

USAID Program Evaluations on
"Rebuilding Post-Conflict Societies"

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The number of societies facing civil wars and strife has been on the rise over the past fifteen years. The failure of governments to accommodate regional aspirations, quests by ethnic groups for a greater share of economic resources, the worsening economic conditions in many countries, artificial national boundaries established during colonial regimes, and often the process of modernization which unsettles the long-established political relationships, are probably the major contributing factors to this phenomenon. During the Cold War, many local and ethnic conflicts were suppressed by superpowers for balance-of-power considerations, but as these rivalries receded, increased political conflict has become manifest in many parts of the world.

The international community, loosely defined to include bilateral donor agencies, inter-government organizations, foundations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), has been playing a critical role in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of war-torn societies once the acute conflict is over and some degree of political order is restored. During the 1980's, it primarily focussed on the economic sector: revival of agriculture, promotion of micro-enterprises, restoration of physical infrastructure shattered during the war, and, above all, promotion of sound macro-economic policy regimes for long-term growth. The almost exclusive focus on economic variables can be attributed to the simple fact that the international community followed intervention approaches that it had successfully applied for rebuilding countries devastated by physical disasters such as floods, droughts or earthquakes.

As the international community accumulated greater experience and some of the underlying factors behind complex political emergencies were further analyzed, it became clear that an economic focus, though essential, was not enough. The most critical element in rebuilding post-conflict societies is political. An intra-state conflict indicates that the state has failed to govern itself—that is, to meet the essential needs and aspirations of its people and to effectively accommodate and reconcile the demands of competing groups within the framework of economic growth and political stability. In the absence of an effective and legitimate political authority, neither economic nor social rehabilitation are possible, nor can further conflict and disintegration be prevented. This belated recognition contributed to a new generation of innovative programs which focus on political and social rehabilitation.

USAID has been a pioneer in designing and implementing modest, though timely, programs on pressing political issues; assistance has been provided for elections, human rights, building judiciary and legal systems, civilian security and psycho-social reconciliation. It has supported such initiatives in a wide range of post-conflict societies including Cambodia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Haiti, Mozambique, Nicaragua and Rwanda. The main objective of the evaluation studies undertaken by the Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) is to review the experience of USAID and, when possible, of other international donor agencies in rebuilding political structures of post-conflict societies.

CDIE's studies have been designed to draw policy and operational lessons to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of international assistance. Consequently, their primary audience are the managers, professional staff and consultants of USAID and undoubtedly of other bilateral donor agencies, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations. Another equally important audience consists of the leaders, officials and elites of post-conflict countries to whom problems of war and the needs of rebuilding are more vivid and urgent. Although, scholars engaged in the study of developing world will find the evaluation studies useful for theorizing and research, these are not undertaken as academic exercises.

CDIE's past and current evaluations and related activities on rebuilding post-conflict societies are described below:

Completed Evaluation Studies

1. Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda

CDIE represented USAID on the Management and Steering Committees of the joint evaluation of emergency assistance to Rwanda. This unprecedented, multinational multi-donor evaluation was launched in November 1994 with a Steering Committee consisting of 19 OECD-member bilateral donor agencies, the European Union, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD, nine multilateral agencies and UN units, and 7 international non-governmental organizations.

In addition, CDIE was responsible for one of the four studies undertaken under the auspices of this evaluation. Its evaluation study specifically focussed on repatriation, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and development issues in Rwanda to include an examination of: programs to promote human rights and a fair judicial system; public sector capacity building; assistance to agriculture and the rural economy; interventions to rehabilitate the key health and primary education sectors; assistance to especially vulnerable populations—primarily widows, orphans and unaccompanied children; and programs for psycho-social reconciliation. It also examined consequences of the genocide, relations between NGOs and the Government of Rwanda and prospects for the return of refugees. The CDIE evaluation team was led by its senior policy analyst Krishna Kumar.

The report was published in 1995 by the Steering Committee of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda. *It can be ordered from Overseas Development Institute Publications in London (tel: +44 171 487 7413, fax: +44 171 487 7590, internet: publications@odi.org.uk).* An abridged version of the report which primarily focusses on USAID's assistance was also prepared by CDIE. *This version can be ordered from the USAID Development Information Services Clearinghouse (tel: 703-351-4006, fax: 703-351-4039, internet: docorder@disc.mhs.comuserve.com).*

2. An Edited Volume Entitled "Rebuilding Societies After Civil War: Critical Roles for International Assistance"

CDIE's senior policy analyst Krishna Kumar edited this volume which is being published by Lynne Rienner Publishers in October 1996. This volume presents a series of case studies that examine the nature, delivery and consequences of international assistance for political, social and economic rehabilitation and reconstruction. The individual chapters are contributed by distinguished scholars who have considerable experience in studying the rebuilding of war-torn societies. DANIDA (the Danish International Development Agency) has purchased 1,000 copies of this book for wider distribution within the development community. *This book can be ordered from Lynne Rienner Publishers in Boulder, CO (tel: 303-444-6684, fax: 303-444-0824).*

Current and Planned Activities

1. Program Evaluation on Electoral Assistance

Peace accords invariably require holding free and fair elections with broad-based participation. Moreover, elections are supposed to settle the contentious issue of the political legitimacy of the government both inside and outside the country. Still more importantly, a responsive, representative political system is widely regarded as an effective mechanism for articulating the political aspirations of the minority and other ethnic groups.

