

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE MIDST OF WAR?

INSTITUTIONAL LEAD

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MODERATOR

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OVERVIEW

Positive governance outcomes such as fair power structures, effective and legitimate institutions, low levels of corruption, inclusive political settlements, the equitable provision of public services, and equitable laws and policies are critical to creating an enabling environment for peace. This session explored how to build positive governance capacity in complex contexts where institutions may have collapsed or were a party to the war, as well as how to strengthen actors and systems in insecure environments.

FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of this session was to discuss how to reach a sustainable peace by addressing the governance-related drivers of conflict, with an emphasis on the particular challenges associated with working on governance during wars and complex crises. Three groups of key questions were discussed: (a) What is known and what is not known about the linkages between governance and peace/conflict? What is the relative importance of each of these factors across contexts and types of conflict? (b) What are the particular challenges and opportunities related to addressing these governance factors during war and crisis in immediate post-conflict settings? (c) Where are the points of agreement between actors from the worlds of policy, practice and research? Where are there areas of consensus versus disagreement? Where are the areas for more research?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Three broad types of programming approach address the governance-related drivers of conflict: (a) legitimate, effective, and accountable institutions; (b) promoting inclusive and fair power structures; and (c) civic engagement.

Communication, perceptions and expectations around the delivery of service is the key for legitimate state institutions, rather than a narrow transactional relationship between services and legitimacy. Legitimate governance is in turn a precondition for peace and a fair and sustainable development where people's needs are met. The way resources are shared affects the legitimacy of the state and development of the country.

In promoting inclusive and fair power structures, it is important that all the different identity groups feel heard and are represented in the formal government for a lasting peace. However, identity should not be overemphasized since this carries with it the risk of identity-based politics, which can fertilize future conflicts. Furthermore, building a national identity can be a means for improving cohesion and coexistence. Inclusiveness in peace- and development processes is important. The government must be representative to its citizens. Related to this is the question of what inclusiveness means: it is important to reflect on who something is inclusive, legitimate and fair to. This question is tricky due to people having different perceptions on what, for example, inclusiveness is. Moreover, inclusive and fair structures are important to create social cohesion and

the social contract between the state and its people. However, too often political solutions are only inclusive for the influential elite and leave the broader public out of decision-making.

The interaction between the government and civil society—civic engagement—is crucial. It is difficult to foster civic engagement due to the lack of good platforms for discussion. Safe spaces where the broader public can engage in politics are critical. The responsibility for setting up these platforms/safe spaces should go beyond the usual actors such as civil society organization (e.g. consider the role that the private sector can play to facilitate the process). The elite dealing in peace processes must be challenged by inclusion of the broader public, since an elite based deal is doomed to fail and can even become a conflict driver since it lacks representation and legitimacy. In other words, it is a narrow and short-term peace that is unable to foster a positive change. A question that arises is how to effectively mobilize communities to collaborate. Peace and development are a collective responsibility in which everyone needs to be engaged and do what they are best at.

Among the operational and strategic issues to address governance during war are (a) broadening types of local partnership during conflict; (b) timing; (c) balancing peace and justice with law and order; and (d) making research useful for policy and practice.

Local ownership of governance interventions is key for sustainable development. However, supportive national and international structures for enabling capacity building of local actors is crucial. For a lasting peace it is important for formal structures to cooperate with the informal traditional peacebuilding, justice and governance structures since they most often carry more trust than the formal ones.

Regarding timing, the balance between long-term and short-term work is tricky and must be discussed further. However, both must be done simultaneously. Short-term projects are important for winning the trust of the people and building a national identity and a common narrative that can facilitate the long-term goal. However, long-time development is important to reach a sustainable peace and development anchored in the local context. Quick wins are a related concept. A new government only has a short time to win legitimacy in the eyes of the citizen in a post-conflict country that suffered from bad governance. However, with this comes the challenges with locally anchored solutions. It is not possible for external actors to intervene and expect quick and durable solutions if the solutions are not locally anchored.

A balance between peace and justice and law and order are important as a support for each other when one of these pillars for peace is lacking. For instance, the law might be unjust and therefore may not be able to be relied on in peace processes. Moreover, short-term humanitarian and long-term governance change can and should be combined by paying attention to modelling good governance principles in the implementation of humanitarian programs.

The concept of good governance tends to be defined narrowly and produces a type of tunnel vision. Instead, the broad field of vision of the goat is an alternative way of seeing governance, since goats have a wider vision than the human eye. The spirit of this idea of ‘goat governance’ is that more research should be done to understand the complexity of good governance in order to broaden the perspective and challenge assumptions. Related to this is the importance of combining reflective action by practitioners and action-oriented research by academics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reflect more on the psychological aspects of governance-focused peacebuilding interventions since each person understands fairness, legitimacy, inclusiveness and good governance differently. This also indicates that people’s perceptions could be changed to support real inclusiveness and justice.

- Promote civil society capacity programmes that create safe platforms for interaction as essential to foster participation and representation.
- Recognize the importance for building trust and legitimacy of well-functioning communication channels that allow for mutual understanding about local needs.
- Reflect further on how to improve and broaden the definition of inclusiveness.

RESOURCE LINKS AND DOCUMENTS

British Department for International Development (DFID), *Building Stability Framework* (DFID: London, 2016), <<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5968990ded915dobafo0019e/UK-Aid-Connect-Stability-Framework.pdf>>.

Mercy Corps, 'Mercy Corps' good governance approach', Aug. 2017, <<https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/Governance-Approach%20Final%20Aug%202017.pdf>>.



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