

## 2

## CCDP Issue Brief

The Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding

Guidelines for Mediators

# Development Assistance

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Development assistance is usually associated with post-conflict recovery and not necessarily with peace negotiations. However, with its increasing involvement in fragile and conflict-affected countries after the Cold War, the management of war-to-peace transitions has become one of the tasks of development agencies. This recent trend has been illustrated by ongoing development engagement during armed conflict or instability, the delivery of humanitarian assistance, or the drafting of post-conflict needs assessments. While the involvement of development agencies in peace processes is highly context-specific, so far, there is no unified view in the mediation community as to what their role should be.

This issue brief suggests that development agencies and assistance can provide important benefits for peace mediation. Even though mediators often attempt to limit the number of intermediaries to keep a peace process manageable, reaching out to the development community can be important for the following reasons:

- Development agencies can play a supportive role in peace processes. They can have a useful context-sensitive understanding of the situation and knowledge of the main local stakeholders due to their long-term presence on the ground. Foreign mediation teams should draw from this knowledge base in the preparation and implementation of their assignments.
- Development assistance and the early engagement of development agencies are crucial for future-oriented peace negotiations. Development assistance can provide important incentives for a better life after the conflict, especially if parties craft a new vision for future political, economic, or security arrangements.
- In order to be an effective incentive, development assistance must be tangible, offer higher rewards than conflict economies, and be embedded in broader political processes and security guarantees. The tangibility of aid increases if the selected aid instrument – for example project support, trust funds or technical assistance – faces few bureaucratic delays, is delivered in a coordinated fashion, and benefits targeted stakeholders and populations in the short-term.
- Mediators and development agencies could benefit from a joint understanding of the process supporting the exit out of conflict. In recent years, mediation practice has shifted towards the provision of a professionalised, permanent service that supports mediation efforts throughout the transition from war to peace. Peace mediation is, therefore, not just an *ad hoc* response to a crisis, but a long-term engagement in which many development and peacebuilding objectives converge. For example, development agencies' good governance programmes have a lot in common with mediators' efforts to create lasting dispute management mechanisms that assist local stakeholders to implement peace accords through negotiations and compromise.

This Issue Brief is one of a series of guidelines for mediators. Part of a multi-year research project, it aims to introduce development assistance as an economic instrument in peace processes, identify opportunities and risks for mediation practice, and propose questions for mediators.

## BACKGROUND

### Development as a political process

Historically, development agencies have targeted the improvement of long-term economic assistance through technical instruments that were considered unrelated to broader political or strategic issues. The end of the Cold War, however, has changed the strategic environment and made it possible to broaden the focus of development policy to include conflict resolution, social reconstruction, and governance transformation. This shift was accompanied by the emergence of so-called 'new wars' that were characterised as an interruption of economic development processes. Development agencies also became increasingly sensitive towards armed conflict due to their involvement in complex humanitarian emergencies and after some countries – such as Nepal and Rwanda – turned violent despite years of development assistance.

In recent years, there has been an ever growing recognition among development actors that aid is also a 'political' – not just an 'economic' – process that involves state building,

### Box 1:

#### STAYING ENGAGED IN NEPAL

Switzerland has a 50-year history of development cooperation in Nepal. During the armed conflict between 1996 and 2005, it stayed engaged and adjusted its development programmes to the conflict. Through conflict-sensitive project management, it focused on conflict and security assessments and monitoring, as well as on lobbying the conflict parties for development space during the conflict. By staying engaged, development actors could modestly contribute to conflict transformation and political reconstruction. Through basic social service delivery and agricultural job creation, development actors prevented major displacements and mitigated the conflict's impact. In addition, aid agencies maintained development dialogues with the government, political parties, and Maoist rebels. The message that the latter's legitimacy may be recognised by part of the international community if they lay down their arms may have encouraged some cadres to opt for dialogue rather than continued armed violence. While the peace process was eventually domestically driven, the established communication channels between development actors and local stakeholders helped support mediation activities between 2001 and 2005.

