



Helpdesk Research Report

Supporting local governance in protracted conflicts

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Question

Please provide examples of successful interventions to support the delivery of services by local governments and administrations in areas where there is a protracted conflict.

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1. Overview

Successful interventions to support the delivery of services by local governments and administrations have been undertaken in a number of countries, including Afghanistan, Nepal, Somalia and Sudan. The majority of these interventions fall into the community-based approaches category. These are often used in areas where there is no effective local government or where supporting local government is considered undesirable. Where direct support is provided to local governments to enable or improve service delivery in areas of protracted conflict, it is often used as a way to enhance state legitimacy.

Examples of interventions where there is some evidence of success include:

- **National Solidarity Programme (NSP) Afghanistan:** Evaluations indicate that the Community Development Council (CDC) component of the NSP provided a means of reaching communities in the absence of effective local government and succeeded in building confidence in the state.
- **Village Development Programme (VDP) Nepal:** Evaluations found that the VDP was successful in improving access to services for the rural poor, even when local government was absent as a result of conflict.

- **UNDP's Joint Programme for Local Governance (JPLG) Somalia:** The programme's 2012 annual report indicates that its community consultation processes project enabled communities to develop long-term social and economic development priorities, and strengthened village governance structures.
- **Community-based organisation (CBO) networks in Sudan:** A qualitative research study found that CBO networks were successfully established in Darfur to enable the remote management of projects by international agencies.
- **UNDP's Afghanistan Subnational Governance Programme (ASGP):** The programme's 2013 annual progress report indicates that the ASGP made significant progress in supporting local government to improve service delivery.
- **UNICEF's Making Public Private Partnerships (PPP) work for rural water supply in Somalia programme:** An independent evaluation of the programme found that it led to some improvement in the quality of service delivery in Somaliland and Puntland.

2. General success factors

Factors contributing to successful interventions to support the delivery of services by local governments and administrations in conflict areas include:

- **Strategic engagement** of various people's groups, government agencies, and local government units (UNDP, 2010, p. xii). This requires an understanding of the power relationships among stakeholders to determine decision-making processes, allocation of resources, and connections with citizens (Allen, 2010, p. 37). Often, citizens consider those in leadership positions as elites. Key stakeholders may see governance programming as a challenge to established power structures due to the good governance principles of participation, accountability and inclusivity. Thus, programmes with governance goals must determine when it is useful to work only with elites as representatives of the larger community, when to involve ordinary citizens in decision-making, or when to engage members of both groups (Allen, 2010, p. 37).
- **Existence of peace agreements** (UNDP, 2010, p. xii).
- Strong **peace infrastructure** consisting of networks, communities, and highly trained human resources for peacebuilding (UNDP, 2010, p. xii).
- An **assessment of pre-existing community structures** for service delivery to avoid tension between donors and existing service providers (Allen, 2010, p. 37).
- **Active civil society participation** (UNDP, 2010, p. xii).

While some experts advocate working with national governments when supporting local governance to improve service delivery, this is not always possible or desirable in areas where there is a protracted conflict (OECD, 2008, p. 36). Shadow systems alignment involves assessing existing formal and informal policies and systems in place, and then building on, adapting, or reforming them (Slaymaker et al, 2005, p. 37). While it does not give governments control over resources, it does use structures, institutions or systems that are compatible with the existing or potential organisation of the state. This avoids undermining the development of a more accountable and legitimate relationship between citizens and the government in the future (Slaymaker et al, 2005, p. 38). It is a suitable approach where there are:

- Concerns about legitimising a particular government or authority.
- Serious concerns about the intention of authorities towards their own population.
- Lack of competing systems.

- A significant and prolonged humanitarian presence (Slaymaker et al, 2005, p. 37).

3. Examples of successful interventions

Community-based approaches

Community Development Councils (CDCs)

In Afghanistan the World Bank financed National Solidarity Programme (NSP) involved the establishment of CDCs in conjunction with INGO facilitating partners. Working with these partners, CDCs selected and implemented development projects. Communities had to provide 10 per cent in cash, in-kind, or in labour to each project. Facilitating partners:

- Supervised CDC elections.
- Built CDC capacity to identify, plan, procure and monitor.
- Helped CDCs to apply for and administer block grants.
- Ensured CDC adherence to reporting procedures.
- Helped CDCs link to external agents to improve access to services and resources.
- Liaised with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development through its provincial Project Management Units (Saltmarshe and Medhi, 2011, p. 33).

