and characterized by arrogant top-down control, short-term transactions, and budgets that often benefit outside 'partners' over those in the conflict area.

Even more useful than the cultivation of respectful relationships is *establishing connections between organizations and individuals in conflict areas who already possess practical experience and expertise and groups in other violence-prone areas*. This proved very beneficial in Habarana, Sri Lanka where facilitators from the Local Governance Support Programme in the Philippines led a week-long peace-building workshop for Sri Lankan and Nepalese fieldworkers.

The explicit *engagement of foreign municipalities in the challenge of integrating peace- and conflict-impact issues in their work with counterparts from conflict areas* is also important. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has taken a step in this direction with its Municipal Co-operation Programme in Sri Lanka. While learning from such efforts, we should not ignore those initiatives by international organizations and NGOs where, although they might have learned how to sprinkle peace-building phrases into proposals to satisfy donors, they have so far failed to genuinely integrate peace-building into their projects, let alone programmes. Among the possible reasons for this failure is the fact that *peace-building must be participatory*: it must include communities, and it must build on and develop existing local and national capacities if it is to be useful and relevant.

All this is necessary for the simple reason that it is impossible to identify or understand impacts without the active participation, analysis and assessment of partners and communities on the ground. However, one must be aware that genuine participation with municipal-level actors may generate problems from the perspective of foreign organizations because it increases perceived inefficiency (for example by increasing the time needed to conduct an assessment; or by involving the gradual cultivation of trust with communities, instead of the usual short-term-transactional relationships) and risks loss of control (by raising expectations and increasing community demands for accountability, and by creating the space for community influence over the means and ends of an initiative).

The final priority is to *consolidate understanding of the roles of municipalities in peace-building based on experience*. Although there is a general appreciation of the various roles that municipalities (both individual municipalities and associations of municipalities) can play in supporting and nurturing peace, this appreciation has yet to be translated into systematic

knowledge and understanding. More importantly, it has not been operationalized or self-consciously integrated into the work of municipalities in conflict areas, or into relationships and programmes. There is a need to collect and consolidate our understandings, experiences and tools in this field of work in a way that serves as a repository of resources for all stakeholders interested in using, and ultimately integrating, peace and conflict sensitivity into their work.

The initiatives surrounding the World Conference on City diplomacy in the summer of 2008 offer an opportunity to work collaboratively within and between partners to work out the details of how we might move the agenda forward in a coherent and sustainable way.

Good Peace-building Practice (Selected case studies)

Potential Areas of Peace & Conflict Impact	Explanation
Institutional Capacity to Address Conflict Non-violently & to Promote Tolerance & Build Peace	Impact on capacity to identify and respond to peace and conflict challenges and opportunities; organizational responsiveness; bureaucratic flexibility; efficiency and effectiveness; ability to modify institutional roles and expectations to suit changing environment and needs; financial management.
Military & Human Security	Direct and indirect impact on: the level, intensity, dynamics of violence; violent behaviour; (in)security (broadly defined); defence/security policy; repatriation, demobilization and reintegration; reform and retraining of police and security forces/structures; disarmament; banditry; organized crime.
Political Structures & Processes	Impact on formal and informal political structures and processes, such as: government capabilities from the level of the state government down to the municipality; policy content and efficacy; decentralization/concentration of power; political ethnicization; representation; transparency; accountability; democratic culture; dialogue; conflict mediation and reconciliation; strengthening/weakening civil society actors; political mobilization. Impact on rule of law; independence/politicization of legal system; human rights conditions; labour standards.
Economic Structures and Processes	Impact on strengthening or weakening equitable socio-economic structures/processes; distortion/conversion of war economies; impact on economic infrastructure; supply of basic goods; availability of investment capital; banking system; employment impact; productivity; training; income generation; production of commercial product or service; food (in)security; impacts on the exploitation, generation or distribution of resources, esp. non-renewable resources and the material basis of economic sustenance or food security.
Social Reconstruction and Empowerment	

Examples

Capacity Focus: *Even when there is a systemic and effective dismantling of formal political structures through militarized violence, it is possible to invest in peace & unity through a focus on capacity building objectives.*

The Inclusion of Ex-Combatants: The participation of ex-combatants in mainstream community development affairs is significant and important – in terms of both the *deconstruction* of structures of violence and the construction of structures of peace.

Delinking Decision Authority: The question of how to develop governance capacity within systems affected by corruption is a difficult one. In PMMP, all control and monitoring rests at the municipal level. There are no direct administrative or decision-making linkages to higher level political actors in the central government tainted by allegations of corruption. In essence, devolution of decision-making power within the project helps to guard against mismanagement and misappropriation.

‘Walking the Talk’: The Participatory dimensions of a project help to ensure transparency. Any project that seeks to increase representation, transparency, accountability, democratic culture and dialogue in the structures and processes of governance must model these principles in everything it does – or else it loses credibility, legitimacy and effectiveness.

Demonstration Effects: The inter-ethnic composition of a project team sends important messages of tolerance, inclusiveness and participation to the communities within which it works. The strategic allocation of seed money may build positive momentum and energies that might otherwise never be encouraged, developed or harnessed. This is a contribution to governance capacity building within civil society.

Piggy-Backing/ Synergistic impact: ‘Synergy’ refers to the combined action of more than one development initiative so that the total impact is *greater than the impact of each project individually*. It also illustrates the way in which the positive peace and unity impact of conventional development projects can be augmented (or ‘supercharged’) when tied explicitly to peace-specific projects.

Civil Society involvement: in local level planning and decision-making. This creates an incentive for inter-ethnic cooperation in issue areas affecting each community. The initial motivation may be self-interest, but over time this may lead to cooperation based on joint interest, and ultimately common interest.

Personal & Professional Linkages: The incorporation of senior officials from other municipalities serves to increase the pool of ideas and inputs into the planning process but, from a Peace and Unity perspective, it may also strengthen personal professional linkages through out a conflict-affected area and thereby contribute to the solidarity and unity of separated communities

Linking Dialogue to Peace: Without dialogue there can be no understanding. Without understanding, there can be no reconciliation. Without reconciliation, there can be no peace. Impact on: quality of life; constructive social communication (e.g., those promoting tolerance, inclusiveness and participatory principles); displaced people; (in)adequacy of health care and social services; (in)compatibility of interests; (dis)trust; inter-group hostility/dialogue; communications; transport; resettlement/displacement; housing; education; nurturing a culture of peace.

Stakes, buying-in & Cohesion: Social cohesion is strongest when majority of members consider themselves to be stakeholders in a particular activity and concern. Conversely, it is weakest when the majority are alienated or ‘stakeless’.

Champions: A ‘Champion’ is someone who is willing to defend and to promote a project or programme. This is particularly important in environments characterized by distrust such as post-conflict settings.