Source: Jörg Frieden. 2008. "International Development and Conflict Transformation". In Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), ed. *Swiss Peace Policy: Nepal*. Bern: FDFA, pp. 73-74. Thania Paffenholz. 2006. *Nepal: Staying Engaged in Conflict*, Bern: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, p. 4.

governance reform, and dispute settlement. These changes were most explicitly elaborated in the 2009 United Kingdom's White Paper on Development, which emphasised that development interventions need to be more political because the challenges such interventions face – such as conflict and state fragility – are inherently political and their solution, therefore, must be rooted in politics. For the peacemaking community, these changes in development policy mean that development agencies can no longer be simply categorised as 'economic' actors – and thus be delegated to the post-agreement phase – but are also crucial 'political' actors that can affect peacemaking (see box 2). For development agencies, these changes imply an increased confidence in their role during the transition from war to peace.

### Development agencies in conflict situations

In many contexts, development agencies are one of the many actors present in or close to conflict zones. They usually engage in conflicts along the principle of 'do no harm' that stresses that development engagement should have the least possible negative consequences on the local context where they operate. The challenge of aid agencies working during conflict is to deliver assistance in such a way that it does not exacerbate the conflict.

In recognition of the 'do no harm' principle, development agencies worked along three strategies: around, in, and on the conflict. They worked *around* the conflict by withdrawing or suspending aid or structural adjustment programmes; they worked *in* the conflict by staying in the midst of it to deliver aid in moments when it is most needed; and they worked *on* the conflict to prevent and transform the conflict, thereby addressing a crucial impediment to human and economic development. In some contexts, aid agencies also engaged with state forces or non-state armed groups (NSAGs) in order to negotiate access to target groups, protect aid workers, or lobby for humanitarian standards.

## DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES AND PEACE PROCESSES

Development agencies have been involved in various phases of peace processes. While their engagement is mostly associated with post-conflict economic recovery and peace accord implementation, in some conflicts they have held distinct positions and roles in the engagement and negotiation phases of peace processes. Development agencies can have a special relationship to peace process negotiations if:

- Armed violence is motivated by redressing horizontal inequalities or social exclusion, and coincides with developmental interests or poverty reduction;

- Horizontal and social inequalities are an underlying structural catalyst for armed violence and require long-term development engagements; and
- The parties agree to a new vision of the economy and society that requires expertise in development planning.

### The engagement of belligerents

- Development agencies can support communication channels between NSAGs and the government. The personal networks established for the agencies' aid work provide a strategic asset for mediators and have the potential to strengthen confidence building measures and dialogue incentives (see box 1).
- Local and international personnel of development agencies represent a vast knowledge of local sensitivities, attitudes and conditions, especially if they have been stationed in the country for a long time. Risk and stakeholder analyses as well as conflict monitoring conducted by aid agencies can be important inputs for mediation processes.

### Peace negotiations

- Development agencies represent multiple opportunities for mediators during peace negotiations. They can:
  - Ensure relevant economic issues are placed on the agenda in a realistic way (see Box 3);
  - Develop mechanisms regarding important economic issues that are likely to become politicised or be ignored after the peace process;
  - Foster realistic expectations among the parties on the amount and nature of development assistance after the peace agreement has been signed; and
  - Strengthen a network among relevant stakeholders that facilitates post-accord delivery of development assistance.

## Box 2:

### NATIONAL ARCHITECTURE FOR PEACE IN GHANA

The merger of the classically distinct 'political' and 'development' communities is exemplified in recent efforts to implement peace architectures, such as the National Architecture for Peace in Ghana. The combination of local and national political leadership, civil society ownership, and assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (UNDPA), and other donors led to the establishment of a nation-wide system of dispute resolution institutions. This system is composed of Local Peace Councils that provide eminent personalities with the mandate to mediate local disputes. These range from land, labour or chieftaincy disputes to differences between and within political parties. Alerted by the post-electoral violence in Kenya, the system was strengthened to prevent the outbreak of armed violence during and after Ghana's 2008 elections. A solid local and national peace infrastructure will also be important to maximise the development benefits from Ghana's recent oil discoveries, and ensure that these do not dissipate through political instability or armed violence.

