Joint coordination of donor support for peace processes

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Question

What lessons or best practices are available regarding the principles, structure and processes for joint (donor, government and non-state armed actors) coordination of donor support for peace processes. Are there examples of the elements of effective coordination mechanisms that have been set up in advance of peace agreements being signed?

Contents

1. Overview

This rapid review looks at the publicly available evidence in relation to lessons and best practice from joint (donor, government and non-state armed actors) coordination of donor support for peace processes[1]. A rapid review has time limitations which mean what is presented is based on an overview of public literature and a few expert comments, rather than a systematic and rigorous study, and the findings should be understood in this light. There appear to be few cases of such joint coordination, especially in relation to the involvement of non-state armed groups, and very little information regarding lessons and best practices in relation to their principles, structure and

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[1] Most focus seems to be on peacebuilding efforts and little seems to have taken place prior to a peace agreement.

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processes. It is possible that much more joint coordination and lessons learning has occurred than can be found rapidly using open source searches, which makes it difficult to gauge what best practices for joint (donor, government and non-state armed actors) coordination of donor support for peace processes are.

Countries where joint coordination mechanisms have been attempted include:

- **Nepal**: The Nepal Peace Trust Fund (NPTF) is a joint government-donor initiative to provide coordination and support for the peace process. The process is led by the government and all political parties are involved in its board. Donors have put in place a rigorous financial management system, although most of the funding comes from the government. A detailed situational analysis was only carried out after the process has got underway. Donor concerns about the coordination mechanism relate to financial management, perceived political bias in project priorities, weak ability to influence the political process and the desire for a peacebuilding strategy from the Government. Meetings have been criticised for being overly focused on micro and operational details. The joint scrutiny and process created more transparency and accountability, which increased trust and confidence.

- **South Sudan**: The Government of Southern Sudan created a number of different donor coordination mechanisms to enhance donor alignment and appraise and approve all donor funded interventions. Capacity restraints meant only the largest projects were actually appraised.

- **Northern Ireland**: The EU, the governments of Britain and Ireland, and civil society coordinated on peace funding through the PEACE programmes. The programmes initially focused on economic activities, building up support for the programme, before moving to more peace focused activities, and a conflict analysis was not carried out. The bureaucracy of the programme may have stifled creative responses on the ground. Paramilitary organisations were eventually drawn into the process, which helped them to transition away from violence.

- **Mozambique**: Donor coordination, combined with their long standing relationship with the parties to the conflict, helped with the successful transition to peace by increasing transparency and creating a shared understanding. However lack of central coordination resulted in duplication, weak local ownership of the peace process, and stretched the capacity of the government.

- **Sri Lanka**: Efforts to create joint coordination mechanisms between the government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) proved unsuccessful and endangered the peace, leading to serious problems for the government and distrust in the process from the LTTE.

Some **general lessons** from elsewhere on joint coordination for peace include:

- **Local ownership and capacity** is needed to ensure peace is durable.
- **Dedicated peacebuilding coordination mechanisms** enhance coordination and information sharing on peace.
- **Inclusive coordination** means that all stakeholders feel included and have trust in each other, although it can be challenging to include non-state actors.
- **Coordination efforts should allow for independence or impartiality** so that different types of support that may benefit a peace process can exist.

▪ **Reactive and proactive mechanisms** can adapt to developments that threaten to compromise peacebuilding efforts.

2. Country cases

A number of countries have, or have attempted to put in place, joint (donor, government, and sometimes non-state armed actors) coordination of donor support for peace processes. However, often mention of these mechanisms is brief and provides little detail.

