

***Promoting and Integrating Conflict Sensitivity into
Local Development Planning for Sustainable Peacebuilding :
Challenges and Opportunities for NGOs***

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Introduction

The utilization of what so-called “peacebuilding” to describe the dynamics of conflict transformation have accelerated and intensified in the last few decades, since it first appeared in United Nations *Agenda for Peace* in 1992, following George Bush’s aspiration of *new world order* (Heathershaw, 2005). Some studies revealed that peacebuilding as a process of dispute resolution has been expanding from diplomatic desk to be NGOs and civil societies business (Poulligny, 2005). Currently, peacebuilding has become a ‘buzzword’, which might have different meanings for different peoples, contexts and interests. Further, the word peacebuilding is sometimes used inter-changeably with other terms in conflict resolution such as peacemaking, peacekeeping, peace enforcement or even with the term reconciliation. Even amongst NGOs, there are variety perceptions and concepts about peace building; its content and strategic actions that the word implied.

This paper intends to explore the meaning of peacebuilding in NGOs practices and in particular how NGOs works on promoting conflict sensitive development in conflict prone communities can contribute to more sustainable peacebuilding, or conversely contribute to escalating more conflict. In order to reach this aim, this paper will be structured as follows: firstly, it will give working definition about peace building; afterwards, it will provide descriptions of the principles and the methods of conflict sensitive development implementation; and provide critical assessments of potential challenges faced by NGOs in their efforts to integrate conflict sensitive into development programs by synthesizing some case studies. A conclusion will be provided to summarize all the findings and discussions.

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2. Definition and General Principles of Peacebuilding

The United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, defined post conflict peace building as published in the UN Security Council report, *The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa* (1998), as follows :

By post conflict peacebuilding I mean actions undertaken at the end of a conflict to consolidate peace and *prevent a recurrence of armed confrontation*. Experience has shown that the consolidation of peace in the aftermath of conflict *requires more than a purely diplomatic and military action*, and that an integrated peace building effort is needed *to address the various factors that have caused or are threatening a conflict*. Peace building may involve the *creation or strengthening of national institutions, monitoring elections, promoting human rights, providing for reintegration and rehabilitation programs, and creating conditions for resumed development* [italics emphasized].

Some interesting features of peacebuilding can be elaborated from the definitions. First, the goal of a peacebuilding effort is to prohibit conflict to happen twice. This is an important point as Collier (2000) argued that post conflict society is vulnerable to recurrence of conflict, because the following reasons: (1) the country still inherits some structural risk factors which potentially triggering conflict such as high population and high dependency of natural resource rents; these factors may attract rebels organization to apply predatory politics and taking benefit from resources rents and has capacity to mobilize community to apostatize tax exodus by the rich, (2) lack of economic opportunities, which create severe poverty and in some extent frustrating, in particular young generation who can initiate social and political movement against government; here, as Collier and Hoeffeler (2000) analyzed that a one percent natural increase of population may create more tension in the post conflict community than a one percent reduce in the per capita GDP, because competition to resources access and endowments is extremely high; (3) in a society which dominated by certain ethnic group, majority tend to minority after conflict. Some of these three aspects may still unsolved or hidden in the community post conflict.

Second, peacebuilding should be based on better understanding of causes of and conditions exacerbating conflict in order to address it. In this perspective, clear understanding of the root causes of conflict such as poverty, economic inequality,

political repression and other causes may enable peacebuilders to move beyond traditional peacebuilding concept, i.e. moving from merely mediating dispute to end the conflict, to a wider concept of conflict transformation which include 'economic rehabilitation, provision of equal access to basic needs and the abolition of majority dominance over minority' (Schloms, 2007, p.42). As a rule of thumb, in most humanitarian intervention during and post conflict providing basic needs such as food, shelter, health and education for the victims is a crucial (Fisher et al., 2000), while focusing on the ways to address the root causes of the conflict for sustainable peacebuilding. For instance, humanitarian workers (NGOs) who worked to facilitate conflict resolution between Moslems and Christians in Maluku Islands, Indonesia, found that besides providing infrastructures to reconstruct local economic growth post conflict, establishing interfaith dialogues are important to explore differences and common ground, identify common religious values and build collective action to transform the conflict for the betterment of the communities (Lowry and Littlejohn, 2006).

