Helpdesk Research Report: Governance Reform and Service Delivery Lessons Learned
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| Query: Please identify lessons learned and best practices in governance reform and service delivery in environments similar to that of Sierra Leone |
| Enquirer: DFID Sierra Leone |

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1. Overview

This report offers a survey of lessons learned and guidance for reforming governance and improving service delivery in environments similar to that of Sierra Leone. It is important to note what this ‘environment’ is: Sierra Leone is one of the 44 countries classified as ‘fragile states’ under the OECD DAC’s definition. The DAC characterises fragile states as countries which demonstrate a lack of political commitment and/or weak capacity to develop and implement pro-poor policies. They have often experienced, or are experiencing, violent conflict. There are differing degrees of fragile states, ranging from deteriorating, to those with arrested development due to low political will and capacity to implement policies; and from countries undergoing post-conflict transition to states in early recovery.

For the purposes of this report, ‘environments similar to that of Sierra Leone’ are taken to mean fragile states undergoing post-conflict transition and/or arrested development. Here they are referred to more generally as ‘difficult environments’. The lessons presented here therefore reflect attempts to synthesise and document efforts at governance reform and service delivery in such environments. Although preference was given to other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, some of the information presented refers to countries currently undergoing conflict (e.g. Afghanistan) and countries with a much higher GDP than Sierra Leone (e.g. Lebanon).

In reference to what he calls ‘failed’ states, Brinkerhoff (2005, p. 13) is at pains to point out that ‘each failed (unhappy) state is failed (unhappy) in its own way’. This is important, for it highlights the risk of making general statements which bear little relation to country context. Further, there are often huge similarities between non-‘fragile’ states and fragile states. In order to navigate these wide variations and similarities, there are a number of policy-focused lessons and recommendations to be drawn from the current literature on governance reform and service delivery:

Statebuilding vs. Service delivery: Trade-off?

In general, the most crucial policy decision donors will face when addressing issues of governance and service delivery in difficult environments is the humanitarian vs. statebuilding imperative. In many cases, the most efficient service provision is not necessarily that provided...
by government structures due to a lack of political will and/or capacity. However, channelling resources away from the government to alternative service providers (the creation of parallel structures) is not conducive to statebuilding. This means that there is often a ‘trade’ off between the most desirable form of service provision, and support to the (re) building of state institutions and mechanisms. A decision is required from the outset based on the institutional context within which a donor is working: if state actors are relatively willing, capable and ‘aligned’ with a donor, guidance indicates that donors are best working with state actors (e.g. OECD, 2008) in order to restore/build legitimacy and security.

The role of local government

There are mixed messages about the potentials for local government to provide services. What is clear is that the relation between local and national government should be a starting point for analysis, for national government has to avoid allocating resources to local governments unequally, contributing to the exclusion of regions and the perpetuation of distributive systems based on clientelism and patronage (Brinkerhoff, 2005). Where devolved authorities possess both strong capacity and effective mandate, there are huge service delivery benefits to be gained, such as the case of Nigeria’s state-level government (OECD, 2008). Where there is a power vacuum, working with a legitimate local government is also good practice in terms of both service delivery and governance. Whilst decentralised governments have fared well in the provision of services such as education (see Rose, 2006), questions have been raised in regard to whether strengthening or supporting local government structures may contribute to a de-legitimisation of the central government (Hamill and Ahmed, 2008), as well as raising the ‘stakes’ for obtaining a position in the local administration and ultimately encouraging fierce competition and social divisions (Anten, 2010).

Non-state providers

As indicated, the trade off between statebuilding and effective service provision is central. Batley and McLoughlin’s (2010) work on how donors can support both offers a number of ‘partnership’ models in which state actors engage with non-state actors in order to manage, direct and oversee service delivery. It would seem that there is a role for both government and non-state service providers through a process which promotes accountability and effective monitoring, as well as offers opportunities for non-state actors to participate in delivering public services. While the types of non-state actors and the options for government involvement are varied, there are plenty of entry points for both sets of actors.