Nepal

Following more than a decade of internal conflict a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CAP) was signed in late 2006. The Nepal Peace Trust Fund (NPTF) is a unique joint government-donor initiative, operated by the Peace Fund Secretariat (PFS) of the Ministry for Peace and Reconstruction (MoPR) to provide support to the on-going Peace Process (O'Gorman et al, 2012: 5; Burke, 2013: 23). It was established in the aftermath of the CAP and started operations in January 2007 (O'Gorman et al, 2012: 12). Its three functions are: i) to function as a coordinating body for peace related initiatives; ii) to act as a funding mechanism for Government of Nepal (GoN) and donors; and iii) to monitor the peace process. It funds projects in four clusters: support for former combatants; assistance to conflict affected persons and communities; promotion of security and transitional justice; support to constituent assembly, elections and peace building initiatives on national and local levels; while a fifth cluster operates as a cross-cutting theme in the form of reconstruction of public infrastructure damaged during the conflict (Burke, 2013: 23). The Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction (MoPR) is the main body responsible for coordinating and monitoring the peace process, while the NPTF supports the ministry in this process.[2] 'The NPTF has a Board that takes all policy decisions and guides NPTF operations. The Board is chaired by minister for MoPR and co-chaired by the Minister for Finance. The Board is assisted by several mechanisms – the Technical Committee, Core Cluster, and Sectoral Cluster – to review and approve projects on peace and peace building'.[3] Commins et al (2013: 28) found that 'it was vitally important for the peace process, that all of the top political parties (irrespective of whether they were in government or not) were involved in the board of the Nepal Peace Trust Fund', although they do not go on to elaborate why. Donors have an oversight role through the NPTF's management structure (Burke, 2013: 23). Burke (2013: 23) found that the strong government lead, meant that donor influence is circumscribed.

Two-thirds of funding comes from the government, with a third of the funding coming from donors[4] (Commins et al, 2013: 70; O'Gorman et al, 2012: 13).[5] The NPTF essentially sought to provide predictable funding to facilitate the peace process (Commins et al, 2013: 56). 'Over time, and given challenges in ensuring transparency, donors have supported more rigorous financial management

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[2] http://nptf.gov.np/faq.php

[3] ibid

[4] Denmark, EU, Finland, Germany, Norway, United Kingdom (DFID), and Switzerland.

[5] There is also a UN Peace Fund for Nepal which is implemented through the UN system and while there is some joint planning/working between the funds, the synergies have not always been maximised (Commins et al, 2013: 70).

systems that have given them greater confidence to continue providing support' (Burke, 2013: 23). A mechanism was built into the NPTF to deal with the need for donors to release funds so that they are available when needed (Commins et al, 2013: 56). First donor money goes into foreign currency account at central bank but government cannot use it (Commins et al, 2013: 56). The funds can only be used when donors release those tranches to the government (Commins et al, 2013: 56).

At the very start of the NPTF, a number of assumptions about the context were made to get the process underway, with a situational analysis carried out after six months to fill in gaps in the context analysis (Commins et al, 2013: 30). Once this baseline had been established, reviews/evaluations were carried out by external evaluators, every couple of years, providing action points for the government (Commins et al, 2013: 30).

O'Gorman et al (2012: 38) found that five years after the launch of the joint government-donor trust fund, donor concerns related to financial management, perceived political bias in project priorities, weak ability to influence the political process and the desire for a peacebuilding strategy from the Government (although no more detail on these concerns is provided). O'Gorman et al (2012: 38) also found that 'the GoN and the donors experience the work with NPTF from two different points of departure. For the GoN the continuous dynamism in the political give-and-take that is slowly moving the process forward is the daily context of work. For the donors similar experiences count, but in addition experiences from other peace processes, and the general trend of reduced funds and reduced willingness to take risks, diversify the picture, sometimes at the cost of the necessary patience with the process in Nepal' (O'Gorman et al, 2012: 38). As a result, O'Gorman et al (2012: 38) found a climate of increasing expectations and conditionality influencing donor engagement with the NPTF, posing a new challenge for the effectiveness of the NPTF. The joint scrutiny and process that is unique to NPTF as a post-conflict peace fund, means that political sensitivities and discussion of projects are more transparent and accountable at different levels, which has helped to increase confidence and trust (O'Gorman et al, 2012: 38).