Third, peacebuilding is context based efforts. It means that there is no specific model to be applied and fitted into all situations. Context of conflict in one country is different from conflict in another country. It means that one or two activities identified in the above definition such as creation or strengthening institutions might be required to prevent conflict in the future, while some other activities such as reintegration and rehabilitation may needed post conflict to sustain peace. For example, Afghans during Taliban era has been suffered because of the collapse of institution, increasing individual insecurity and the destruction of livelihoods of people (Scholms, 2007). The same impacts of conflict might similarly felt by victims of conflict in Sri Lanka but the context of war in Afghanistan and Sri Lanka are significantly different. Accordingly, the interventions to address it might similar in terms of providing basic needs such as health and education, but the ways these two services delivered to the victims might be different. For example, the humanitarian institutions (NGOs) may find some difficulties to work directly with women in Afghanistan to deliver health aid, compare to women in Sri Lanka who might be culturally more independent (Orjuela, 2003; Sultan, 2005).

Finally, peacebuilding is a complex action in nature. So far, peacebuilding is about managing people in disputes, thus its complexity is corresponding to complexity of

human systems. It means that what superficially triggers a conflict might not be single factor causation. For example, religious differences amongst community in Maluku Islands might be a source of conflict. For centuries indigenous inhabitants in the islands has been practicing *Pela*, an indigenous custom/tradition to solve conflict between Moslems and Christians from different villages (Lowry and Littlejohn, 2006). But the fact that 1999 conflict in the islands prolonged until 2004 put the effectiveness of such traditional dispute resolution mechanism into questions. However, NGOs should understand the heart of conflict happened in Maluku Islands beyond that (van Klinken, 2001). The religious differences was only a superficial factor, but in reality the conflict in Maluku Islands Indonesia was an accumulation of political, social and economical chaos happened in Indonesia due to Asian Crisis in 1998/1999. At that time, economic crisis and inflation increased the price for basic needs such as rice and kerosene, higher than the increase in wage. Job opportunities limited and mass forcedly resigned of workers exacerbated the economical situation in particular in poor households. As a result, purchasing power of people diminished, and poverty level increased and created other social problems in Indonesia such as separatism movements and conflicts in several islands in Indonesia. In short, a set of factors caused tensions in human systems in Maluku Islands.

3. The Roles of NGOs in Peacebuilding

In general, NGOs are operating in three different and sometimes overlapped sectors, i.e. government sector, business sector and voluntary sector including humanitarian sector, in some extent can be a source of multiple understanding of peacebuilding amongst NGOs and activities they taken (Fowler, 1997). This argument is in line with Fisher (2006) who stated that NGO is “the spaces in between” which can be detached to specific sector. Mostly, international NGOs currently are working within a range of issues. For example, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was established in 1863 with a mission to ‘protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance’, has been working to fight a range of issues such as voting rights for women, international law and disarmament, ending the slave trade, and other activities (www.icrc.org).

Further, after World War II, NGOs has expanded their activities, to move beyond humanitarian areas and involved actively in helping for peacebuilding (Mathews, 2002; Fisher, 2006). For example, a number of NGOs such as Responding to Conflict (RTC) UK, International Allert, Women Waging Peace USA, Mediation and Change Ghana., and many other non government institutions have been involved in peacebuilding (Mathews, 2002). In fact, the level of NGOs engagement in peacebuilding activities formally depend on the NGO's mission, historical background, existing capacities and experiences in the field. Some NGOs might be established as a response to local or global conflicts and others might have firstly worked in development issues but then expanded their activities to integrate conflict rehabilitation and development, for example in Kenya as documented by Leonhardt et al. (2002).

Apart from some criticisms that only few NGOs have peacebuilding mandate as captured by Leonhardt et al. (2002) in Guatemala or doubts about the capacity of NGOs to work in peacebuilding in Afghanistan as raised by Monsipouri (2007), mainly NGOs view their contributions to peacebuilding through different lenses in terms of any acts:

- (1) to promote democracy, good governance and human rights, advocacy and to raise awareness around jurisdictions reform to support peacebuilding; for example in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Belloni, 2001); in Burundi (Mathews, 2002); and in Rwanda, NGO working with women promote good governance post conflict (Powley, 2003).
- (2) to initiate development activities such as economic recovery programs, provision of education and health in order to maintain long term peacebuilding; for example in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Sudan (McCaffery, 2007).
- (3) related to relief and rehabilitation to the internally displaced victims of ethnic clashes, including resettlement; for example Peace Community of San Jose de Apartado in Colombia working with people from both sides to rebuild houses (Mathews, 2002).
- (3) related to conflict management training and problem-solving workshops with different stakeholder including community leaders, women, youth and political decision-makers at various levels; for example the Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM) at the University of Maryland

organized two workshops using problem solving approach to solve civil war in Lebanon (Mathews, 2002).