Citizen- and community-based approaches

Relating to the provision of services by non-state actors, the literature points to the importance of engaging with citizens and their communities in order to build trust in both service delivery and the government. Further, it is thought that citizen engagement with state actors in the service delivery process (e.g. in community monitoring systems or planning meetings) this trust is facilitated and the relation between citizens and the state. It is also thought to have a positive impact on service delivery itself.

Donor behaviour

In countries where aid makes up the largest proportion of government revenue, there is a huge risk of an accountability vacuum. The literature underscores the need for donor partners to carry out effective oversight of service providers in order to enter into a relationship with the citizens of a country. Further, the case for donor transparency for enhanced accountability and prevention of corruption in difficult environments is clearly articulated (Galtung and Tisné, 2009). The need for donors to coordinate their efforts in order to streamline support for a particular model or approach, avoiding short-term strategies which fail to take into account the long-term impact of donor policy decisions, is also highlighted.
Accurate analysis

The above guidance is predicated on the ability of donors to commission and/or undertake research and analysis into the context in which they are working. This context is always changing and evolving, and may differ considerably between regions. Donors require the ability to make accurate diagnoses of a state government’s a) capacity and b) willingness, as well as to map non-state actors and the services they offer. Potential and current threats to the state must form an integral part of the analysis in order to guide decisions regarding levels of support to particular actors, and the likely impact this support will have upon statebuilding and service delivery.

2. General Literature – Governance Reform and Service Delivery

http://download.clib.psu.ac.th/datawebclib/e_resource/trial_database/WileyInterScienceCD/pdf/PAD/PAD_1.pdf

This theoretical paper concerns itself with how effective governance can be re-established following societal conflict or war. It discusses governance reconstruction in terms of three dimensions: reconstituting legitimacy, re-establishing security and rebuilding effectiveness, which post-conflict reconstruction interventions target. On the basis of a series of journal articles the author identifies five cross-cutting issues which offer lessons in governance reform in countries which have undergone relatively recent conflict.

- There are similarities between the approach required for governance reform in post-conflict contexts and others: in general, ‘post-conflict governance reconstruction could benefit from taking more advantage of development tools and approaches, such as participatory appraisals, political mapping, sustainability planning, strategic policy management and community empowerment. In practice, these tools and approaches are sometimes ignored, due to factors such as, among others, a lack of knowledge on the part of some actors (e.g. the military) and the accelerated dynamics of post-conflict situations where the pressure for results and the potential for rapid reversals of fortune and vicious circles are high’ (p. 10).

- There are significant linkages between governance’s legitimacy, security and effectiveness: there is little use in focusing on one aspect of reconstruction (e.g. security sector reform) without adequate oversight mechanisms in place). It may also mean that actors who are seen as legitimate (e.g. traditional leaders) have a greater role. However, donor interventions tend not to make the links between the three aspects.

- The question of construction vs. reconstruction: donors need to be careful not to ‘rebuild’ previously faulty structures. Often, as in the case of Cambodia, this may require the ‘building’ of new governance structures. However, donors must ensure that their financial projections are accurate, and that reconstruction enjoys popular support.

- The relation between local and national government is key: this may lead to the exclusion of regions from allocated resources, ultimately undermining any notion of statebuilding. Distributive mechanisms tend to be based on ‘patronage and clientelism’ (p. 11).

- Formal vs. Informal governance: there may be ‘fuzzy’ boundaries between both formal and informal governance structures, making efforts to ‘penetrate’ a governance context complex. In other cases, reforms may rely on traditional (informal) structures, and therefore run the risk of impeding the ‘democratic process’ (p. 12).