O'Gorman et al (2012: 39) suggest that the meetings of the GoN- Donor Group forum were overtaken by repeated criticism of financial management reporting delays, project selection, and timeliness of documents, and recommended that it might be good instead to 'review the purpose and agendas for these meetings and consider ways and means of opening up policy space and limiting the micro and operational details for other forums'.

Despite the NPTF being intended to be the main vehicle in support of the political peace and transformation process outlined in the CPA, O'Gorman et al (2012: 40) found that a number of donors are channelling their support (and an increasing portion of it) focused on the peace process either through INGOs and NGOs, through national line ministries and UN bodies, resulting in 'far less coordination, undermining of the national ownership and insufficient account taken of the complex and time-consuming national political process going on'. However, an evaluation conducted a year later by Particip and Niras (2013: 11) found that 'NPTF is emerging as the key joint instrument through which development partners can harmonise their efforts, align with government priorities, and help build capacity in the process.'

Particip and Niras (2013: 72) found a wide range of opinions about the state of development partner coordination in Nepal, with some claiming that 'coordination was exactly as effective and flexible as it could be; others lamented the lack of clarity, the continued overlaps, and described development partner coordination in dysfunctional terms'. Particip and Niras (2013: 15) concluded

that there is no optimal model for coordination in Nepal and considered the diversity of opinions on coordination healthy.

South Sudan

The 2005 Comprehensive Peace agreement ended over two decades of war between the central Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army and led to the independence of South Sudan in 2011. In the early years of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, there were numerous overlapping peacebuilding mechanisms and structures which coordinated peacebuilding activities in a variety of ways depending on who was undertaking the activity and their understanding of peacebuilding activities (Lotze et al 2008: 46). 'Despite the existence of donor coordination mechanisms, these tend to be limited to sharing information rather than promoting a joint donor approach based on shared analysis and consensus' (Bennett et al, 2010: xiv).

In 2006, the newly created Government of South Sudan (GoSS) put in place a number of coordination mechanisms (Bennett et al, 2010: 68-69):

- **GoSS Donor Forum**, which provided a platform for sharing information and enhancing dialogue between GoSS and donors. The agenda varied according to the needs, but it was generally used as a platform for GoSS to seek enhancement of donor alignment with government priorities.

- **The Inter-Ministerial Appraisal Committee (IMAC)**, which was mandated to appraise and approve all donor funded interventions. Its main objective was to ensure that donor projects were consistent with GoSS policies, including the aid strategy, and to ensure coordination of interventions. The core members of IMAC were the Ministries of Finance, Regional Cooperation, Presidential Affairs, Legal Affairs, Housing, the Southern Sudan Commission for Census and Statistics, and the Local Government Board (LGB). These members met regularly. MoFEP chaired the committee. Ministries belonging to the sector in which a project falls were invited as required. Due to capacity constraints, the IMAC was not in a position to appraise and monitor all projects; only the largest projects were actually appraised. Donors also failed to register activities with the IMAC (only around 20 per cent of all projects were registered).

- **The Budget Sector Working Groups (BSWG)**, which were the main bodies for government wide coordination and planning, and included donors as well as UN and NGO representatives. The ten groups were responsible for developing the annual budget sector plans that set government priorities and expenditure allocations for the next three years in the given sector. However, some donors noted that GoSS set its priorities in advance of the BSWGs, leaving little room for negotiation at the BSWG meetings. The BSWGs were also expected to monitor expenditure within their respective sectors, review annual performance against the sectors' objectives and work to ensure the alignment and coordination of all partners' assistance in Southern Sudan. In principle, the groups were mandated to be the technical quality assurance instruments for GoSS vis-à-vis proposed donor funded projects but as they met only once a year this tended to fall under the responsibility of IMAC. However, it was felt that these groups made some impact in helping avoid duplication and overlap (Bennett et al, 2010: 141).