(4) to develop conflict early warning and monitoring; for example, Humanitarian Early Warning System (Mathews, 2002).

To summarize the findings, how NGOs understand peacebuilding can be traced from their works in the field, which is related to their mission statement and mandate. There are great desires amongst NGOs who are working in peacebuilding issues, to integrate conflict sensitive approach into development programs in order to enhance their contributions to reconstruction of post conflict societies and to achieve sustainable peacebuilding. Their focus has been shifted from warriors to transforming social and economical circumstances of ordinary people in post conflict situation (Scholms, 2007).

4. Conflict Sensitive Development Approach (CSDA)

Integrating conflict sensitive issues into development planning is as part of strategic peacebuilding for NGOs, because it corresponds to the attempts of NGOs to address causes of conflict and build local capacity to change. This section will elaborate this argument through dismantling the features of conflict sensitive development approach and challenges for integrating it into formal local government planning.

4.1. The Notions of CSDA

Conflict sensitive in NGOs context can be defined as skills required by NGO to grasp better understanding of context of conflict where the NGO work with and its interrelation to intervention taken in attempts to minimize the potential harmful impacts of such actions.

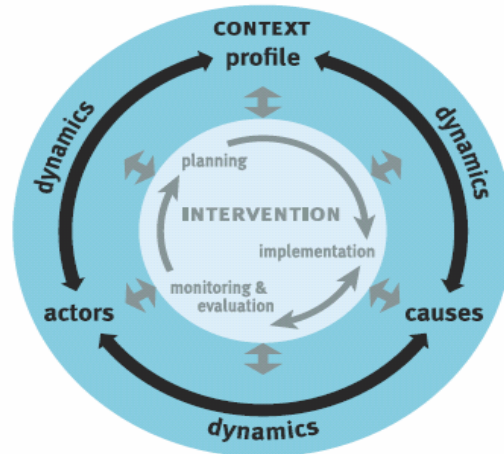


Figure 1. Conflict Sensitive Development Approach
(Adapted from : Conflict Sensitive Development Resource Pack available online at www.internationalalert.org)

Figure 1 showed the ingredients of conflict sensitive development approach (CSDA). The heart of conflict sensitive development approach is laid on how to synergize the results of such understanding of conflict context including causes, actors and their profile, with formal ways of development program planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring. In fact, mostly local government in conflict prone areas in many countries are still applying traditional development planning approach, which omit their vulnerabilities to conflict, due to lack political of will and lack of capacity to understands better the pathology of conflict in order to act upon it. Therefore, the inclusion of CSDA into development planning in a conflict prone area requires a *paradigm shift* from seeing conflict as a barrier to development into conflict as a challenge to local government to do more in providing equal access especially to basic needs to people.

Schloms (2007) views post conflict society as a 'learning environment' for NGOs in which NGOs can learn to shape and analyze their engagement according to the context they are facing and work together in partnership with policy makers in development to combine CSDA into formal program planning cycle. Besides, it also needs willingness and passion from NGOs to work within formal and bureaucratic structure of local government, which might different with the ways or styles of the NGOs worked so far. It

depends on existing capacity of policy makers, structure and access (ibid.). These issues will be touched more in the following sections.

5. The Ways to Integrate CSDA and Challenges

Scholms (2007) argued that NGOs who promote conflict sensitive approach to development need to engage in partnership with policy makers in development arena from the beginning until the end of development project cycle i.e planning (including analysis of conflict and budgeting), implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The following discussion emphasize on NGOs relationship with local government and other policy makers in government because of two reasons i.e. the issue of ownership and sustainability related to conflict sensitive development planning as a blue-print in conflict prone areas.

5.1. Planning

Planning stage in CSDA comprises of two steps i.e. learning and analyzing conflict; and budgeting. The key focuses of NGO involvement with policy makers in government and other actors in conflict sensitive development planning, as highlighted by Fisher et al. (2000), are to raise their sensitiveness of conflict issues and to help them resize and reframe development policies to match it with conflict dimension.

