

**LOCAL GOVERNANCE APPROACH TO  
SOCIAL REINTEGRATION AND  
ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN  
POST-CONFLICT COUNTRIES:**

**PROGRAMMING OPTIONS FOR UNDP/UNCDF ASSISTANCE**

**By Dirk Salomons**  
Managing Partner  
The Praxis Group, Ltd.

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*“Working at the edge of the development of human society is to work on the brink of the unknown. Much of what is done will one day prove to have been of little avail. That is no excuse for the failure to act in accordance with our best understanding, in recognition of its limits but with faith in the ultimate result of the creative evolution in which it is our privilege to cooperate.”<sup>1</sup> Dag Hammarskjöld*

## INTRODUCTION

The international community is increasingly aware of the importance of good governance in building lasting peace and accelerating recovery in countries that are emerging from protracted violent conflict. In this context, much emphasis has been placed on the role of technical and humanitarian assistance in supporting central government, but the question arises: what contribution can external support make to decentralization and local capacity-building?

This question is of particular interest to the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), since the promotion of local good governance in order to reduce poverty lies at the core of its mandate. It does so in the conviction that good local governance – preferably in the form of good local government -- increases sustainable access to public good and services, particularly for vulnerable groups: the poor, women, and marginalized people.<sup>2</sup> Does this hold true even under the often chaotic conditions that characterize societies coming out of conflict? Is there scope for a “local governance approach to peace building”, and if so, how can assistance best be designed and delivered to support the emergence of vibrant local societies, with access to their own resources and the ability to plan their use wisely?

This paper has been prepared as a contribution to a workshop to be hosted in October 2002 by UNCDF and UNDP’s Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery. It intends to raise questions and to point at opportunities, with a focus on concrete programming options. In doing so, it will refer to an extensive body of literature reflecting lessons learned, or at least recorded. Yet, the argument linking local-level governance to national peace-building processes still needs to be fully developed. Part I of this paper will review a range of conceptual considerations that will affect the programming process. Programming external assistance, after all, is a political and cultural process as much as it is a technical challenge, and especially after conflict, aid can often be a double-edged sword. Part II describes and assesses concrete options across a range of thematic areas, with particular emphasis on the opportunities provided by the needs that arise from a respite in hostilities, when refugees return, soldiers demobilize, communities seek healing and illicit arms remain to be collected. Part III then briefly examines the CARERE and PRODERE experience in the light of the paper’s overall argument that local action can anticipate and strengthen national capacity building after violent conflict.

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<sup>1</sup> Address at the University of Chicago Law School, May 1, 1960, cited in Brian Urquhart, “Looking for a New Sheriff”, *New York Review of Books*, July 16, 1998, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> UNCDF 2000 Results-oriented Annual Report, p. 13.

## I. PROGRAMMING CONSIDERATIONS

### The issues

In a recent issue of the German development journal *Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit*, the Afghan administrator of the Khost provincial school district, Khazan Gul Tani, described the practical problems that threaten to overwhelm his community<sup>3</sup>:

“Farmers can’t sell their produce, because international organizations distribute wheat and legumes for free. There are no school buildings, and the children sit in the open, often under the broiling sun. We have no teaching materials. There are very few trained teachers left, mainly elderly men. We’d like to build schools in every village, which could also serve as community centres. We’d like to have busses, so we can bring children from remote hamlets to the schools. We’d like to have drinking water in the schools, but water levels in the wells have gone down, and we have no pumps. We’d like to teach girls, and parents are insisting that we do, but we lack female teachers. We have no money to pay our teachers. The money pledged by the donor community in Tokyo, and specifically the money placed in trust with the United Nations to pay salaries, has never trickled down to our province, and anyway, there are no functioning banks to transfer money. Security is poor, but the American troops are a help. The only material assistance thus far – several months after the international community landed in Kabul – has come from a small German NGO.”

This sad vignette highlights a range of problems that typically beset countries emerging from conflict: the gap between pledges of aid and their delivery, the unintended consequences of humanitarian interventions, the lack of local capacity, the shortages in building materials and means of transportation, the damaged transportation infrastructure, lack of access to clean drinking water, and the gaps in food production and health care. Add to this the widespread concerns with security, compounded by small arms in the hands of unemployed goons, and then imagine the psychosocial damage done by internal conflict, pitting groups against each other as hatred spreads, dispersing refugees and displaced people, victimizing the weakest – women, children and the elderly. The overall composite picture is one of utter disarray.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, never are the arguments to intervene more compelling: as the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD points out, developing countries are ultimately responsible for their own development, but “when division is rife and local capacities are severely weakened”; this places a moral obligation on the international community to “help strengthen a country’s indigenous capacities”.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Khazan Gul Tani. “Schulen fuer die Kinder von Khost”, in *Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit*, July 2002, p. 218.

<sup>4</sup> See also Shepard Forman, Stewart Patrick, and Dirk Salomons, *Recovering From Conflict: An International Response*, Paying for Essentials Policy Paper Series, Center on International Cooperation, New York University, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> DAC/OECD Policy Statement, *Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation on the Threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Paris, May 1997.

Conflict prevention is not just a desirable strategy before a crisis becomes violent; while a settlement may have been reached, the root causes of the conflict may still remain unresolved. That is why post-conflict recovery efforts have to be seen as extended conflict prevention strategies, which have to focus on the emergence of non-violent leadership, post-conflict reconciliation, institution building and investments in civil society.<sup>6</sup>

From the vantage point of the international community, keen to provide assistance in post-conflict situations, but faced with a challenge of daunting complexity, the key questions then become:

- When can we move from strictly humanitarian interventions to peace-building and reconstruction?
- How do we find the resources in a very volatile and often media-driven donor environment?
- How do we coordinate our efforts among so many players, from large to small?
- Where do we focus our efforts, at the centre or at the periphery? Is there a centre to support, or do we need to construct one?
- What level of security is adequate to allow entry, and what needs to be done to create or maintain it?
- With whom do we work in the areas of former conflict? What institutions remain, what can be rebuilt, what social capital exists, what cultural and social entry points can be identified?
- How do we set our priorities, allocate resources, and programme our assistance in a manner that transfers ownership, power and accountability to representative and non-violent local partners?
- Can support for good local governance lead to good governance at the centre?
- What are the concrete potential entry points and programming opportunities?

It is from these perspectives that the question raised by UNCDF on the feasibility of a “local governance approach to peace-building” deserves a closer look.<sup>7</sup>

## **Timing**

There is never a clear cut-off point where there is no longer a need for humanitarian assistance, and post-conflict reconstruction can begin. A peace accord, or even a cease-fire, may mark the transition, but more often than not, the reliability of such agreements is shaky, and it may take considerable time before their impact is felt. The experience with the peace process in Sierra Leone, or currently in the Congo, shows the

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<sup>6</sup> Michelle Cullen, Johanna Mendelson Forman, *Conflict Prevention and Post-conflict Reconstruction: Perspectives and Prospects*, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 1998.