At the time of writing Lotze et al (2008: 50) found that the government coordination structures were not operating at full capacity and there was considerable overlap in terms of areas of responsibility.

Bennett et al (2010: 143) also warned that there was too much coordination in the form of pooled funds which were largely unable to respond to specific local issues.

Northern Ireland

Over three decades of conflict ended with the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Starting in 1995, the EU funded PEACE programmes 'created incentives for diverse groups to work together in making funding decisions' (Bush and Houston, 2011: 57). Bush and Houston (2011: 58) suggest that the programmes 'partnership principle helped both to build positive working relations, and to build organisational capacities that were applicable beyond the PEACE programme'. Bush and Houston (2011: 58) put forward that the fund's initial focus on economic regeneration helped create buy-in to more overtly framed reconciliation projects. 'Within a highly politicised and volatile post-agreement environment, it is very useful to cast funding as widely and generally as possible, to increase awareness of, and support for, a programme' (Bush and Houston, 2011: 29). 'When such support has been established – support for both the programme and, perhaps less explicitly, for peace over continued conflict – then programming can begin to move delicately into more politically sensitive areas of project support (Bush and Houston, 2011: 29). Bush and Houston (2011: 29) indicate that 'reconciliation (however it might be defined) is a non-starter if there is not participation in PEACE funded projects within and between divided groups'. They suggest that 'at the start of the PEACE programme, the fact that the primary source of funding was not British, and not Irish, reduced some of the potential suspicions that political strings would be attached to projects' (Bush and Houston, 2011: 60). The PEACE programme broke new ground, clarifying what it meant by reconciliation as it went along (Bush and Houston, 2011: 63). Not carrying out an initial conflict analysis 'avoided a very contentious and divisive debate that might well have stopped the programme from ever getting off the ground' (Bush and Houston, 2011: 63).

The UK and Irish governments, as well as various different local stakeholders, and the EU, were involved in the consultations leading to the creation of the first PEACE programme (Bush and Houston, 2011: 25). There is a notable absence of the republican and loyalist paramilitary organisations as this was a politically sensitive issue (Bush and Houston, 2011: 25). The direct presence of paramilitary organisations might also be difficult for individuals and groups affected by their violence and the legitimacy of their inclusion may be questioned (Bush and Houston, 2011: 25). 'In the Northern Ireland case, while paramilitary voices were key to the formal political process, they only found their way into the consultations indirectly through the groups represented there' (Bush and Houston, 2011: 25).

'The capacity of groups to apply for, and use, PEACE-type funding is not (and is never) evenly distributed across affected populations' (Bush and Houston, 2011: 59). 'To ignore this issue risks creating a situation where particular groups feel that they are not benefiting from the peace – or not benefiting to the same extent as other groups (especially groups perceived to be from the 'other side')' (Bush and Houston, 2011: 59). (Bush and Houston (2011: 59) warn that 'the paradoxical risk here is that the availability of peace funds may aggravate tensions between groups because of the real, or perceived, inequitable distribution of funds.'

Bush and Houston (2011: 62) find that 'there is a sense among funding recipients that over time, the bureaucratic needs of accountability and reporting have stifled creative responses to addressing needs on the ground – even when they clearly fall within the purview of the funding priorities of the programme.' (Bush and Houston, 2011: 62). 'The increased paperwork, in the name of transparency and accountability' meant that some stakeholders felt that 'unless you were applying for large amounts of money, it just wasn't worth it' (Bush and Houston, 2011: 34). Bush

and Houston (2011: 63) also warn that sustainable peace and reconciliation takes time and sometimes trust-building and relationship-building do not fit neatly into a time-limited, budget-determined, logical, framework-managed projects.