In conclusion, Brinkerhoff warns against treating all ‘difficult’ states with the same medicine: ‘Understanding, and intervening in, the dynamics of states where all is not well, where the social and institutional fabric has been shredded and violence has erupted, call for a careful
combination of the general (and generalisable) and the situation-specific. Much has been learned about the universe of targets and tasks required to put post-conflict states on the path to governance and socio-economic development. Yet identifying what targets to reach for does not answer questions about how to reach them, or about who should do what and with whom. To borrow from Tolstoy’s famous characterisation of marriage, each failed (unhappy) state is failed (unhappy) in its own way. In moving to models, strategies and doctrine, it is important to base them solidly in an understanding of the particular dynamics of the country and to leave sufficient policy and operational space for flexibility and learning.’ (p. 12-13).

http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3795

This chapter, part of a UNDESA report on the challenges and strategies involved in rebuilding public service delivery after conflict, considers the benefits of a multi-stakeholder approach and the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in public service delivery. In the aftermath of conflict, restoring the delivery of public services is not just a matter of ensuring the population’s survival; it is a way for rebuilding trust in government and restoring and/or building legitimacy. Post-conflict situations provide a ‘window of opportunity’ for transformation, allowing states to develop better processes and systems for more efficient, effective and inclusive service delivery. However a particular challenge for post-conflict governments is the infrastructural deficiencies they are likely to encounter. In order to target scarce resources accurately, ICT networks can be useful in mapping areas of the highest need. The potential for ICT to direct resources in this way have ‘barely been tapped’ (p. 110).

The chapter offers a number of recommendations for utilising ICT and relevant information to strengthen service delivery in a citizen-centric manner:

- Information-sharing is crucial for donors attempting to coordinate interventions with other donors, and harmonise with recipient country priorities.
- ICT utilisation also stimulates demand-led accountability due to greater transparency, potentially having a positive impact upon service delivery.
- ICT systems can be used to manage local resources and target interventions towards the most needy/marginalised groups.
- Indeed – ‘In many post-conflict situations, ICTs may be the only way in which governments are able to maintain viable service delivery networks. When infrastructure has been destroyed, mobile telephones can be invaluable for communicating. Geographic information systems (GIS) and remote sensing are helpful in identifying heavily damaged areas and establishing priorities for action’ (p. 116).
- ‘Contrary to commonly held belief, post-conflict situations not only present challenges, but also numerous opportunities to leapfrog stages of development by adopting innovative practices in public administration, including the application of ICTs in government and service delivery service delivery in the information age we all live in’ (p.121).

http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3179

This publication, based on the work of the DAC Fragile States Group, identifies the challenges and dilemmas the international community and its partners face in delivering services in fragile situations and offers practical guidance on how to overcome such
challenges. The most relevant part of the paper is found in Sections 3 (‘Taking Action’) and Section 4 (‘Policy Implications’).

In terms of the suggested approaches presented in Section 3, along with the major challenges face in deciding what approach to use, the following points are made:

- The most difficult decision for donors is whether to work within the existing system or in parallel when supporting the delivery of ‘public’ services. This involves undertaking a critical appreciation of the actors involved, their alignment, deficits, and interests, as well the long-term effects of the decision made (e.g. although short-term gains may be made, these must be weighed-up against longer term governance implications, such as the perpetuation of particular incentive structures).

- Where there is a level of central state willingness, the national government should be the preferred partner. They are largely in a better position to fulfill the dual aspects of service delivery (allocation and production). It is only when the state is truly unwilling and/or incapable that alternative service providers should be considered. This may involve NGOs, community-based provision, private sector providers, government-led contracting, or co-production between aligned interest groups.

- In situations where a country is dependent on aid to function, there is a risk that accountability in service delivery is diluted and weakened. Experience suggests that there are ways in which external aid does not have to negatively impact upon state-citizen accountability. Donors can actually increase accountability by performing an oversight role over service providers.

- It is generally thought that devolving financial and decision-making responsibility to local tiers of government reaps benefits in terms of service delivery efficiency. For instance, in Nigeria – ‘the willingness of states (provinces) to support education varied depending on the quality of the state-level commissioner. Local governments and traditional leaders showed greater willingness and small-scale programmes run by community service organisations were the most successful. Analysis suggests that requiring counterpart resources and achieving critical mass were important in mobilising local efforts. The national (federal) government of Nigeria proved to be mainly a bureaucratic checkpoint rather than a source of support and co-ordination’ (pp. 34-35). In other cases, there may be enough of a power vacuum for local-level governments to act relatively independently. In some circumstances the local level administrative capacity will not be sufficient to cope with the responsibility of devolved service provision, however. In this case, community-based approaches have shown great promise, such as the Oranji Pilot Project in Karachi, Pakistan.