<sup>7</sup> See also the Carnegie Commission on the Prevention of Deadly Conflict’s outline of key criteria for successful “transition” operations, such as the identification of “a lead player”, the development of “a coherent political-military approach designed to arrest the violence”, the need for “adequate resources to address the problem”, and “a plan for the restoration of host country authority”, *Preventing Deadly Conflict*, Carnegie Corporation of New York, December 1997, p. 40.

fragility of signatures on paper. Violence often continues well after deals have been made, and often the parties to a conflict are not even in control of their own more extreme factions. Peace tends to come first in isolated pockets, in certain communities or areas, and rarely synchronously across entire countries. That is where a programming approach focusing on local opportunities has its first major advantage. There may be opportunities locally or regionally well before a country is pacified in its entirety. Such local interventions can then set the scene for expanded programming – an approach followed in Angola during recent years, and currently visible in the Congo. Often the NGO community is well ahead of the international organizations in taking such localized initiatives.

## Resources

The resource mobilization mechanisms available to fund post-conflict recovery are not as well established as those available for humanitarian crises; there still is no equivalent of the United Nations' annual global Common Appeals Process. Usually, funds are mobilized through crisis-specific pledging conferences, with the United Nations system and the World Bank often hosting separate fund-raising events. The recent concerted efforts to address the costs of rebuilding Afghanistan were based on a joint UNDP/World Bank needs assessment<sup>8</sup>; this represented a major step forward in methodology, and may have contributed to donors' willingness to pledge generously at the Tokyo conference earlier this year. If funds are to be found for a local approach, the concept as such will therefore have to be included in the needs assessment methodology currently emerging from the UNDP/World Bank consensus, since this may well be the model for future joint action. UNDP is well aware of this, and intends to use the Resident Coordinator Fund to strengthen coordination in post-conflict countries.<sup>9</sup> This implies that any format for a "local approach" emerging from this workshop will have to be firmly anchored into the United Nations Development Group's (UNDG) common planning framework, and that a methodology to estimate the programming options and costs for local action will have to be built into the needs assessment process.

UNCDF will also have to consider how it can reconcile its financial model, whereby grants are limited to "approximate the future capital flows realistically anticipated from central transfers, donor financing or local taxation"<sup>10</sup> with the post-crisis need for a relatively large influx of "kick-start" funds – it may have to develop a two-phased funding model for this purpose, with a sustainable capital flow as a longer-term objective. In funding local level governance institutions, UNCDF will have to network with its partners to take into account "kick-start" funds coming from other donors, and it will have to make sure that the local absorption capacity is not exceeded.

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<sup>8</sup> [www.undp.org/afghanistan/index.html](http://www.undp.org/afghanistan/index.html)

<sup>9</sup> See UNDP document DP/2001/4, *Role of UNDP in crisis and post-conflict situations*, November 2002, pp. 16 and 17.

<sup>10</sup> UNCDF, *Taking Risks*, Key Midterm Review Findings, New York, undated (approximately 2000), p. 19.

## Coordination

If, indeed, any “local approach” needs to be fully integrated into the United Nations system’s common development assistance model, it is important that the Common Country Assessment (CCA) for countries in crisis, as well as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, support local interventions.<sup>11</sup> In fact, this is already very much the case, as can be seen from recent UNDAFs such as that for Mozambique 2002-2006, which emphasizes community-based activities and collaboration with NGOs. The World Bank as well, in its approach to national Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, supports an analysis of local capacity. As governments themselves decentralize (often inspired by UNDP’s advocacy to this effect), the United Nations system will have to follow, with more activities planned at the regional or provincial level. This phenomenon is particularly evident already in countries such as India or Nigeria.

The problem of coordination, however, goes well beyond the UN system. Usually, NGOs are on the scene in post-conflict zones well before the international organizations have arrived, and any assessment what needs to be done should take their views and experience into account. Since many of these NGOs in fact act as sub-contractors for bilateral donors (for example, 85% of USAID’s programmes are implemented through NGOs), they can serve as a portal for access to a wider range of aid providers. Countries in crisis rarely have effective governmental aid coordination mechanisms, and unless the United Nations itself serves as the temporary administrative authority, as it did in Cambodia, East Timor and Kosovo, or unless a strong central government rapidly emerges, as it did in Afghanistan, the players in post-conflict recovery operations are very much on their own, and must rely on informal consultative mechanisms. UNCDF therefore will have to cultivate its non-UN networks in order to maximize programming opportunities.<sup>12</sup>

## Working on the periphery -- without a centre

Ultimately, a policy to support a “local governance approach to peace-building” should at the same time be a policy to strengthen the centre. While this paper will argue that much can be done in a decentralized manner, particularly in the initial period after conflict when institutions are fragile at best, the limits of decentralized action are soon reached. Local schools can be rebuilt, but soon there is a need for country-wide educational policies and curricula; seeds and fowl can be distributed, but at some point unresolved issues of land tenure will cripple agricultural enterprise; donors’ funds can keep communities afloat temporarily, but questions of fiscal powers and distribution of state resources can not be brushed aside permanently. There must be security, rule of law, a stable currency, electoral reform – all of which requires a functioning, democratic government and an effective civil service.

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<sup>11</sup> DP/2001/4, p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Kate Halvorsen’s case study for the Local Capacities for Peace Project, *Reintegration Efforts in a Post-war Context: The Activities of Danish Refugee Council and Norwegian Refugee Council in Mozambique*, [www.cdainc.com/pubs/casel1.htm](http://www.cdainc.com/pubs/casel1.htm), which describes the intensive coordination among local authorities, NGOs, UNOHAC and UNHCR in the distribution of non-food items to 50,000 families in three provinces – the NGOs had set up their own coordination body, LINK, to work with the UN system.

When the post-conflict void at the centre is filled by a temporary extraneous agent, such as a United Nations administrative authority, opportunities clearly abound. Some of the most successful efforts to work at the local or provincial level, such as CARERE in Cambodia and the local governance initiatives in Kosovo, were made possible through United Nations oversight or benign neglect. When the government is hostile, but donor money is abundant, as was the case in Guatemala when PRODERE was established, the opportunities are still manifold. But the experience with local programmes in rudderless countries like Liberia or Somalia has been mixed, and current efforts in the Congo, where the government's reach is far more limited than its borders, demonstrate the difficulties in dealing with pseudo-authorities dictated by warlords. On the other hand, the experience in Mozambique, where a strong government was in charge during and after the peace process, showed how successful local initiatives can be.

Paradoxically, therefore, one must conclude that local interventions have the best chance of success when the centre is viable. As a corollary, one can argue that a local approach should implicitly be designed to strengthen, or at least define, the role of the central government, and should reinforce local government, not just informal community structures. This strategy is strongly supported by the conclusions of a joint USAID/Office of Transition Initiatives and UNDP/Emergency Response Division Roundtable held in October 2000, which warned against the creation of localized "islands of success".<sup>13</sup>

## **Security**

In most peacekeeping operations, the troops have a double mandate: to oversee and support the implementation of the peace accord, particularly the cease-fire and demobilization provisions, and to ensure the safety of the aid delivery operations in the area. Given the numerical paucity and operational weakness of so many of the troops provided by member states (as described, inter alia, in the "Brahimi" report), the security of aid and development personnel is not necessarily guaranteed even in United Nations peacekeeping operations.<sup>14</sup> When the United Nations conducts political missions such as the one that spawned PRODERE in Central America, there are no security guarantees whatsoever. Where the parties to the conflict themselves "sell" security, as they did in Somalia, the risk level soon becomes stellar, and aid becomes an accomplice to the war economy<sup>15</sup>. Away from the capitals, security risks also tend to increase exponentially, as has become apparent in Afghanistan, where the lack of security in some peripheral provinces tends to stymie the entire recovery process. A careful assessment of the potential dangers is therefore an essential prerequisite for any "local approach" programming venture.