Government departments were integrated into decisions over the allocation and management of PEACE as a result of the need to clearly delineate between PEACE funding and normal government funding – especially when the projects may look like regular government initiatives (such as the building of roads or bridges), but which are meant to have peace building or reconciliatory impacts; and the need to ensure (as far as possible) that the particular interests of political officials are harnessed to the PEACE programmes, not the other way around (Bush and Houston, 2011: 34). Government and state agencies have an essential role to play in building peace, although decisions over peace funding should not be politicised or captured by particularistic or sectarian interests (Bush and Houston, 2011: 34). Care should be taken that non-state actors do not perform too many state-like functions, or deliver services that should be delivered by the state, as there is risk that the division of labour and responsibilities between the state, society and the market are unbalanced, and that the institutional development of the state is restricted (Bush and Houston, 2011: 34).

The approach of the PEACE programme 'validated work between ex-combatants and promoted their social and political reintegration' (Bush and Houston, 2011: 38).

Mozambique

Manning and Malbrough (2009, 90) find that 'the most important factor behind Mozambique's success [at transitioning to peace] was the flexible, intensive, and coordinated efforts of major donors, who were committed to making peace work and had long-standing relationships with the former belligerents. The relationships these donors had established with the government and, in some cases, with Renamo, fostered mutual trust and lowered uncertainty, giving donors a deep contextual understanding of the priorities and conditions that were necessary to successfully establish peace in Mozambique'. Coordination between donors in relation to the peace process elections through the Democracy Assistance Group (GAD) helped exchange information and prevent or dispel misinformation about the peace process, which meant that well-informed donors were 'able to reassure a suspicious and insecure Renamo leadership and to reduce tensions between Renamo and the government' (Manning and Malbrough, 2010: 159). In addition, regular meetings helped create a shared understanding of the importance of the elections, which helped leverage the necessary support and a common reaction (Manning and Malbrough, 2010: 159).

However, the lack of central coordination which developed in Mozambique 'often had negative effects, producing incoherence or duplication, and taxing the ability of the overstretched Mozambican state to participate, monitor, or otherwise be involved in the process. Donors came to be seen, and perhaps to see themselves, as the habitual providers of services normally delivered by states to their citizens. This undoubtedly contributed later to a sense of donor ownership of the peace process: once again, donors would provide where the state could not' (Manning and Malbrough, 2010: 153).

Sri Lanka

After two decades of internal conflict in Sri Lanka, a ceasefire was declared in 2001. In 2002, the first year of the peace process, the government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) set up various joint sub committees (such as the Sub Committee on

Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs in the North-east (SIHRN)) to work on issues in the peace process and to select projects to be funded, but none of these sub committees got off the ground as negotiations between them broke down (Uyangoda, 2008: 199; Sriskandarajah, 2003: 8-9). Uyangoda (2008: 199) attributes this to 'the thin commitment of both sides to joint institution building during the transition phase'. The two sides worked together and separately to canvass international support for development assistance to help the peace process along (Sriskandarajah, 2003: 12-13).

Subsequent efforts to put in place joint government and LTTE mechanisms for aid allocation also proved unsuccessful, such as the Post-Tsunami Management Structure (P-TOMS) arrangement, or the North East Reconstruction Fund, which was to pool donor funds for reconstruction work, but was never implemented due to GoSL-LTTE disagreement over its shared management (Chapman et al, 2009: 9, 15). Donors also found it hard to align with changing domestic policy and work with the government (Chapman et al, 2009: 15). In addition, Chapman et al (2009: 46) finds that '[t]he climate of mistrust in Sri Lanka means that information sharing is reduced and the willingness to discuss results and engage in joint government-donor-civil society efforts to learn lessons is limited'. Frerks and Klem (2006: xii) also suggest that while donors hoped that SIHRN and P-TOMS would make peace, they because issues which endangered the peace. These joint mechanisms were the only tangible outcome of the peace process with regard to power-sharing and thus were a litmus test for the LTTE with regard to government commitment to substantial devolution of powers to an autonomous North-eastern administration (Frerks and Klem, 2006: 33). They became a legal and political stumbling block for the government (Frerks and Klem, 2006: 33). The negotiations around SIHRN, lead to an LTTE proposal perceived as a 'stepping stone to independence' which precipitated the overthrow of the UNP regime; while P-TOMS caused a split in the ruling coalition, leaving the government paralysed (Frerks and Klem, 2006: 33).