Following on from the information presented, three key policy implications are offered:

- Tailoring interventions to context: Donors should do contextual analyses and mapping of service realities to acquaint themselves with the country situation and to design more robust indicators for monitoring short- and long-term progress. In selecting their means and degrees of engagement, donors should seek to strike an appropriate balance, based on risk/benefit analyses of the political realities of different service sectors.

- Long-term focus on governance and state-building: Donors face an ethical challenge in fragile states between achieving short-term improvements in service delivery and establishing the foundation for long-term improvement in governance. To attain both of these goals, donors must be engaged at multiple levels of government within a fragile state, working to promote a mixture of community-driven and nationally organised programs.

- Managing transition and hand-back: Different fragile state settings require different transition strategies. In stabilising or post-conflict settings, donors should work with government to accelerate the transition of service provision from external and non-state actors back to state mechanisms. Deteriorating settings necessitate a decision on whether or not to engage with the government. If not, a strategy focused on community and locally-led service delivery may be most effective.
When is non-state service delivery feasible in fragile contexts? The OECD (2008) paper questions whether non-state services in fragile states may reduce the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of its citizens, arguing that the process of ‘state-building’ is dependent upon governments’ engagement in service management. This article reviews the available evidence to identify what types of engagement are feasible and most likely to contribute to service delivery, or at least not to damage it. Often fragile contexts are faced with the dual ‘imperative’ of service provision and state building. For the OECD, the two can go hand-in-hand. Tensions between the two do arise however: in fragile contexts it is likely that government service provision is weak and other actors have stepped in. Further, international actors may find it easier to bypass weak national governments in order to deliver essential services. But ‘what is good for service delivery may not be good for state-building’ (p. 132) - the creation of parallel structures and ‘state avoidance’ do little to strengthen weak states, and in fact have a negative impact on their legitimacy and accountability.

Some have seen the state as having a ‘stewardship’ role in service provision. The way in which this may look is as follows:

- engaging non-state actors in policy dialogue, and formulating policies that provide the framework for service providers;
- regulating by setting minimum standards and enforcing them, licensing, accrediting and facilitating providers, and safeguarding consumers;
- contracting out government-financed services to NSPs or contracting in the support of NSPs to government services;
- entering into mutual agreements for jointly financed collaboration between the state and NSPs.

However, evidence on the efficacy of this approach suggests this role is generally ‘poorly undertaken’ (p. 132). The literature on this approach, which is seen to wed state-building with service provision is lacking. Indeed the article talks about government and Non State Provider engagement using ‘normative, scenario-type statements’ due to the thin evidence base (p. 133). A review of what evidence does exist leads the authors to the following assertion:

‘The dilemma for donors and governments is that the most desirable interventions from a service delivery viewpoint – for example, getting mass service delivery quickly operational by contracting it universally to NGOs – present a high risk of adverse effects, if government lacks the capacity to contract and the institutional conditions are not in place to enforce terms. From a service-delivery perspective, the weakness of services in fragile states may require large-scale and more interventionist approaches, and the fragmented nature of non-state provision may indicate the need for quick coordination. However, from a state-building perspective, the institutional conditions should be established before very concrete initiatives are taken to work with NSPs. The latter would argue for an incremental process of dialogue, leading to the design of legally and financially supported policy frameworks, and the step-by-step development of capacity to contract and regulate. This would recognise the difficulty of building capacity whilst also presenting opportunities to do so incrementally, ‘learning by doing’ as they move towards more complex and formal relationships with non-state actors’ (p. 146).

3. Sector-specific literature

Rose, P., and Greeley, M., 2006, ‘Education in Fragile States: Capturing Lessons and Identifying Good Practice’, Report prepared for the DAC Fragile States Group, Service Delivery Workstream, Sub-Team for Education Services, University of Sussex, Brighton

This report presents an overview of how education services have been supported and implemented in fragile states, with a view to advising donors on how to best support education service delivery in difficult contexts. Education is seen to play an important role in influencing fragility, positively or negatively (for instance schools may be targeted by particular actors in efforts to undermine government legitimacy). Education is also being increasingly seen to play an important role in promoting security due to its role in peacebuilding and restoring the social contract between government and its citizens. In general, education interventions are also favoured because they offer rapid impact for relatively small investments. In post-conflict contexts education has a huge symbolic value in establishing the legitimacy of the state.