## **Local partners**

To identify communities in areas emerging from conflict where a local governance approach might be effective, UNCDF might find it helpful to use a technique

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<sup>13</sup> Roundtable Report "*Community-Based Reintegration and Rehabilitation in Post-Conflict Settings*", USAID/OTI and UNDP/ERD, Washington, D.C., October 2000, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, UN document a/55/305, 21 August 2000.

<sup>15</sup> Mary B. Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – Or War*. Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 1999, chapter 4.

currently being developed in the area of mine action: mapping overlays. In mine action, this means marking up topographic maps of a given region with reports of mine threats, and adding a layer indicating core socio-economic data such as population density, economic activity, location of schools and wells, or ethnic diversity. This will allow the mine action planners to set priorities for humanitarian mine clearance, with the objective to restore the possibility of economic recovery for as many people as possible in the most efficient manner. UNCDF might develop a similar methodology to create an “institutional topography”, mapping the whereabouts of potential institutional and individual partners against a background of economic data and security profiles for regions under consideration. Such a methodology for the selection of target areas could then be integrated into the UNDAF process.

In the case of UNCDF, this would create an opportunity to identify, in the words of Dr. John Paul Lederach, “those individuals who have capacity for change, since a critical mass is necessary for a social movement to evolve”. Finding these individuals is akin to developing “the critical yeast”, according to Dr. Lederach. Thus, the focus in a transition should be “on the set of people who have the potential to have a significant impact and on the resources they need to grow over time. The role of the international actors is to help cultivate both”.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, it is important to target beneficiaries widely, so that entire communities benefit, and not just specific groups, however deserving.<sup>17</sup>

Particularly in areas directly affected by conflict, the chance of finding intact local government institutions is uncertain, and the most logical partners are often leaders recognized by communities because of tradition or religion; schools, youth centres, women’s groups, business groups, refugees and displaced persons often have their leaders identified on the basis of performance during times of hardship. In time, local government can coalesce around such informal arrangements, as it did in Cambodia.

Mary Anderson, in her book *Do No Harm*, makes the argument that in periods of violent conflict, war leaders emerge who suppress any moderate voices, and that one of the potential benefits of post-conflict recovery programmes is the possibility of giving a constructive role to people on both sides of the conflict who want to work for peace and reconciliation. If the implementation of reconstruction projects is in their hands, they will gain credibility in the community, and become the nucleus of a new type of leadership. Some fifteen case studies cited in her book illustrate such opportunities for gradual change from within.<sup>18</sup>

The careful selection of development partners will also reduce the risk that aid resources flow into the criminal parallel economy that so often characterizes societies emerging from conflict – complex networks of smuggling, trafficking, illicit removal and

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<sup>16</sup> Director of the Conflict Transformation Program at Eastern Mennonite University, quoted in the Roundtable Report “*Community-Based Reintegration and Rehabilitation in Post-Conflict Settings*”, USAID/OTI and UNDP/ERD, Washington, D.C., October 2000, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> See also John Paul Lederach, *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, 1995.

<sup>18</sup> Anderson, 1999.

sale of natural resources, arms deals and investments of dirty money in legitimate businesses.<sup>19</sup>

### **Building genuine local capacity**

With all these caveats and considerations, how can UNCDF best identify programming opportunities that genuinely strengthen communities without compromising or prejudging the restoration of central authority? The key may be the selection of activities that can be undertaken autonomously – if needed - in a decentralized setting, but that are sure to fit into a national post-conflict reconstruction strategy, and that support the country’s overall peace process. As relief gradually makes way for development, and as a central governance structure gradually replaces the ad-hoc constructs provided by the international community, UNCDF should then be able to strengthen the linkages between its local activities and the overall recovery effort at the national level.<sup>20</sup>

In thematic terms, the entry points are numerous, and in the next chapter of this paper, we will be examining some specific programming options.

## **II. PROGRAMMING OPTIONS AND ENTRY POINTS**

The U.S. Agency for International Development’s Center for Democracy and Governance has identified three strategic areas that can serve as entry points for initial programming in support of democratic local governance: creating a favourable national enabling environment; developing democratic local governance; and building local government capacity.<sup>21</sup>

The first area comprises the implementation of constitutional reforms that recognize local autonomy, the introduction of decentralizing, enabling legislation and the issuance of corresponding administrative laws, regulations and policies. The second area includes opportunities for citizens to set priorities for local services, access to public meetings and records, participatory procedures regarding resource allocation and planning, capacity building to work effectively with the media, drawing non-traditional groups into local government, and building links among local governments, civil society organizations, the private sector and other groups. Under the third heading, finally, come such activities as technical assistance to local governments in policy-making, expanding

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<sup>19</sup> See in particular the collection of essays on this topic edited by Mats Berdal and David M. Malone as part of a project initiated by the International Peace Academy, *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 2000.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of “Linking Local Involvement to the National Level”, see also *Community-Based Reintegration and Rehabilitation in Post-Conflict Settings*, a USAID/OTI and UNDP/ERD Roundtable Report, Washington, DC, 2000, chapter IV.

<sup>21</sup> Center for Democracy and Governance, *Decentralization and Democratic Local Governance Programming Handbook*, Technical Publications Series, Bureau for Global Programs, Field Support, and Research, USAID, Washington, D.C., 2000

**Table I.**

**ESSENTIAL ACTIVITIES FOR RECOVERY FROM CONFLICT:  
PROGRAMMING OPPORTUNITIES FOR DECENTRALIZED ACTION**

| <b>SECTOR/ACTIVITIES</b>   |
|--|
| <b>1. Repatriation, Resettlement and Reconciliation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Transport assistance for return</li><li>• Shelter and reconstruction materials</li><li>• Community reconciliation and psychosocial counselling</li><li>• Family tracing and reunification</li></ul>  |
| <b>2. Public Safety</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mine clearance and awareness</li><li>• Demobilization: reintegration and job creation</li><li>• Small arms control and buy-backs</li><li>• Restructuring and retraining of security forces</li><li>• Human rights monitoring and advocacy</li><li>• Conflict prevention and resolution training</li></ul>  |
| <b>3. Infrastructure Recovery</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Water and Sanitation</li><li>• Transportation</li><li>• Power generation</li><li>• Housing</li><li>• Solid waste disposal</li><li>• Telecommunications</li></ul>   |
| <b>4. Food Security and Agricultural Rehabilitation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Targeted food distribution</li><li>• Seeds and tools distribution</li><li>• Livestock and veterinary projects</li><li>• Land tenure issues</li></ul>   |
| <b>5. Health, Education and Social Welfare</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provision of essential health services</li><li>• Building basic local services capacity, physical and human</li><li>• Rehabilitation or construction of schools; instruction materials</li><li>• Recruitment and/or training of teachers</li><li>• Employment and skills training; food-for-work projects</li><li>• Micro-credit and micro-enterprise development</li></ul> |
| <b>6. Governance and Civil Society</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NGO capacity building</li><li>• Support to existing religious and social leadership structures</li><li>• Media training, program development and radio distribution</li><li>• Local electoral process: education, support, monitoring</li><li>• Local administration of justice and adjudication of disputes</li></ul>  |

local revenue-generating authority, strengthening local officials' management and policy analysis skills.<sup>22</sup>

While these are all valid interventions, not all are suitable for the initial period after a conflict has been settled or died down, and while most of these proposals do strengthen the local governance capacity, they have to be undertaken, legitimized and implemented centrally.