USAID has performed three important roles in the conduct of elections in post-conflict societies. First, it has provided technical assistance for preparing guidelines, codes, manuals, lists of voters, and training of personnel. It has also shared the cost of elections in many instances. Second, USAID and other international organizations have sent observers to monitor elections and to document irregularities and fraudulent practices. Finally, they have often served as mediators between the warring parties prior to, during and after elections.

While free and fair elections have been a step in the democratic rehabilitation of post-conflict societies, they are not without problems. Often the initial expectations fail to materialize. In many cases, too, elections do not resolve the issues of political legitimacy and minority representation. Governments formed after elections have not always been strong and stable enough to promote reconciliation and development. Further, elections in post-conflict societies have been very divisive. In highly fragmented societies, elections can aggravate the ethnic and social cleavages which contributed to the violent conflict in the first place. In any case, holding elections does not guarantee that democratic political competition will be institutionalized.

The CDIE evaluation will critically examine the nature, focus and conduct of electoral

assistance and its short- and long-term effects on the promotion of democracy and reconciliation in post-conflict societies. It is largely based on an in-depth review of documents, reports and academic literature and interviews with knowledgeable individuals. Case studies are being prepared for the following six countries which will be synthesized in the evaluation report. The draft reports will be ready by October 1996.

- Angola. The author is Dr. Marina Ottaway, Goergetown University.
- Ethiopia. The author is Dr. John Harbeson, CUNY Graduate School.
- Mozambique. The authors are Dr. Mike Turner, CUNY Hunter College; Sue Nelson, USAID Cambodia; and Kim Mahling-Clark, USAID.
- Cambodia. The author is Dr. Frederick Brown, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.
- El Salvador. The authors are Dr. Rafael López-Pintor, Universidad Autonoma de Madrid and Dr. Enrique Baloyra, University of Miami.
- Nicaragua. The authors are Dr. Rafael López-Pintor, Universidad Autonoma de Madrid and Dr. Enrique Baloyra, University of Miami.

The following outputs of the evaluation will be available by June 1997:

- The evaluation report presenting the main findings, conclusions and recommendations.
- Six country case studies of the context, conduct and consequences of elections in post-crisis situation; Depending upon the availability of funds, these case studies may be published in a single volume along with the evaluation report.
- Guidelines for USAID for assisting post-conflict societies.
- Evaluation highlights on country case studies for wider dissemination.

2. Program Evaluation of Assistance for Psycho-Social Reconciliation

Formal peace accords signed by conflicting parties to end civil wars do not necessarily lessen mutual hostility and antagonism between the warring parties. In fact, post-conflict societies continue to remain highly polarized with populations harboring deep-seated distrust and bitterness towards each other. During wars, antagonistic parties systematically demonize each other through false propaganda and misinformation

campaigns. Often political and military mobilization is based on them. The resulting perceptions do not easily change. Memories of violence and bloodshed remain fresh in the minds of affected populations and undermine inter-group harmony and cooperation. The presence of traumatized individuals—unaccompanied children, sexually abused women and widows, and disabled soldiers—continues to fuel resentment and anger towards former adversaries. In short, mutual tolerance and understanding, much less friendly relations, between formerly warring parties remain a distant goal.

Economic, political, military or diplomatic interventions that are usually promoted at the cessation of war, can directly or indirectly help to foster positive interactions among former enemies. For instance, free and fair elections, power sharing arrangements and constitutional reforms may enhance understanding and political cooperation among conflicting groups. Demobilization and resettlement of ex-combatants, as another example, can help reduce mutual apprehensions and distrust, while economic growth spurred by macro-economic reforms and stabilization programs can contribute to intergroup economic integration. Thus, the usual programs of economic, political and social rehabilitation, carefully planned and properly timed, can contribute to reconciliation in post-conflict societies.

Many experts, however, contend that conventional rehabilitation efforts, though essential, are insufficient to promote reconciliation in the aftermath of severe violence and bloodshed. They need to be supplemented by other activities that heal the wounds of war, foster intergroup understanding and strengthen nonviolent conflict resolution mechanisms. According to these experts, specific interventions are necessary to help reconstruct intergroup relationships into a more positive form by directly affecting attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of contesting parties.