An independent assessment of local governance support in Afghanistan carried out by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) found that INGO facilitating partners had generally been effective in training, providing assistance with bureaucratic procedures and offering technical support to CDCs (Saltmarshe and Medhi, 2011, p. 33). The assessment was primarily based on semi-structured interviews with almost 800 respondents (Saltmarshe and Medhi, 2011, p. 11). Respondents stated that CDCs improved lives through basic infrastructure improvement and the provision of clean drinking water. CDCs tended to work best where there were good linkages with district line ministries (Saltmarshe and Medhi, 2011, p. 34). CDCs were able to operate in many Taliban controlled areas, but in these cases they had no contact with district officials (Saltmarshe and Medhi, 2011, p. 34). The AREU evaluation notes that the NSP provided a means of reaching communities in the absence of effective local government and succeeded in building confidence in the state (Saltmarshe and Medhi, 2011, p. 39).

The World Bank's own evaluation of its projects in Afghanistan for the period 2002-2011 found that in that period the NSP had reached all 34 provinces. It had resulted in the establishment of 27,360 CDCs, which had undertaken at least 59,629 locally identified sub-projects (World Bank, 2012, p. 64). It notes that NSP grants to communities had improved local capacity to plan and manage development or rehabilitation of basic public infrastructure in rural areas. These sub-projects largely consisted of physical works for transport (26 per cent), water and sanitation (24 per cent), irrigation (19 per cent), power (12 per cent), and education facilities (10 per cent) (World Bank, 2012, p. 64).

In Abyei, Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile, and Upper Nile states in Sudan and what is now South Sudan, CDCs and government officials worked together to gain practical experience in planning, implementing and managing projects that improve services (Allen, 2010, p. 41). They undertook a combination of quick impact projects and long-term development efforts under the auspices of the BRIDGE project. For example, the South Kordofan Ministry of Water Affairs, local government units and CDCs partnered to repair five

boreholes and were trained in maintenance of project-provided assets, strategic planning for longer-term development and management of water supply delivery systems (Allen, 2010, p. 41).

Village Development Committees (VDCs)

In Nepal the UNDP and the Government of Norway’s Decentralised Local Government Support Programme (DLGSP) aimed to enhance participation in the local governance process and to improve access to services by the rural poor (Meier et al, 2009, p. 67). The main component of the programme was the Village Development Programme (VDP). At the time of implementation many of the poorest villages in Nepal were in areas used by Maoist rebels as hideouts, or for their training camps, making implementation more difficult (Meier et al, 2009, p. 23).

An independent evaluation of the DLGSP found that the VDP’s achievements at the community level included:

- Two out of three households benefitted from community infrastructure projects. For example, access to drinking water within 15 minutes walking distance increased (Meier et al, 2009, pp. 28-29).
- Primary school enrolment increased, especially for girls.
- Water borne diseases reduced (Meier et al, 2009, p. 29).
- Participatory planning processes were institutionalised at the local level (Meier et al 2009, p. 39).

The evaluation also found that the programme remained effective even when local government was dysfunctional or absent as a result of conflict (Meier et al 2009, p. 39).

In Darfur, international donors provided support to VDCs that were established prior to the onset of conflict. They also established new VDCs during the conflict. Examples of projects undertaken include longer-term food security support such as seed banks, paravet training, water reservoirs, and dams (Jaspars, 2010, p. 2). International support for VDCs in Darfur was possible via remote management. In this case remote management took the form of community partnership arrangements (Jaspars, 2010). Descriptions of this and other forms of remote management used by international agencies operating in Darfur and elsewhere are provided in *Table 1*.

Table 1: Remote control mechanisms

Approach	Agent	Description	Potential benefits	Potential weaknesses
Remote control	National staff	Agency senior staff direct programming and manage local employees from a distance	Continuity of leadership Better oversight	Communications problems National staff bear great responsibility but have little authority
Remote support	National staff	Local staff assume decision-making authority	Capacity-building (individuals) No time lag for decision-making	Lack of oversight Dearth of experienced national staff

			More flexibility	Corruption risk
Subcontracting arrangements	Local NGOs	Programmes formerly implemented or managed by international agency turned over to NGO	Capacity-building (organisations) Greater acceptance Better targeting	Partiality Lack of contextual analysis Difficult to identify/screen
Community partnership arrangements	CBOs/Community leaders	International agency arranges for community group or leaders to implement some portion of its programme e.g. aid distribution	More stable and familiar presence to local population Better targeting of beneficiaries Community ownership More resilient to insecurity	Partiality May not be representative Risk of elite capture
Government partnership arrangements	National or local government authorities	INGO develops programme in consultation with government authorities and/or hands over existing programme as 'exit strategy'	Promotes long-term development May promote security via increased community acceptance	More suitable for development aims than emergency relief Independence, neutrality suffer Government may not have local support Corruption risk
Outsourcing	Commercial contractors	Fee for service arrangement with private firm (e.g. trucking company) to do basic provision		

Source: Stoddard et al, 2006, p. 39.