It may therefore be more effective in the initial stages of post-conflict recovery to focus on "sectoral" entry points that allow for indirect influencing of local democratic processes and decentralization. This was discussed last year at a symposium hosted by UNCDF, in partnership with UNDP, the Ford Foundation and the Government of Japan, on decentralization and local governance in Africa. The participants singled out primary education, primary health care, rural roads and rural water supplies as common targets for decentralization in all countries, and even there, some functions of these sectors normally should be retained by the centre.<sup>23</sup>

This reflects the common denominator, but there may be a broader range of options. During the summer of 1999, the Center on International Cooperation at New York University prepared several papers for the Brooking Roundtable on the Relief to Development Gap, and in doing so, it identified seven sectors that require immediate attention in the aftermath of conflict: repatriation and resettlement; public safety; infrastructure recovery; food security and agricultural rehabilitation; health, education and social welfare needs, governance and civil society; and macroeconomic stabilization.<sup>24</sup>

Out of these seven areas, six are eminently suitable for programme development activities at the local level. Table I describes a set of activities in each of these areas which could serve as entry points for interventions meant to strengthen local governance.

### **Repatriation and resettlement**

As refugees and displaced persons return, there is a dire need for vehicles, and as the level of violence goes down, there is a growing need for public transportation. International organizations and NGOs alike are in the market for trucks and jitneys, and communities that have the means to invest in vehicles can look forward to long-term business opportunities. The construction of shelter and the manufacturing of building materials is another local industry that could flourish with some start-up capital, and this could be linked to the creation of jobs for demobilizing soldiers and thugs seeking a career change. Local government can take the lead in these areas.

A key document that should be consulted by organizations which intend to programme external assistance at the local or regional level is the comparative study

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<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, pp. 35 to 42.

<sup>23</sup> *Proceedings from the UNCDF Participatory Symposium on Decentralization & Local Governance in Africa*, UNCDF, New York, 2002, p. 110.

<sup>24</sup> Forman, Patrick, Salomons, 2000, p. 64.

published by UNDP in 1999 on *Governance Foundations for Post-conflict Situations: UNDP's Experience*. This report examines the conceptual side of governance and conflict, analyses the different approaches employed by UNDP, and offers recommendations on approaches, modalities, resource mobilisation and aid coordination. While it mainly addresses issues at the national level, it has some specific recommendations on reintegration and governance at local levels, especially as it affects refugees and displaced people returning to their communities.

UNDP stresses that focus on reconciliation and power sharing at the centre often results in the creation of a political and management vacuum in rural areas. Yet, that is where the stress and friction are often most pronounced. UNDP's answer has been the development and implementation of so-called Area Development Schemes – which have their roots in the Sudanese/Ethiopian drought and famine in the mid-1980s. - This approach focused on the creation of disposable income for villagers by encouraging and supporting productive income-generating schemes. It later developed into the full-fledged holistic area development programmes in Cambodia and Central America known as CARERE and PRODERE, which both had to deal with a massive influx of returning refugees (see part III of this report).

The key programming tools used in both ventures included the strengthening of local government institutions; the construction of health clinics and schools; the provision of water supply; the construction of roads; irrigation schemes; capacity development for agricultural production; training of small entrepreneurs; micro-credit schemes; and land redistribution programmes. Both CARERE and PRODERE, as well as UNDP's experiments in the nineties with Area Development Programmes in Afghanistan, have shown that this approach is intrinsically sound, and offers opportunities well before a central government has come to grips with its development problems.<sup>25</sup>

### **Reconciliation and psychosocial counselling**

Another area where support to local initiatives can be very helpful is psychosocial counselling and community reconciliation. As to the latter: Richard C. Crook, at the U.K. Institute of Development Studies, points at the examples of Bosnia and Uganda, both multi-ethnic, both without a clear majority for any particular group, and describes how both countries have adopted a policy of decentralization in order to resolve the problem of competitive ethnic or religious mobilization. Decentralization is seen as a way “of enhancing popular participation, deepening democracy and promoting the responsiveness of the government” by giving minorities a sphere of autonomy.<sup>26</sup>

This works only to the extent that minorities are concentrated geographically, and while it restores their rights, it does not necessarily reconcile them with their neighbours. A more intriguing model is offered by the Bosnian peace agreements and post-conflict

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<sup>25</sup> UNDP Management Development and Governance Division, Bureau for Development Policy, *Governance Foundations for Post-Conflict Situations: UNDP's Experience*. UNDP, New York, 1999, chapter III.

<sup>26</sup> Richard C. Crook, *Strengthening democratic governance in conflict-torn societies: civic organizations, democratic effectiveness and political conflict*, IDS Working Paper 129, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, 2001, pp. 7 ff.

constitutional arrangements, which go well beyond such sub-divisions. The Statutes and Rules of Procedure for the Bosnian municipalities, for example, imposed by the Office of the High Representative, include a clause which gives veto power to any minority group represented on the council.<sup>27</sup> This creates a situation where negotiations across ethnic and religious borders become necessary, and where external support might accelerate reconciliation. In fact, there is a plethora of NGOs and multilateral actors on the ground in Bosnia at present providing reconciliation and psychosocial services – unfortunately, many other areas coming out of war are not as well supported.

It may be unrealistic to talk about restoring mutual trust right after brutal conflict, “when memories of the violence perpetrated by the warring groups are still fresh”, as Krishna Kumar emphasises in his study on social reconciliation. He describes this as a process that begins with the adversaries’ acceptance of each other’s right to coexist in war-torn societies. Social reconciliation, according to Kumar, does not presuppose tolerance; it seeks to promote it. Social reconciliation interventions are therefore “specifically designed to foster intergroup understanding, strengthen non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms, and heal the wounds of war.”<sup>28</sup>

Of particular interest in this context is also the work of the Swiss NGO War-torn Societies Project (WSP) International, which in an earlier incarnation was part of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD). WSP has done considerable field work in conflict zones such as Somalia and Mozambique to test its thesis that conflict resolution has to begin with a common understanding of the underlying issues. WSP will therefore pair researchers from conflicting parties for joint research, guided by neutral experts. Their common findings then serve as the starting point for discussions between adversarial communities. WSP places special emphasis on the quality of post-conflict assistance, rather than its sheer volume, and stresses the need to select people who understand the societies and processes they support.<sup>29</sup>

Local communities are the natural setting to start such a process, as they provide opportunities for small-scale cooperative action, communication, and acknowledgment of the past. This can be programmed around the rebuilding of infrastructure, schools, or health services, for example.<sup>30</sup> Things may become more difficult when former fighters settle in communities where they have no roots, since their own communities were destroyed, as is the case in Sierra Leone. Their disruptive impact can play havoc with reconciliation and reconstruction efforts, and strong links may therefore have to be forged between local strategies to absorb former combatants and efforts at community reconciliation.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> Krishna Kumar, *Promoting Social Reconciliation in Postconflict Societies: Selected Lessons From USAID’s Experience*, Center for Development Information and Evaluation, USAID, Washington, D.C., 1999.