Will and capacity are the 2 prerequisites for service delivery. In terms of will, commitment to a common or shared goal/target, the transition from international to national (domestic) ownership, and government responsiveness (such as the Government of Burundi’s decision to abolish school fees in 2005) are vital components of service delivery in challenging environments. Capacity refers to that of individuals, organisations, and institutions (the ‘rules of the game’). In order to support both will and capacity, the authors quote Creative Associates (2006), who identify a number of priority activities in the delivery of education services in fragile states. These include:

- Immediate roll-out of teacher training
- Provision of learning materials
- Establishment of safe learning spaces
- Institutionalisation of school-community relations
- Personnel procedures, salary adjustments and payroll processes
- Recruitment, management and deployment systems
- Relationship with decentralised local governance institutions and teachers unions
- School construction programme

There is however a tendency to neglect secondary school education. In Liberia attempts by UNICEF to facilitate access to secondary school led to an accelerated learning programme in which primary schooling was condensed from 6 years to 3 years, enabling students to ‘rejoin’ secondary school. Other approaches include mainstreaming home-schooling into national planning (e.g. Afghanistan) and public-private partnerships to offer education services (e.g. Pakistan). Decentralised education services have proved successful in both Mozambique and Nepal. In Sudan, education services were integrated with the provision of water and sanitation services.

http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3371

Based on the experiences of Health Unlimited country offices in Cambodia, Burma, Peru, Guatemala, Ethiopia and Somalia this paper draws together 13 key principles to guide policymakers in designing health programmes in fragile states and difficult environments. These principles are as follows:

1. Understand context in a local area, including continuous monitoring
2. Build trust between providers of services and communities (e.g. employ locally)
3. Share information and evidence with like-minded groups
4. Provide long-term developmental support rather than short-term humanitarian investments
5. Adopt a rights-based approach
6. Reach marginalised communities through targeting, the use of disaggregated data and indicators and tackling barriers to health service access, such as gender discrimination and high service costs
7. Build on what exists by working with local partners (such as local authorities) and relevant government authorities
8. Develop accountability mechanisms (including supporting government responsiveness and the capacity of citizens to advocate for their rights)
9. Facilitate an appropriate mix of aid modalities
10. Focus on the health system as a whole, through the use of integrated systems and national protocols
11. Address human resourcing constraints through long-term investment and flexible entry requirements for staff
12. Utilise appropriate communication approaches to support ‘demand’ for services (e.g. radio programmes)
13. Promote cooperation between donor agencies.


What are the best approaches to strengthening health systems in fragile states? This report offers a survey of current health strategies. Its findings suggest that while there is great diversity in the approaches taken to strengthen health systems, successful interventions share common elements of a) community integration, b) partnership, and c) a long-term perspective. Poor national health systems are considered to be a major constraint in improving health, leading to increased efforts by donors to strengthen national systems. Strengthening health systems in fragile states is challenging given: the limited resources available; governance-related issues; and the difficulties of organising and delivering health care in difficult settings. Despite these difficulties, the reality that fragile states have a high burden of ill health and are currently off-track to meet the health millennium development goals (MDGs) has re-focused the international community’s efforts to strengthen health systems in fragile contexts.

Health system strengthening (HSS) initiatives in fragile states aim not only to support the achievement of the health MDGs and national health targets, but also to ensure that the delivery of national health services takes place in an equitable, accountable and sustainable manner, thereby taking a governance approach. These approaches are varied and, in many cases, creatively adapted to the specific context. However, in surveying these approaches and strategies, several common themes emerge as being essential for successful interventions:

- Community involvement is embraced as a key to ensure sustainability and security of services.
- There is no simple, single approach that will work. Programmes tend to consist of multiple elements, not only focusing on service delivery but also addressing causes of low service utilisation, investing in staff, improving community awareness and participation, and harnessing local capacity to achieve sustainability.
- Many programmes have gone beyond stand-alone, vertical services provision, and seek to achieve integration with existing services and systems.
- Most initiatives do not work on short timelines. Sustainable successes seem to have been achieved when investments were made over the longer term.
- Most approaches attempt to build a diversity of partnerships, working with everyone from the community to overseas academic institutions.
- Financial support is important. Small seed grants to support local initiatives can have significant long-term impacts.