3. General lessons

Common challenges to peacebuilding coordination efforts

Coordination is highlighted in most evaluations as being very important for peace efforts, and Newman and Richmond (2006: 5) warn that lack of coordination of support to peace processes could complicate the picture and result in behaviour that effectively constitutes spoiling.

It is suggested that effective coordination is difficult to achieve as a result of 'the multitude of actors, often numbering in the hundreds…; the high cost in time and money that effective co-ordination entails; the need for donors to satisfy their own constituencies and serve their national interests; competition for influence and visibility between donors; and the general unwillingness of actors to limit their margin for maneuver by the discipline of coordination' (Uvin in de Coning, 2007: 8).

Lotze et al (2008: 11, 62-63) found a number of common challenges for peacebuilding coordination efforts as a result of research carried out in the DRC, Liberia and Sudan. They include:

Local ownership and capacity

There is a need for local ownership, capacity and cooperation with external actors, as peacebuilding coordination is often driven by external actors, and local ownership is essential if peace is to be durable (Lotze et al, 2008: 11, 62-63).

Campbell and Hartnett (2005: 14) warn that if donors set up parallel systems as a result of weak governments, the development of downward accountability or social contract to the population is hampered. As a result it is suggested that where there is weak capacity, donors and governments 'work to focus on a limited number of tasks rather than try to spread limited human, financial and institutional capital over a range of tasks simultaneously' (Campbell and Hartnett, 2005: 14). Huber et al (2013: 98) find that 'Donors are also frequently constrained or selective in which aspects of implementation they are willing to finance'.

Dedicated peacebuilding coordination mechanism

There is a need for dedicated peacebuilding coordinating structures rather than peacebuilding being relegated as a sub-theme within coordination and implementation structures. This could serve to enhance coordination and information-sharing, and indirectly build the capacity of those engaged in the structure (Lotze et al, 2008: 11, 62).

Inclusive coordination

There is a need for inclusive coordination so that all stakeholders feel included and are certain of the roles and mandates of the other actors within the system (Lotze et al, 2008: 11-12, 62-63). Challenges in sharing results and giving transparency to the internal–external relations undermines trust among different actors (Lotze et al, 2008: 30). Huber et al (2013: 98) find that central governments may object to the provision of external funding to non-state actors within their borders, while 'non-state actors may be wary of being dependent on central government officials for disbursements of funds enabling them to implement their commitments'.

Coordination should allow for independence or impartiality

There is a need for coordination that accommodates various needs, as in some cases certain actors will prefer not to coordinate, or be coordinated, so as to preserve their independence or impartiality (Lotze et al, 2008: 12, 62-63). de Coning (2007: 9), notes that there is 'tension between the need for improved coordination on the one hand, and the potential limiting effects coordination may have on the ability of individual agents to exercise control over their own programming and allocation of resources'. Uvin (1999: 21) also flags up some potential problems with coordination with local institutions as 'local institutions are usually weak and sometimes biased to the point of being part of the problem. Donors often distrust the institutions of the state or do not want to be seen as partial, especially in cases where violence is still ongoing'.

Although they are looking at third party support for peace processes rather than joint mechanisms in support of peace, Gündüz and Herbolzheimer (2010: 21) find that coordination should 'not stifle or try to impose full control over the diversity of types of support that may benefit a peace process, including differences in approach, and potential strengths and capacities of different third parties to act in different ways' as 'individual, confidential and parallel efforts can, in fact, be as important as collective ones, if not more so'.

Reactive and proactive mechanisms

There is a need to be both reactive and proactive to developments that threaten to compromise peacebuilding efforts (Lotze et al, 2008: 12, 63).

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About this report

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