<sup>29</sup> *Improving external assistance to war-torn societies: the Bossey Statement*. Guidelines for the management of post-conflict programmes from the War-Torn Societies Project, [www.wsp-international.org/bossey.htm](http://www.wsp-international.org/bossey.htm).

<sup>30</sup> See also Augustine Toure’s account of *The Role of Civil Society in National Reconciliation and Peacebuilding in Liberia*, International Peace Academy, New York, 2002.

<sup>31</sup> International Crisis Group Africa Report Nr. 49. *Sierra Leone After Elections: Politics as Usual?* Freetown/Brussels, July 2002.

## **Public safety: mine action**

The very first problem that often needs to be addressed when conflict abates is that of mine clearance and mine awareness. Refugees and displaced people tend to rush home the moment they believe that it is safe to return, and are often not aware of the residual threat of mines when the shooting stops. The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) has become a very effective leader in building a rapid response capacity as soon as circumstances allow – its staff was on the ground in Kosovo, for example, within hours after the Serbian troops agreed to retreat. The UN mine action programme in Afghanistan, to cite another example, has been in continuous operation ever since the Soviets pulled out, right through the numerous political upheavals and regime changes of the last decade. Numerous NGOs specialized in mine action work closely with the United Nations, and together they have created a model for interventions that is highly decentralized, and that offers many opportunities for support and capacity building at the local level.<sup>32</sup>

To begin with, specialized NGOs and commercial firms usually conduct rapid surveys in communities to assess the level of danger from mines and unexploded ordnance. They will often remove booby traps from houses, clear a few paths and wells, and mark off all the areas where it is unsafe to go, based on information obtained from the local population. This information is processed centrally by the UNMAS team in the country, and a plan is drawn up for systematic mine removal. At this stage, there is a clear need for local staff: mine clearance is extremely labour-intensive, and usually, hundreds of locals are recruited by the international NGOs, trained to UN standards, and then employed.

Many of those locals then find continuous employment with NGOs in their own region for years to come; others are recruited internationally by the large commercial firms. There is a clear opportunity for local entrepreneurs to start up their own mine clearance firms, provided they find the capital for gear and vehicles – training is often provided by the United Nations, which has operated mine clearance schools in countries such as Mozambique, Afghanistan and Cambodia. A strong case can be made to decentralize and nationalize operations (under the overall planning and tasking umbrella of the United Nations or the government), with capacity building support provided by external actors. This may be more cost-effective and sustainable than the extended deployment of NGOs.

In all this, there is a clear regulatory and planning role for local government. In Cambodia, for example, land use planning units were established in 1999 at the district level, to manage development following mine clearance. These district units, in turn, report to a provincial sub-committee that has as its key tasks to ensure effective and fair land use, through clear and transparently planned mine clearing operations.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> See also: The Praxis Group, Ltd., *Willing To Listen: An Evaluation of the United Nations Mine Action Programme in Kosovo 1999-2002*, UN Mine Action Service, New York, 2002.

<sup>33</sup> Land Use Planning Unit (LUPU) Battambang Process and Structure, May 2001

## **Public safety: reintegration of former combatants**

Another issue affecting local safety - and offering opportunities for local business ventures - is the presence of former soldiers and the prevalence of small arms in the community. The successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants after violent conflict represent the touchstone, the moment of truth, for any peace-building process. When combatants are asked to give up their arms, they face a “point of no return”: they, and their leaders, must have faith in a future where the advantages of peace outweigh those of war. Without a vision of that future, they will not make the choice for peace--and if they remain a threat, no one will be able to make that choice. A country or a region without peace and security is doomed to a marginal existence. Neither its inhabitants nor its neighbours will risk an investment in its development, and thus the vicious circle of instability and poverty will tighten its grip. However, DDR is no substitute for a comprehensive peace process: in no case has DDR succeeded when the peace process was flawed. On the other hand, no peace process has ever come to fruition unless the former combatants were effectively reintegrated, and much of this reintegration process depends on the regional and local capacity to respond.

If the international community wants to “restore hope” in a country or region emerging from violent conflict by supporting and nurturing a peaceful resolution, it will have to pay special attention to the long term prospects of the military and the warlords who are about to lose their livelihoods. Supporting a demobilization process is not a just technical military issue: it is a complex operation that has political, security, humanitarian and development dimensions as well. If one aspect of this pentagram is neglected, the entire fragile peace process may unravel. While the violence may have abated, the underlying sources of conflict may take years, if not generations, to overcome. If support to the demobilization process is not matched, moreover, by the efforts required to facilitate the entire peace-building and recovery process, failure is again likely. Thus, the response of the international community cannot be half-hearted or piece-meal.

Typically, hostilities will decrease and demobilization of combatants will take place when a country's crisis has reached such depths that even war has become unprofitable and unsustainable – often after external support is withdrawn, or lucrative war profiteering is stymied. At this stage, the need for humanitarian assistance in the area usually has reached its apex. True, combatants, ex-combatants and dependants, child soldiers, etc. are key actors in the peace process. Nonetheless, for humanitarian agencies and national/local authorities their needs represent only a minor share in the context of overall needs. For example, in Mozambique there were approximately 150,000 demobilized soldiers and dependants, compared to 3 million members of the general population who were directly affected by the war (IDPs, returnees, etc.).

Thus, a dilemma arises, both at the national and at the community levels. On the one hand, former combatants can be a special threat to their communities, and unless exceptional efforts are made to control them, and to get their guns off the scene, they can destabilize any peace effort. On the other hand, an objective difficulty exists when attempting to plan and establish DDR priorities with local government authorities or NGOs. There can be a perceived sense that there is an excessive focus on the needs of a

few. The civilian population is likely to have suffered more during the conflict and former soldiers are easily perceived as those responsible for violence. Structures and systems which produce an impression of privilege for the offenders must therefore be avoided. How can this be resolved? How can the international community best contribute? How can local communities cope?