In spite of the creativity and diversity observed in HSS, doubts in regard to the feasibility of strengthening health systems in fragile state contexts persist. Challenges remain in the negotiation of governance-related constraints imposed by fragile states and in understanding how these constraints impact health outcomes. The report goes on to argue that greater efforts are needed in measuring and evaluating progress and impact in order to quantify success that can currently only be observed qualitatively. It is then argues that current interventions demonstrate the relevance of HSS models to fragile states, but developing
health systems that have good coverage and are both affordable and responsive is still a major challenge.

Zivetz L., 2006, 'Health Service Delivery in Early Recovery Fragile States: Lessons from Afghanistan, Cambodia, Mozambique, and Timor Leste', United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and BASICS, Washington DC
http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display?type=Document&id=3190

This paper asks about the impact of foreign assistance on state stewardship of the health sector in early recovery fragile states. Although it is concerned with early recovery states, of which Sierra Leone is not, it contains a number of important messages.

The case studies indicate that donors have undermined state capacity to regulate service delivery by creating a two-track system. Promising approaches to support state stewardship include: contracting with NGOs; equity funds; civil service performance-based reform; sectoral plans; and budget support. This is predicated upon the need to increase donor harmonisation.

Donors have more potential to impact on state effectiveness in service delivery through policy, capacity, and systems strengthening than upon a state’s internal legitimacy. Donor efforts to re-establish and strengthen health service delivery in post-conflict and fragile state situations are however hampered by a combination of structural impediments and poor policy decision-making and implementation. Hindrances include the following:

- ‘State avoidance’ strategies which undermine donor credibility
- Aid volatility which affects the accuracy of forward planning
- The existence of strict accountability mechanisms and an emphasis on greater NGO involvement create parallel service delivery structures, inhibiting states’ ability to manage services
- A focus on highly visible but largely unsustainable infrastructure projects
- A narrow focus on training within capacity building efforts
- A tendency to support projects through short-term assistance which often act to undermine the social contract between state and citizens

Donor interventions are further restricted by policy choices. The emphasis on incorporating NGOs into the health sector as service delivery contractors detracts from their role as sources of accountability, and a resistance remains to engaging with private sector service delivery agencies—which have demonstrated greater service delivery efficiencies. While the current approach has resulted in improvements in some health indicators, sustainable improvements in these indicators will rely on improvements in the ability of state institutions to manage and monitor resources and to respond to the expectations of consumers and the health system requirements as a whole. In early recovery states where the goal is improved state legitimacy and effectiveness, nurturing state stewardship of the health sector depends on a donor community that is willing to stand together and behind the state to build systems and capacity over a realistic timetable. On the basis of the case studies, this seems to rely on a number of factors:

- A sectoral framework with built-in conditionalities
- Long-term, inclusive, multi-donor funding managed through an intermediary or government or donor mechanism
- Long-term, systems-based capacity building for adequately paid Ministry of Health managers and service providers
- NGO accountability to the state
- An attitude towards technical assistance as mentoring, not as ‘doing for’.
How can and should donors support sustainable post-conflict recovery and service delivery by working with local government? This workshop paper from the United Nations Development Programme identifies lessons using post-2006 Lebanon as a case study. The authors locate local government at the centre of reconstruction, in terms of a) service delivery, b) local-level decision making, and c) community peacebuilding and reconciliation. This paper distills some of the lessons to emerge from reflecting on Lebanon’s experience in strengthening local government.