Source: Ministry of Interior of Ghana (MoIG). 2006. *National Architecture for Peace in Ghana*. Accra: MoIG. United Nations Department of Political Affairs. 2009. "Conflict Prevention in Partnership with UNDP." In *Politically Speaking* (Spring), p.16. United Nations Development Programme. 2009. *Annual Report 2008 of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery*. New York: UNDP, p. 9.

Members of the Volta Regional Peace Advisory Council at its inauguration ceremony on 24 October 2007. Source: UNDP.



- The role of development agencies in peace negotiations is also crucial to foster economic recovery once the peace accord has been signed. A central lesson from peace implementation processes is that a rapid economic recovery is crucial in strengthening war-to-peace transitions. Associating development agencies with peace processes only once an agreement has been signed is therefore too late to foster a speedy recovery.
- Credible commitments of development assistance can support a momentum at a mature stage of peace negotiations and help shift the parties' attitudes from short-term gains to a long-term economic vision for the future. After years of conflict, this transition is often extremely difficult as the belligerents and populations have very short-term – if any – planning horizons.
- Development engagement during peace processes facilitates post-conflict aid delivery. It allows for planning and advocacy for post-conflict economic recovery, and helps shape the legal and political frameworks of peace agreements that structure aid interventions after the conflict.
- Peace mediators, however, are often reluctant to involve development agencies during peace processes. They intend to limit the number and type of the participants in negotiations to keep a process manageable and focused on issues that the parties are likely to agree on. In this context, development issues are perceived as complex, divisive, and difficult to contain. Mediators also fear the cumbersome bureaucratic decision-making process of development agencies, as well as a loss of control over the process if it goes beyond their own expertise and allegiance networks.

### Box 3:

#### EXPECTATIONS AND LAND TENURE DISPUTES IN EL SALVADOR

The 1992 peace agreement of El Salvador stipulated that land tenure conflicts were to be resolved within six months after the signing of the agreement (Chapter V, Art. 3E). This timeframe was unrealistic and fostered expectations among the rural population to receive justice rapidly. Existing legal procedures for transferring land titles were complex and the process of identifying beneficiaries was likely to be complicated. Previous land transfer programmes had taken around 10 years to be completed. Had development specialists been consulted during the talks, it may have been possible to determine a more realistic timeframe and the political process necessary to agree on compensations and land transfers once the peace agreement had been signed.

Source: Nicole Ball and Tammy Halevy. 1996. *Making Peace Work: The Role of the International Development Community*. Policy Essay No. 18. Washington D.C.: Overseas Development Council, p. 68.

#### Peace accord implementation

- Development aid in post-accord transition phases is important to strengthen the implementation of the peace agreements and satisfy the population's expectations of a better life after conflict.
- Development assistance plays a crucial role in the demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants, as well as the reform of the security sector. Important contributions are food aid or health services in cantonment areas, but also larger vocational training and labour-intensive economic recovery programmes targeting especially, in the short-term, mid and low-level soldiers who are most likely to spoil the peace.
- Aid can be used to ensure compliance with a peace process, especially if there are few other economic opportunities and the parties are highly aid-dependent.
- Good governance projects can contribute to peace consolidation by creating conflict resolution mechanisms that address disputes not covered by the peace agreement or resulting from the implementation of the peace accord. Such projects require new coalitions between local and international development and political agencies.