When it comes to supporting countries in their efforts to disarm, demobilise and reintegrate former combatants, particularly after violent conflict, the international community has been on a steep learning curve. Numerous reports and studies have analysed every DDR effort from the early days in Zimbabwe and Namibia to recent events in Liberia and Sierra Leone.<sup>34</sup> By now there is an impressive body of policy recommendations and lessons learned. Yet, many practitioners in the field of post-conflict recovery are concerned that these cumulative insights have not led to a more informed and harmonised international response capacity.<sup>35</sup>

The key lesson to be put into practice may be this: the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants must be components of a holistic process, and every element needs to be integrated closely into the whole. In fact, there are at least five interconnected processes:

- political, consisting of ongoing negotiations and power shifts, well beyond the conclusion of a peace accord, leading to the integration of the former combatants into a new power structure (and possibly into a new military framework, such as a consolidated army);
- military/technical, leading from cease-fire and cantonment to disarmament and discharge, while peacekeeping mechanisms are employed to prevent conflicts from recurring;
- security, linking reductions in the threat posed by combatants with guns to broader disarmament and weapons collection efforts intended to create a climate less prone to violence, as well as to general conflict prevention and reductions in the arms trade;
- humanitarian, linking the well-being of the former combatants to that of vulnerable groups within and on the fringe of their ranks (e.g., child soldiers, female combatants, disabled soldiers and chronically ill soldiers), as well as to the well-being of other vulnerable groups in the population at large (while maintaining a balance among the various interests), and leading to their (re)insertion into society as healthy and stable citizens;

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<sup>34</sup> Of particular interest are: Mats Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilization after Civil Wars*, Adelphi Paper 303, Oxford University Press, New York, 1996; Nat J. Colletta, Markus Kostner and Ingo Wiederhofer, *The Transition from War to Peace in Sub-Saharan Africa*, World Bank, Washington D.C., 1996; Bernd Hoffmann and Colin Gleichmann, *Programmes for the Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: Changing Perspectives in Development and Security*, Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), Eschborn, 2000.

<sup>35</sup> World Bank, Africa Region Working Group on Demobilization and Reintegration of Military Personnel, *Demobilization and Reintegration of Military Personnel: the evidence from seven country case studies*, Volume I, Synthesis Report, Washington, D.C., February 1993.

- socio-economic, cutting off resources for the “business of war”, and linking the prospects of the various skill-based subgroups within the demobilizing population to the potential opportunity structure (employment, land, credit, training) created by the peace process, thus leading to the former combatants’ (re)integration into the economic activities of their communities.

As a matter of principle, the main responsibility for the planning and execution of a DDR process should rest with the parties, and should involve local communities to the fullest. In some instances, such as the peace process in northern Somalia, large groups of soldiers have been demobilised with little or no support from the international community; more often than not, however, international support is sought. At that stage, it is essential that the planning and preparations for each of these five processes begin simultaneously and in a concerted fashion; if one strain is neglected, the others will by necessity suffer.<sup>36</sup> To the extent possible, this process should be participatory, and the “lower ranks” should have a voice.

At the local level, the focus can then be on the creation of jobs – mine clearance, road construction, renovation and building of housing, irrigation projects, agriculture, livestock production – within the overall community recovery plan; at the same time, integration of former combatants into the work force must be seen as an opportunity for social reconciliation, and community programmes must be established to support that process. For organizations contemplating external assistance, the programming options are abundant.

### **Public safety: weapons collection**

The need to remove small arms from the scene may also provide incentives for local action. Even when soldiers hand in their weapons at the time of demobilization, this represents only a fraction of the total number of guns in the area. Countries in conflict are usually flooded with assault guns, ordnance, landmines, grenade launchers and similar gear. Civilians are often recruited into militias, gangs buy up weapons from the army, external parties stoking the flames will ship in supplies, and smuggling routes fill in the gaps. The standard response has normally been the introduction of buy-back programmes, but given the fluidity of the weapons market, new small arms may come pouring in as quickly as they are bought back, especially when the price is right.

In El Salvador, UNDP has joined NGOs, national foundations and the government in a “Society without Violence” project that aims to limit the deaths and injuries caused by some 400,000 illegal firearms circulating in the country. The goal is first and foremost to educate the population, particularly at the community level and through local institutions, and generate a climate that is less supportive to arms ownership, and thus to their use.<sup>37</sup> If successful, it is UNDP’s intention to expand this project to all of Central America.

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<sup>36</sup> Peggy Mason, Ian C. Douglas, Douglas Fraser, *Practical Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Measures for Peacebuilding*, Dept. of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, 1997.

<sup>37</sup> [www.undp.org/erd/pubinfo/som/august2002.htm](http://www.undp.org/erd/pubinfo/som/august2002.htm)

The model for weapons collection, however, that has attracted the most interest in recent years – though not strictly post-conflict -- is the programme for Albania developed jointly by UNDP and the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs. This programme, piloted initially in the district of Gramsch, offers development incentives to communities in return for the voluntary surrender of weapons. Funding comes from UNDP, the EU, Norway, Belgium and Japan. It consists of three parallel initiatives, combining disarmament, development and public awareness. The communities define their priorities, and as weapons are turned in, their dreams materialize: telecommunications, roads, schools.

This approach has demonstrated that often many small arms are under control of civilians who keep them for reasons of personal security, and that the percentage in the hands of criminals is relatively small. As job opportunities grow and security improves, disarming regular citizens becomes easier, and once that is done, one can focus on isolating the criminal elements.<sup>38</sup> To the extent that there is a cultural tradition of bearing arms (shooting them at weddings and other festivities), the strong cultural prohibitions on the use of these weapons can be restored.<sup>39</sup>

This type of initiative would offer UNCDF numerous programming opportunities around the world, as it combines investment in development and the creation of local employment with a direct contribution to peace and security.

### **From relief to development: restoring productive capacity**

While the sectoral activities outlined above -- repatriation, resettlement, reconciliation, mine clearance, demobilization and weapons collection – all address the need to come to terms with the residue of violence, there are many more activities essential to recovery after conflict. These can be defined as efforts to wean war-torn societies from their dependence on emergency aid, and help them restore their productive capacity. In Table I, the main categories are listed: infrastructure recovery, food security, agricultural rehabilitation, health, education, social welfare, governance and civil society.

Within each of these categories, there is a broad range of possible activities, and most of them need little comment, as they are the stock and staple of many standard community development models. One especially useful set of observations on the need for transitional support strategies can be found in the World Bank's studies on the concept of "social capital", enabling forms of capital that are socially owned, such as education, health, or technology-transfer services.<sup>40</sup> UNCDF's expertise in the area of micro-credit is particularly relevant, and through such financing mechanisms, the entry

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<sup>38</sup> UN Press release DC/2626 of 29 January 1999. See also the Working Terms of Reference for the Evaluation Mission of the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament to Albania, June 1998, at [www.un.org/Depts/dda/CAB/alb1.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/dda/CAB/alb1.htm).

<sup>39</sup> Communication to the author from Susan Woodward, referring to an article by Joanna Spear in the forthcoming publication *Ending Civil War*, edited by Stedman, Rothchild and Cousens.

<sup>40</sup> Michelle Cullen and Johanna Mendelson Forman, *Conflict Prevention and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Perspectives and Prospects*, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 1998, p. 8

points to sanitation, transportation, power generation, livestock projects and similar activities are obvious.<sup>41</sup>

Increasingly, the budgets for peacekeeping operations now reflect the “multidimensional” scope of such ventures, and tend to include funding for so-called “quick impact projects”, which in turn present the perfect opportunity for external actors to pick up the thread and formulate their own initiatives as a follow-up to the initial work already started. Much of this again calls for ventures at the community or provincial level, and UNCDF might, through the UNDAF process, seek out such connective targets.