USAID, like other international donors, has supported a range of initiatives to promote what may be called—in the absence of another expression—"psycho-social reconciliation." First, it has supported activities such as truth commissions and war tribunals which bring to light historic and recent acts of violence, human rights abuses and disappearance of individuals. Second, it has promoted dialogues, workshops and conflict management training to strengthen the lines of communication among the former warring segments of the populace. Third, USAID has tried to promote mutual tolerance and understanding using mass media. Finally, and most importantly, it has provided support for traumatized individuals—particularly unaccompanied children, rape victims and widows.

This evaluation is designed to examine psycho-social reconciliation activities supported by USAID and other donors in post-conflict societies. Its primary objective is to inform and assist the senior policy makers and decision makers of the Agency in formulating and supporting psycho-social programs. The evaluation will also outline a menu of activities that may be individually or collectively supported by USAID and other donors

in future.

The evaluation will be based on case studies of countries, which have been selected based on level of international involvement, availability of documents and material, and, finally, the opportunity to learn from the experience. The countries are as follows:

- Cambodia. The background study author is Dr. Robert Muscat, an independent consultant. The draft report will be ready by October 1996. A team will do fieldwork early next year and produce the final case study.
- El Salvador. The background study author is Dr. Tricia Juhn, an independent consultant. The draft report will be ready by September 1996. A team comprising Jim Vermillion, USAID, Heather McHugh, AED, and a local counterpart will do fieldwork in September-October 1996 and produce a final case study.
- Ethiopia. To be determined.
- Mozambique. To be determined.
- South Africa. Although strictly speaking not a post-war society, a paper will be prepared by an expert who has studied this subject.

CDIE is also commissioning two short papers, which will provide further input on a few critical policy issues which confront USAID. One paper is presently being written by John Prendergast, a humanitarian assistance expert. The draft report will be ready by October 1996.

The following outputs of this evaluation study will be available by the end of September 1997 (with the possible exception of the synthesis report).

- The evaluation report presenting the main findings, conclusions and recommendations.
- Five country case studies.
- Two policy papers.
- Evaluation highlights on country case studies for wider dissemination.

3. Evaluation on Civilian Security Within the Framework of the Rule of Law

Finally, the evaluation will review the experience of the international community in

assisting war-torn societies in restructuring and reforming their internal security regime. During civil wars, the distinction between internal security and defense against external threats, if such a separation existed in the country, is further blurred. The military is increasingly asked to maintain law and order, and acquires considerable political power and authority. The police, too, amass additional power and are able to indulge in acts of terror, illegal detention and even murder with impunity. Therefore, reform of the internal security system remains central to democratic political rehabilitation during transitions.

The international community has shown a marked reluctance to initiate and implement projects in this area for many reasons. Support for internal security is outside the mandate of practically all non-governmental organizations, and most inter-governmental organizations and relief agencies. In fact, many bilateral agencies are prohibited by law from giving assistance in this area. For example, in the aftermath of the Vietnam war, the U.S. Congress passed legislation prohibiting USAID's involvement in police programs. In addition, host governments are also sensitive about foreign involvement in internal security matters. Consequently, only in El Salvador and Haiti has the international community provided significant assistance for comprehensive reforms in the internal security sector.

Three essential premises inform international assistance in the internal security sector. First, a clear distinction should be made between the internal security function focussing on protection of human rights and maintenance of law and order and the external security function concerned with defending the country against threats emanating from outside. In other words, the military has no role in civilian affairs. Second, the military should be under the control of civilian authorities, who should determine its policies, budgets and operations. Finally, a law and order function has to be performed with the framework of essential human rights.

USAID, in cooperation with other departments of the US government and international organizations, has supported two sets of reform activities in El Salvador and Haiti. The first set concerns armed forces and their role in internal security. While the entire armed force was demobilized in Haiti, El Salvador drastically reduced the size of its armed forces. Moreover, many organizational functions such as paramilitary patrol and intelligence, which were earlier performed by the army in El Salvador, were discontinued and brought under the control of the civilian authorities. The second set of activities involved the creation of an almost entirely new national police force. In both countries, it necessitated disbanding existing institutional structures, recruitment and training of police officials and building a new organization culture.

CDIE has not finalized the details of its evaluation in this critical yet neglected area. It plans to develop a draft proposal by June 1997 and undertake fieldwork in early 1998.

4. International Conference

USAID will host a two-day international conference entitled "Rebuilding Failed States: Lessons for the International Community" in September 1997 to discuss and analyze the recent lessons concerning the rehabilitation of post-conflict societies. About 100 representatives from international donor agencies, PVOs and outside experts will be invited to participate.

For further information on any of these activities, please contact Dr. Krishna Kumar, director of this series of evaluations (tel: 703-875-4864, fax: 703-875-4866, internet: kkumar@usaid.gov) or Carolyn Knapp, research associate (tel: 703-875-4873, fax: 703-875-4866, internet: cknapp@usaid.gov).

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