#### The limits of development agencies in peace processes

- During step-by-step peace process strategies that sequence the settlement of specific issues over time, military and political concerns can precede economic or development-related matters. In this context, broad development and economic principles can be included at the outset of a process, while economic reforms become part of the political reform process after ceasefire has settled the military part of the dispute (see Box 4).
- Development agencies are risk averse and sometimes consider peace processes as a 'political' issue that is outside their direct development mandate.
- Many post-conflict situations remain insecure and do not provide the conditions for the deployment of personnel or the long-term commitment of development investments.
- Member states of multilateral development agencies do not find a political consensus that allows for engagement during peace processes and make the start of operations conditional on the existence of a peace agreement.
- Operations during 'conflict' and 'post-conflict' phases are institutionally divided between military, political, or humanitarian on one side, and peacebuilding or development agencies on the other. This division limits the role of development agencies in peace processes, but could be addressed by increasing coordination.
- Development assistance to governments or NSAGs that have been involved in major atrocities can be rejected on moral grounds, even if their demobilisation and reintegration is often a political priority.

## Box 4:

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITY AND THE PEACE PROCESS IN NEPAL

The 2005-2006 peace negotiations in Nepal contained a tacit agreement by the parties to focus on the achievement of key military and political issues and later deal with economic concerns. The main issue was changing the structure of the state from a centralised monarchy to a democracy with a constitutional assembly and a newly drafted constitution. Delaying discussions on socio-economic inequalities had the purpose of safeguarding political achievements and avoiding a polarising topic during the negotiations. In this sense, the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) stipulated economic principles were to be addressed through a 'normal' political process after the nature of the state has been changed. While this strategy secured the signing of the CPA, in hindsight, the lack of a joint economic vision risked threatening political and military achievements of Nepal's post-conflict transition, and the obstruction of development results became a political tool of the opposition against the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) when the latter was in government.

Source: Achim Wennmann. 2009. *Economic Issues in Peace Processes: Socio-Economic Inequality and Peace in Nepal*. CCDP Working Paper 2. Geneva: Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies.

## STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT PEACE PROCESSES

### Development assistance as an incentive for peace

- Incentives for peace refer to all purposeful uses of aid that strengthen peace processes. This can occur by influencing the behaviour of the principal stakeholders, strengthening the capacities of pro-peace constituencies, changing the relations between belligerents, and influencing the social and economic environment underlying a peace process.
- Incentivising aid is, however, controversial in the development community. Aid is supposed to be primarily about poverty reduction and needs-based interventions, and should not be driven by political agendas.
- Development incentives must be substantial enough to provide motivation for pro-peace development and represent a credible counter-weight to political aspirations and conflict economies.
- Development assistance has limited leverage on belligerents in circumstances in which private sector investment, diaspora transfers, or illicit economies offer higher rewards than aid.
- Development assistance alone is not able to shape incentives of belligerents; it needs to operate, with guarantees of security, within a broader political strategy adapted to the local context (see box 5).



Supporters of the United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) cheer during a protest rally in Kathmandu in 2009. Despite the CPA, many issues remain unresolved, leading to continued political instability. Source: AFP.

## Box 5:

### 'DEVELOPMENT FOR PEACE' – LESSONS FROM SRI LANKA

After an indefinite ceasefire in 2002, the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) made the achievement of rapid 'peace dividends' the first priority of their talks. These efforts targeted the economic reconstruction of the North-East as well as the strengthening of Sri Lanka's overall economic development. From a conflict resolution perspective, talking about economic development was intended in order to dissipate tensions between the parties and broaden the constituency for peace before entering into more contentious political or military issues.

In Sri Lanka, this 'development for peace' approach rested on a shared agenda between the parties, albeit temporarily: The government promised its electorate an economic recovery and, by making it a priority, hoped to ensure its political survival after the elections; the LTTE wanted to satisfy urgent humanitarian and material needs of North-Eastern populations, thereby re-enforcing its role as a de-facto authority and strengthening the legitimacy of its claim for regional autonomy.