Of particular interest, among the numerous areas that call for attention, is the possibility to support the use of radio as a means to rebuild community spirit, ensure effective communications, countermand sectarian propaganda and accelerate community learning.<sup>42</sup> Mozambique has recently experimented with the gratis distribution of “Freeplay Radios” in rural areas, radios that are powered by a hand-crank.<sup>43</sup> While these were meant in the first place as tools in an early warning system against natural disasters, they have become an important component of Mozambique’s rural development programmes, and have shown their use especially in areas where people live far apart from each other. It would seem that this concept is worth developing, as it offers opportunities for media training and peace-oriented programme development, the creation of local ownership of media (radio is cheap), and an opportunity to reinforce communities’ social coherence. Here again, UNCDF could find opportunities for highly visible initiatives.<sup>44</sup>

### **III. CARERE AND PRODERE: EVOLUTION OF AREA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

The first part of this paper presents the argument that there are several key considerations that should be paramount in deciding whether to support local governance structures in countries emerging from conflict, and if so, how best to do so. At the time that the United Nations system began to focus on the “continuum” between peace and development, shortly after the end of the Cold War, it mounted two major interventions to help resettle large numbers of refugees after conflict, one in Cambodia and one in Central America. These were based on an approach that focussed on community development. They demonstrated the programming strategy designated as “area development schemes” by its originators, UNDP and its Office of Project Services, and they have, in turn, become the model for similar efforts across other war-torn countries,

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<sup>41</sup> See especially the UNCDF *Strategy for Policy Impact and Replication in Local Governance and Microfinance*, New York, 2002.

<sup>42</sup> For a compelling account of the use of radio in community-based peace processes, see Larry S. Beyna, Michael Lund, Stacy C. Stacks, Janet Tuthill and Patricia Vondal, *The Effectiveness of Civil Society Initiatives in Controlling Violent Conflicts and Building Peace: A Study of Three Approaches in the Greater Horn of Africa*. USAID, Washington, D.C., 2001

<sup>43</sup> [www.freeplayfoundation.org/News/Newsitems/MozEval.htm](http://www.freeplayfoundation.org/News/Newsitems/MozEval.htm)

<sup>44</sup> Possibly working with the private sector – Grundig now makes a hand-cranked radio sold in the US for less than \$40. Freeplay radios are even cheaper.

most recently in Afghanistan. It might be interesting to review briefly how they functioned from the perspective of the programming considerations set out in this paper.

### **Timing**

Central America has suffered from social exclusion and conflict since the Spanish conquest. Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua were mired in civil war for decades, until after the end of the Cold War an understanding in principle was reached (Esquipulas agreements) to restore democracy in the region. As refugees flooded the region, particularly Belize, Honduras, Mexico and Costa Rica, an International Conference on Central American Refugees was organized as part of the follow-up to the Esquipulas agreements, and this in turn led in 1988 to the decision to establish a *Programa de Desarrollo para Desplazados, Refugiados y Repatriados en Centroamerica*, commonly known as PRODERE. UNDP was asked to execute the project, as it had offices in every country in the region, and its Office for Project Services was tasked with the implementation. The creation of PRODERE can therefore be described as the outcome of a political process, based on formal peace agreements supported by sovereign governments (although it became operational in 1989 before all national peace accords were signed).

When in 1992 peace was restored in Cambodia through United Nations-brokered peace talks after two decades of conflict, some 200,000 refugees and over 100,000 internally displaced people returned home, most of them to the north-western provinces. As a result of the peace negotiations, a United Nations Transitional Authority for Cambodia (UNTAC) was created, giving the United Nations considerable powers of governance. UNTAC tasked UNDP and the UN Office of Project Services (UNOPS) to deliver immediate relief to the northern region by providing strategic infrastructure and social support systems. The project was called Cambodian Resettlement and Reintegration, or CARERE. It took off shortly after the UN-sponsored 1993 elections, and rapidly delivered remarkable results.<sup>45</sup> CARERE was therefore also firmly anchored into both a detailed and serious peace agreement and a solid central governance structure.<sup>46</sup>

### **Resources**

PRODERE was largely funded by the Italian Agency for Bilateral Cooperation, and it worked with UNDP as its co-financing partner, as well as with UNHCR, the ILO, and PAHO/WHO. All in all, the Italian government contributed \$115 million during the three years of PRODERE's existence, while its partners played only a nominal funding role.<sup>47</sup> The fact that Italy controlled the funding allowed it to impose high standards on

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<sup>45</sup> For a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of the CARERE project, see Sam Barnes and Alan Retiere, *Peace-building from the ground up: A case study of UNDP's CARERE programme in Cambodia, 1991-2000*, UNDP/Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 2001.

<sup>46</sup> [www.unCDF.org/local\\_governance/reports/case\\_studies/cambodia/05-carere.htm](http://www.unCDF.org/local_governance/reports/case_studies/cambodia/05-carere.htm).

<sup>47</sup> For a discussion of the funding of peace operations in Central America, see Shepard Forman and Stewart Patrick, *Good Intentions: Pledges of Aid for Postconflict Recovery*, Center on International Cooperation, New York University, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 2000.

coordination and management: if the implementing agencies did not work together, funding would come to a halt.<sup>48</sup>

As Sam Barnes and Alan Retiere point out in their evaluation of CARERE, it was one of UNDP's most successful resource mobilization efforts, netting some \$ 70 million in donor contributions in addition to the \$ 35 million that UNDP had saved from its core resources during the years it had no programme in Cambodia.<sup>49</sup> This should be seen against the backdrop of heavy donor involvement in Cambodia, with the UNTAC budget for 1992-1993 running close to \$ 2 billion, while the donor community pledged an additional \$ 880 million in humanitarian and development assistance at a ministerial conference hosted by the government of Japan in June 1992.<sup>50</sup>

Both PRODERE and CARERE therefore profited from a political climate that built considerable donor interest, and both projects worked in a funding environment where there were sufficient resources for reconstruction and recovery at the national level, so that the efforts made regionally did not create a disproportionate funding anomaly.

### **Coordination**

PRODERE would last three years, starting on January 1, 1990. Its main management support came from UNDP/OPS headquarters in New York. It was set up as an autonomous development program. The UNDP Office for Project Services (UNDP/OPS) was selected as the executing agency because UNDP was represented in every PRODERE country. Furthermore, UNDP/OPS had an added advantage in that it could also work on the regional level, instead of only a country-by-country basis like most other UN organizations.

In line with its emphasis on area-based development, it operated in a decentralized manner. It worked with eight subprograms: six national subprograms, a regional coordination program and EDINFODOC (*Educación, Información, Formación, Documentación, y Investigación* — Education, Information, Training, Documentation, and Research).

The subprogram for coordination, management, and regional backstopping functioned as the central management unit for the whole region.<sup>51</sup> It supervised, coordinated, and supported the national subprograms. For example, it checked their operational plans, which indicated which specialized activities would be carried out by which UN organization. Each organization had one main technical advisor at the Central Coordination Unit.

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<sup>48</sup> Dennis Dijkzeul, *UNOPS in Guatemala: From Relief to Development*, manuscript prepared for the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, New York University, 2000.