Local government’s lack of capacity is sometimes used as a justification for the long-term deployment of NGOs for the delivery of basic services. Without simultaneous capacity building, this affects the sustainability of service provision and undermines local government legitimacy. The July 2006 war in Lebanon provides a case study on how development agencies worked with local government (rather than non-state actors) to re-establish service delivery and to strengthen local planning and decision making processes. The case of Lebanon shows that speed and participation are not mutually exclusive. Local governments, the authors argue, are prime candidates for working with development agencies as implementing partners.

The case study offers a number of key findings, including:

- Local governments sometimes have limited power over community infrastructure and service delivery. Their willingness to undertake post-crisis recovery efforts may not be matched by sufficient capacity, skills or resources.
- Local participation in rehabilitation requires input from community representatives beyond local government. Existing networks and relationships with local communities can be critical. Initially, reconciling local participation and speed presented a problem. However it emerged that local municipalities were already engaged in the reconstruction process.
- Support for local government inevitably generates questions about central government’s ability to handle post-conflict rehabilitation. If central government cannot fund local government, this compounds challenges and exacerbates tensions between government structures.

In order to take these key lessons forward, development agencies should give local government flexibility to respond to local priorities, while also consulting with others while investigating post-conflict needs. Further suggested actions include:

- Identify which functions, services and utilities local governments are to provide as a baseline, and strengthen local governments’ technical expertise.
- Extend interactions beyond only local government in war-affected communities, without compromising rapid response. It is important to use local knowledge and contacts generated through working in local communities.
- Provide local government with sufficient tools to sustain long-term development efforts after the early post-conflict recovery phase is over, and use existing resources to help build local government capacity.
- Communicate with stakeholders, beneficiaries and colleagues in the international cooperation community to ensure mutual understanding and to manage expectations. This includes work to co-ordinate integrated environmental approaches to post-conflict recovery.
Measure and monitor the impact of support to capacity-building activities, and the impact of the activities themselves in terms of service delivery, local decision making, and community peacebuilding and reconciliation.


This paper offers a detailed case study of the political economy of Ituri, in the post-conflict Democratic Republic of Congo. This context is characterised as nepotistic, corrupt, predatory, and exclusionary. The paper also describes Ituri as suffering from a power vacuum, in which its local institutions have been weakened or destroyed. In particular, administrative services and the judiciary are seen as especially problematic, with District Commissioners largely failing to communicate with local chiefs. Indeed the power relations between customary leaders and formal officials and representatives are complex. Ituri is also characterised by parallel power structures, seen in the increasing importance of NGOs, faith-based associations, local armed groups, international relief agencies, and private contractors. Many of these actors have become politicised.

The author focuses upon land issues as the source of Ituri’s ongoing governance problems. Land law in the Democratic Republic of Congo is confused, with remnants of customary law still in operation. It is very difficult to resolve customary land disputes due not only to the complexity of the law, but because state agencies lack legitimacy and capacity. Approaches to governance reform therefore require land issues to be placed at the heart of planning.

The author warns that in the case of Ituri a move towards full decentralisation is likely to have a negative impact upon governance in the district. By significantly raising the ‘stakes’ of obtaining a position in the provincial administration, this reform could lead to fierce competition between would-be office holders, heightened tensions and an increase in social divisions. Some in Ituri do support decentralisation however, for it is thought to bring increased revenues and a more rapid resolution of local issues.


Based on the work of non-governmental organisation Tiri, this paper discusses the challenge of accountability and service delivery encountered in post-war contexts (Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Lebanon, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and Timor Leste) where foreign aid plays a central role in supporting reconstruction. The authors argue that:

‘Success in stabilizing the country, reconciling divisions, and building trust (between competing groups as well as in the state itself) after war depends on these informal mechanisms as much as on formal democratic institutions. An alternative approach is thus needed whereby citizens are engaged in the allocation of public resources that affect their lives. In addition to stemming corruption, this can help to reengage citizens in the democratic process. Contrary to received wisdom, such measures can begin in the earliest postwar stages, building on a country’s local competencies and resources’ (p.94).