The international development community's quick response to the situation in June 2003 raised USD 4.5 billion at a donor conference in Tokyo. While the funds were tied to progress in the peace process, the Tokyo package did not specify progress measures, mechanisms for enforcing compliance, or governance arrangements to allocate and disburse aid. It therefore had a limited effectiveness in advancing the peace process and was held to illustrate the flawed assumption that economic incentives could override political imperatives.

Ultimately, development assistance was unable to change the parties' political agendas. As their temporary conversion of interests on economic development subsided, the political and military incompatibility resurfaced and negotiations were suspended. A crucial ingredient for 'development for peace' is therefore a strong political commitment to end the conflict. In cases in which the parties engage in peace talks for other ends – such as strengthening constituency support or improving military conditions – 'development for peace' is likely to be nothing more than lip-service. It is therefore important to understand the attitudes of the parties towards a peace process when structuring aid incentives. Otherwise, having a carrot in front of the peace cart has no effects because the horses that are supposed to pull it have left.

Sources: Jonathan Goodhand and Bart Klem. 2005. *Aid, Conflict, and Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka, 2000-2005*. Colombo: The Asia Foundation. Dhananjayan Srisankarajah. 2003. "The Return of Peace in Sri Lanka: The Development Cart before the Conflict Resolution Horse?" *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*. Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 21-35.

### Withdrawing development assistance as a threat

- The usefulness of cutting development assistance largely depends on the targeted party's access to and value of alternative revenue sources, including foreign direct investment (FDI) and Diaspora remittances (see CCDP Issue Brief 3 on Private Sector Investment).
- Withdrawing aid can be an effective political strategy to exert pressure on governments that are highly aid dependent, and can increase perceptions of economic and political isolation of targeted elites.
- Threatening to cut or discontinuing development assistance can have high political costs because it creates a climate of adversity and resentment that can undermine a peace process.
- Threats of aid withdrawal are often a political strategy that does not have direct effects on the ground because targeted parties usually have a high degree of threat resistance.

### Aid instruments for peace processes

- *Aid instruments* are mechanisms and procedures through which development agencies channel resources to fragile and conflict states. They involve, for example, projects, trust funds, budget support, or technical cooperation. By increasing the benefits associated with a peace agreement, aid instruments can become an incentive for peace.
- *Development projects* are flexible means of aid delivery that can be adjusted to the context. They can be used to disburse funds 'around' state institutions, to establish a relationship with NSAGs, to access communities in territories outside the de-facto control of the government, and to mobilise immediate results through quick impact projects. Projects have been found to have limited long-term impact if not embedded in local ownership and institutions.



No peace, no development. A Sri Lankan newsagent displays the latest headlines announcing the banning of the LTTE in January 2009 after a prolonged military offensive by the Government. Source: AFP.

- *Multi-donor trust funds* result from pool funding of various donors to promote long-term and coordinated development programming. They are less effective in disbursing funds in the short-term, but can support long-term development planning, funding, and statebuilding.
- *Budget support* has been found particularly effective in early stages of state formation (East Timor, Afghanistan) and in post-conflict countries with new political leadership (Rwanda, Sierra Leone). Budget support and debt relief free-up a portion of the state budget for discretionary public spending, improve government ownership of development planning and disbursement, and can help build institutional capacity if combined with technical assistance.
- *Technical cooperation* involves investments in training, advice, and research. It is crucial in war-to-peace transitions to reduce asymmetries in education and skills between the negotiating parties. Training and information creation build joint knowledge platforms and reduce the gaps in negotiation or analytical skill-sets.
- *Post-Conflict Needs Assessments* (PCNAs) are multi-stakeholder initiatives that conceptualise, negotiate, and finance a shared strategy for recovery and development in fragile and conflict contexts. They are intended to become a foundation for national development plans and resource mobilisation. If PCNAs are conducted when a peace agreement is imminent, they can draft joint futures in war-to-peace transitions.