Other types of committees

In addition to the VDCs established prior to the onset of conflict in Darfur, INGOs operating in the region established a range of other committees, including 'needs-specific committees' and IDP camp management committees. The latter were established to help with camp management, service delivery, and capacity

building (Jaspars, 2010, p. 1). The need for new committees arose due to the absence of effective local governance structures in the region. In contrast to pre-conflict CBOs, which were established to empower communities and strengthen governance, these committees were established to improve the effectiveness of service delivery and capacity-building (Jaspars, 2010).

Community-based organisation (CBO) networks

CBO networks were established in Darfur to enable remote management of projects in rural areas. A research study undertaken in Darfur found that CBO networks were successful because they were ethnically heterogeneous. This enabled them to negotiate between opposing tribes, and between the government and the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) (Jaspars, 2010, p. 31). The study was based on interviews with community groups, representatives of CBOs, local NGOs and international agencies (Jaspars, 2010, p. 4).

Community consultation processes

The UNDP's Joint Programme for Local Governance (JPLG) trained district Departments of Planning and Social Affairs in Somaliland and Puntland to enable them to train district based facilitators and to oversee implementation of community consultation processes in targeted districts (UNDP, 2012, p. 27). UNDP's JPLG 2012 annual report found that these processes enabled communities to develop long-term social and economic development priorities. They also strengthened village governance structures, making them more representative and inclusive (UNDP, 2012, p. 27).

In Iraq, Mercy Corp's USAID funded Community Action Program (CAP) improved local governance and service delivery by giving Iraqi community groups experience of designing and participating in democratic processes (Allen, 2010, p. 99). The programme helped over 550 communities form Community Action Groups (CAGs) to identify their own development priorities and to design and implement solutions in an inclusive, participatory manner. CAGs implemented over 1,500 community development projects (Allen, 2010, p. 99).

Direct support to local governments

The UNDP's Afghanistan Subnational Governance Programme's (ASGP) 2013 annual progress report found that the programme had made substantial progress in supporting local government to improve service delivery (UNDP, 2013).

The ASGP supports the salaries of several hundred technical and capacity development specialists embedded in Provincial Governors Offices, democratically-elected Provincial Councils, and municipalities. These ASGP-supported personnel support governance and service delivery, and also train and mentor Afghan civil service personnel (expert comment).

In addition, the ASGP supports governance specialists in the Provincial Governors Offices (PGOs), which lead and coordinate governance, security, and service delivery in the provinces. UNDP/ASGP support helps PGO-lead service delivery processes to function, as PGOs often lack technical capacity and funds to carry out these activities (expert comment).

The ASGP also supports a Provincial Council specialist in each of Afghanistan's 34 Provincial Councils. Provincial Councils oversee services such as health and education in the provinces and districts (expert comment).

Public Private Partnerships (PPP)

The UNDP's Joint Programme for Local Governance (JPLG) provided support for a favourable legal, policy and regulatory environment for PPP in Somaliland and Puntland. This was done by drafting PPP policy frameworks and preparing a PPP toolkit. The aim of the project was to enable local governments in Somaliland and Puntland to cope with increasing demand for basic public services (UNDP, 2012, p. 19). JPLG also provided orientation and training on PPP for central, local, and private sector partners (UNDP, 2012, p. 19). An independent evaluation of this project does not appear to be publicly available.

Another example of a programme promoting PPP in Somaliland and Puntland is UNICEF's *Making PPP work for rural water supply in Somalia* programme. An independent evaluation of the programme found that:

- An effective improvement of service delivery quality could be observed in the field. However, this was mostly the result of rehabilitation works.
- There were signs of improved management in some localities.
- Training led to some improvement in the level of technical skills available for ensuring rural water supply.
- The involvement of national authorities in the process developed some capacity for replication at national level.
- The project resulted in a wider acceptance of the PPP concept by communities and central government. Moreover, some communities gained the confidence to undertake other projects and to consider the PPP approach (Hydroconseil, 2012, p. 8).

The evaluation was based on a desk review of existing documents, interviews with stakeholders and field visits to accessible communities.

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Key websites

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