This paper subsequently offers an approach to ensuring accountability in service delivery which aims to tackle the difficult relationship between the state and citizens. By strengthening social accountability mechanisms and offering citizens a clear mandate to hold public officials to account (particularly with reference to corruption) both ensures that foreign aid is used effectively, and that civil society actors perform a central role in their society’s development. Citizens’ trust in the government and the services it provides also helps support more efficient service delivery mechanisms. For instance:
‘In Afghanistan, a large-scale community-driven reconstruction program—the National Solidarity Programme (NSP)—formed elected councils to determine spending priorities for community projects in two-thirds of Afghanistan’s 24,000 villages. These councils provide a forum for power holders to continue playing a role in their communities and to work out their differences in the open. They also provide a forum for active involvement by the community—for example, by voluntarily donating labor. Thus the program has given Afghans a stake in rebuilding their country. A report by Human Rights Watch found that NSP-built schools were less likely to be attacked by the Taliban than other newly built schools’ (p.103).

Service delivery relies on the collection of taxes. The community-based approach to post-war reconstruction can also be employed in this sense:

‘In Congo (Kinshasa), informal tax collectors masquerading as police and customs officials had been extorting traders carrying goods down the Congo River every few miles. In a project facilitated by the NGO Innovative Resources Management, affected communities and river transporters joined forces to report illegal payments to the Congolese Ministry of Interior. The government, the traders, and local communities were all suffering financial losses and had an incentive to cooperate. The project succeeded in reviving commerce along the river, despite being implemented during a period of turmoil in a huge country where corruption was widely thought to be intractable’ (ibid).

The paper also draws attention to the role of donors in making budgetary and funding information public in order that citizens are able to hold state actors to account when funded services are not delivered.

http://www.eldis.org/fulltext/CFCI-Sudan-casestudy.pdf

This case study looks at the Child Friendly Community Initiative (CFCI) – described as an integrated, cross-sectoral and community-based approach to achieving sustainable improvements in the lives of women and children in rural areas. The CFCI promotes a rights-based approach through advocacy and by strengthening the public services that benefit children. The CFCI was a key component of UNICEF’s 2002-2006 Master Plan of Operation in Sudan, characterised by a stronger but more limited geographic and programmatic focus. The CFCI expands and builds upon the successes of the Child Friendly Village Initiative (CFVI), which was launched by UNICEF and the GOS in 1993. But it improves on it by identifying the most vulnerable states, Localities and communities on the basis of key indicators measured by two surveys, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 2000) and Safe Motherhood Survey (1999). CFVI selected communities based on demand, which meant the poorest, most vulnerable were often left out. CFCI has improved on this by introducing selection based on basic welfare indicators.

The purpose of the case study is to draw out general lessons for the design and implementation of similar interventions. Suggested approaches include:

- Supporting/ scaling up a small programme that clearly already has some political support. Government financing (even if very little) signals reasonably strong support, especially in difficult environments.
- Strengthening areas where reform is already taking place, or where it is clear that government is open to reform. This is a case of working/ strengthening the state level in a context where decentralisation reforms are starting to take place.
- Partnering with lower levels of government that may be more ‘willing’ than central government.

Reflecting upon UNIFEM’s experience in Sudan, the paper identifies a number of lessons:
By working with existing pockets of political willingness, the CFCI – and other interventions like it – offer a good entry point for donors to further engage in service delivery in Sudan.

Service delivery cannot be isolated from wider issues of economic and physical security: access to and demand for service delivery will increase with enhanced security.

Uncoordinated donor action results in high transaction costs for governments which already suffer weakness. It also provides greater opportunities for recipient governments to play donors off against each other. Alignment with existing government strategies and/or lead donors is crucial. In the case of UNICEF in Sudan it also proved important not to be seen as providing legitimacy or blanket support to the Khartoum government.

5. Further resources

It should be noted that much of the literature presented here can be found in the GSDRC Service Delivery and Fragile States Topic Guides.

Related GSDRC reports

GSDRC Helpdesk Query, 2009, ‘Non-State Providers of Health Services in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States’, GSDRC, University of Birmingham
http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Helpdesk&id=482

http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Helpdesk&id=484

GSDRC Helpdesk Query, 2009, ‘Civil Service Reform in Rwanda’, GSDRC, Birmingham
http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Helpdesk&id=553

6. Additional information

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Selected websites visited

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