### Peace conditionality

- Peace conditionality is the use of development assistance to persuade parties to stop fighting, implement peace accords, and consolidate peace. Peace conditionality is part of the larger phenomenon of aid conditionality that illustrates development agencies' concern for the way their aid is spent.
- Peace conditionality has been found to work best if
  - it nurtures a strong domestic constituency for peace;
  - it is applied as part of a coherent and coordinated policy that prioritizes peacemaking;
  - it is perceived by local stakeholders to be even-handed; and
  - there is a high level of pre-existing development assistance.
- Peace conditionality is ineffective in circumstances in which
  - other development agencies or donors are willing to provide aid with no strings attached;
  - aid is not coordinated;
  - strong donor pressure creates a backlash from governments or NSAGs against the international community; and
  - other sources of financing provide higher inflows than development assistance.
- Peace conditionality has been criticised to be incompatible with local ownership of peace processes and policy making.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE MEDIATOR

### Testing the attitude of development agencies towards peacemaking

- What determines the mandate of particular development agencies? Do they have statutory limitations of engagement in conflict zones?
- What is the level of aid flows of the particular agency during armed conflict? Who is the biggest aid provider? How long have particular development agencies been present in the country? How much aid investments have been lost due to the conflict?
- Have development agencies and their staff been attacked during the conflict? Do they want to engage in peace process, or merely establish contact with the belligerents to reduce attacks against their staff?
- Does a particular development agency plan a major post-conflict recovery operation after the signing of a peace accord? Is it engaged in the planning or implementation of PCNAs?

### Mobilising development assistance for peacemaking

- Do aid agencies adopt a conflict-sensitive development policy? How unified is the development community in this approach?
- What are the aid instruments used in the delivery of aid? Do aid agencies maximize the conflict resolution impact of their programmes and projects?
- What expertise and contacts do aid agencies and individual aid workers have that could potentially support a peace process?
- Is the conflict catalysed by structural inequalities and social exclusion that can only be addressed through long-term development interventions? Do the motivations of one or various belligerents regarding these factors mirror the aid agencies' interests in poverty reduction?
- Does the belligerents' future vision of the economy in particular and society as a whole require the expertise of the development agencies?

### Testing the expected impact of development assistance

- Does the actual or promised development assistance provide a credible alternative to the economic opportunities of conflict? What are the alternative economic opportunities that could potentially provide higher rewards than development assistance?
- How sensitive are the parties towards incentives or threats related to development assistance? How dependent are they on aid flows? How credible are the incentives and threats? How threat-resistant are the targeted parties?
- Is aid conditionality consistently applied by all donors and to all parties? Is aid conditionality likely to provoke a backlash from the government or NSAGs?

## FURTHER READING

- Mary Anderson. 1999. *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – or War*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
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The Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP) is a research centre of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland. It aims to offer policy relevant research built upon strong academic foundations on a variety of themes and issues, including: peacebuilding and reconciliation; post-conflict transitions and state-building; armed violence and development; and multi-stakeholder initiatives and the politics of monitoring and evaluation. CCDP Issue Briefs comprise one stream of the centre's publications. Their primary objective is to distil research findings amongst the relevant community of policy-makers as well as amongst practitioners and scholars.

This CCDP Issue Brief is part of the project *Economic Issues and Tools in Peace Processes*, which is generously supported by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). The objective of the project is to increase the evidence base on the role and management of economic issues in peace processes, and provide mediators with information about the practical opportunities and risks associated with the use of economic instruments in peace processes. For more information, see <http://graduateinstitute.ch/ccdp/tools-peace-processes.html>.

Dr. Achim Wennmann is Researcher at the CCDP, and directs the project *Economic Issues and Tools in Peace Processes*. He thanks Günther Bächler, Simon Mason, Murezi Michael, and Thania Paffenholz for comments. This Issue Brief also benefited from the deliberations of the conference "Improving Coherent International Support to Peace Processes", Ottawa, 26 January 2010.

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