<sup>49</sup> Barnes and Retiere, p. 51

<sup>50</sup> Dirk Salomons and Dennis Dijkzeul, *The Conjurers' Hat: Financing United Nations Peace-building in operations Directed by Special Representatives of the Secretary-General*, Fafo Institute for Applied Social Science and Center on International Cooperation, New York University, Oslo 2001, pp. 67 ff.

<sup>51</sup> Originally, backstopping was a separate subprogram. In 1992, it was integrated into the regional coordination program.

EDINFODOC was set up to support the systematization, sharing, and dissemination of information on program population, techniques, and results, not just in the Region itself, but also with Italian counterparts. These included the Italian Government, other development institutions, universities and experts. EDINFODOC had two seats: an operational office in San Salvador and a liaison office in Rome, Italy. The Italians did not just want to spread the word about the program — they also wanted to learn and use its results in their other development activities.

Every national subprogram had a national coordinator (main technical advisor) responsible for daily management and the operational plans, as well as technical advisors from each UN organization involved. These were also responsible to their advisor in the Central Coordination Unit. PRODERE thus worked with a functional/regional matrix structure. The offices of the national subprograms were located in the national capitals and had field offices — implementing units — in the selected departments.

In addition to UNDP, the ILO, UNHCR and PAHO/WHO, who participated from the onset, several NGOs and other UN organizations, such as the World WFP and UNICEF, as well as the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights, would also join PRODERE. The cooperation of all these organizations was necessary in such a broad program. In particular, NGOs could play a useful role because they generally stood close to the local people and provided services that the weak state could not yet provide.<sup>52</sup>

The final program design was unique in UN history. With its funds administered by UNDP/OPS, it represented a new form of interagency cooperation. The organizations did not just coordinate — which often only happens in name —, instead, they were to operate in an integrated manner. A large decentralized program encompassing six countries and four UN agencies working with one strategy in joint execution addressing some of the most difficult international management issues imaginable: solving the twin problems of social exclusion and violence.

The design for CARERE, which became operational in June 1992, was strongly influenced by the PRODERE experience, with geographic area-based targeting, an integrated approach to reconstruction and to the reintegration of refugees, IDPs and former combatants, and a focus on communities that had a large number of “target beneficiaries”, rather than on the beneficiaries themselves. The cast of players in the case of CARERE was considerably smaller than in PRODERE, but certainly in the beginning, UNHCR was a major partner, as it had borne the brunt of the refugee resettlement responsibilities in the area thus far. Many CARERE staff came from the United Nations Border Relief Operation, which had delivered humanitarian assistance in the earlier phases of the peace process. In a related programme, the ILO executed several rural development projects in the area. Leadership and management, however, came directly from UNDP/OPS, based on its control over the financial resources of the project.

For both PRODERE and CARERE, the strong role of a central funding entity, as well as the concept of central management combined with decentralized implementation, helped in establishing a climate where numerous partners worked in relative harmony with common goals and a common plan.

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<sup>52</sup> Some NGOs became sub-contractors. PRODERE also funded some NGO activities.

## **Relationship to the centre**

Both PRODERE and CARERE profited from the presence of a relatively strong central authority, supported by political trends that supported democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. At the same time, both operated in an environment where these values were trampled upon with sickening regularity. In Central America, a culture of exclusion and feudalistic oppression slowly had to make way for more liberal values, but even after the signing of the Esquipulas agreements, the support for PRODERE came mainly from the donor community and the United Nations, who had to place constant pressure on the governments in the region to introduce the reforms needed. The process initiated by PRODERE required legislation that strengthened decentralization, a gender focus on human development, land reform and strong human rights – and one can see how the governments in the region have slowly, over the years, increased their involvement. In Guatemala, for example, PRODERE begat PDHLS/PROGRESS, which begat PDHSL/FIDHEG, which begat DECOPAZ, which all helped to build FONOPAZ, a national counterpart agency that – now, ten years later - has internalized many of PRODERE’s initial goals and methods.<sup>53</sup>

In the case of CARERE, the UN initially *was* the government, which facilitated the overall coordination between central planning and resource allocation on the one hand, and the evolution of CARERE into a regional development engine on the other. UNTAC handed over authority to a democratically elected Cambodian government in 1993, and after some initial violent episodes, internal tensions were resolved to the point where a functional coalition now has taken charge of the country’s development. With the help of the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and UNDP, the Government is currently implementing major civil service reforms, and moving from a command-and-control style of management to a more decentralized governance system. It has, in 1995, already initiated a national programme called SEILA (“foundation stone” in Khmer) that is built on the CARERE model, and that focuses on decentralized local development planning, financing and management.

To a large extent, therefore, the success of both PRODERE and CARERE can be measured by the extent to which they have been adopted and internalized by national authorities as valid models for decentralized development -- and this, in turn, reinforces the argument that efforts to strengthen local governance must be founded in a viable central governance structure.

## **Building local capacity**

Both PRODERE and CARERE were extremely successful in developing networks of local counterparts, and nurturing these networks to the stage where they became self-supporting.

PRODERE was designed with the principle in mind that developing local capacities and institutions was the most direct path to peace and reconciliation. It therefore never defined its target populations as “victims” or “recipients”, but rather as

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<sup>53</sup> Dijkzeul, p. 36.

potential partners. Both the area-based and the “whole person” focus reinforced each other and fostered a strategic integration of sectoral activities. Local participation was both the end and the means of the programme. Hence, PRODERE established area-based, inter-institutional Development Committees (DCs), which provided a mechanism for joint decision-making and simply bringing together local governments, state institutions, and, above all, participants of civil society. The first DCs all started at the community level.<sup>54</sup> The local population was actively involved in relief and reconstruction, for example, by building new houses.

CARERE initially struggled with “undemocratic” government institutions, often paralyzed by internal dissent, and in order to provide a counterweight, it initiated a rural development structure, designed to link the village and province levels into the decision making process. An essential feature was the availability of CARERE funds which village level committees could direct.<sup>55</sup> This led to the concept of *elected* Village Development Committees, working closely with provincial authorities. At the central level, CARERE pushed for a royal decree legitimizing the experiment. The close attention paid by CARERE to the creation of rural development structures within an accepted national framework – which has by now been fully internalized and accepted – demonstrates the validity of the area development programming approach in building local governance capacity.

## **Conclusion**

PRODERE and CARERE both, in deciding on the viability and design of their area development initiatives as a strategy to gap the void between relief and development, took into account the political environment, and timed their entry to coincide with a general wave of support for the peace processes to which they were linked. Both PRODERE and CARERE were centrally funded and managed, which enabled them to provide firm leadership, without having to rely on purely voluntary cooperation. This, in turn, facilitated coordination. They were implemented through decentralized local governments and aimed at building local governance. They functioned in a setting where central authority was gradually restored, and with it respect for law and order, human rights, and the need to alleviate the extremes of poverty and social exclusion. Above all, they found ways to give a voice and control over resources to local partners, without alienating the centre – all in all, an inspiring model for future efforts to strengthen local governance in post-conflict settings.

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<sup>54</sup> Dijkzeul, p. 11

<sup>55</sup> Barnes and Retiere, p. 20

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