Learning and analysis steps in conflict sensitive planning consist of context analysis and actor analysis. In terms of conflict analysis, mostly conflict happened because of imbalance of power in basic need access, such as food, water, housing and health for ordinary people. Accordingly, conflict analysis also needs to cover possible strategies to address these aspects, in particular immediate material needs of people in post conflict situation (Collier, 2000; Fisher et al., 2000). Besides, in the analysis, considerations also need to put on understanding social economic disparities and gender-related issues. A number of reports on successful peacebuilding development projects have been published emphasize on women roles, such as women school teachers in promoting peacebuilding through schools and development projects. For examples, women and good governance post conflict in Cambodia (McGrew et al., 2004); women initiating dialogues and campaigning for peacebuilding in Colombia (Rojas et al., 2004);

women's contributions in reintegration and reconstruction in El-Salvador (Conaway et al., 2004). While in actors analysis might target influential military, political and religious leaders at top leadership level; respected ethnic and religious leaders, academics and NGOs leaders at middle range leadership; and indigenous community leaders, community developers, local health officers and refugee camp leaders (Lederach, 2001).

The challenges for integrating conflict sensitivity into formal development planning are many, but in theory it relates to 4WH questions i.e. what, who, why, when and how questions. For example, what criteria and indicators should be agreed on, who should be involved, why they should be included, and other related questions. However, this essay will explain only some major challenges faced by NGOs.

The first challenge is related to the capacity of NGO to facilitate participatory planning and learning environment for NGO - local government officers – local people and to work in a rigid political and bureaucratic system. As elaborated in section 3, different knowledge and perceptions of NGOs about the root causes of conflict in some extent determined their roles and activities in certain conflict prone areas. When applied into CSDA learning environment, this knowledge and perception need to be shared with other actors for peacebuilding. The focus is not only on respecting the knowledge and perceptions of other actors in the conflict about causes of conflict, but also on sharing our respective ways of knowing (Chambers, 2005) about the causes of conflict and about how to transform the conflict.

By acknowledging that knowledge of conflict is power, especially for parties who may have interest to sustain conflict, empowerment people in post conflict society need to emphasize on an equal consciousness raising and exchange of interests within a mutual learning process. As a consequence, sharing experiences about conflict may need to open public sphere, i.e dialogue and discourse about “truth-seeking” and “truth-telling” amongst the actors (Mendeloff, 2004). Truth-telling is important as a foundation for sustainable peacebuilding and sustainable development in post conflict society because it ‘assures justice, promotes social and psychological healing, fosters reconciliation, and deters future crimes, all of which help consolidate peace in war-torn societies’ (ibid. p. 356). But persuade people into dialogues for truth-telling, trust building and its implication for establishing local

partnership, which is the toughest part of conflict learning and analysis steps, requires advanced facilitating skill from NGOs.

The second constraint of integrating CSDA in development planning is budget available to conduct planning and to finance the rest of the process (Kraft and Furlong, 2004). On one hand, in a centralized budgeting regulation, budget for local government development planning distributed from central government may not enough to finance the whole process of planning and implementation of the program (ibid). On the other hand, learning and analyzing conflict by using NGOs style of planning conflict sensitive development takes time and requires resources. For example, targeting the actors to be involved in planning needs resources, for training officers to work in the field and providing logistics for them to work may be expensive. Thus, NGO have to considered about alternatives to share budget or co-funding between NGO (and donors) and local government and be aware of the danger of seeing government as main actor.

The third challenge is dealing with fixed time and sequencing in formal government planning period. Timing is important because to some extent development program planning and implementation need to respond quickly to volatile situation in post conflict society. As a matter of fact, local government planning and budgeting has already fixed in time frame, which means that in some circumstances it lack of flexibility in dealing with post conflict situation volatility. Sometimes when planning session begins, it was too late to address certain problems aroused in the society. Even though in local government there is a budget for 'emergency' but in many cases rigid bureaucracy inhibits such emergency response actions. This is a challenge for NGOs who want to promote CSDA into government development planning, that is how to promote flexibility of planning for conflict sensitive development in a situation where all things are fixed. Here, decision-making is shaped by both the politics of the emergency and the politics of the response. Therefore, as Scholms (2007, p.42) suggested, NGOs should 'willing to cooperate with political actors for the sake of a common goal'.

5.2. Implementation

Planning section produces sets of objectives to be achieved through conflict sensitive development programs. It also generates strategies for peacebuilding through development programs. In fact, not all strategies fit all situations. Each context of conflict requires unique strategy. For example, experience from the field (Samset, 2007) showed that peacebuilding through community development programs are highly likely suitable to address conflict which rooted from poverty and marginalization, for instance in northern Uganda and southern Sudan; but it will not be applicable to address conflicts in which the root causes are identity, religion and political power such as in Lebanon and Israel.

Lesson learnt from these experiences is program implementation within conflict sensitive perspective requires continuous monitoring of and learning from the program which being implemented. As already mentioned, it is because the program is implemented within a volatile situation in post conflict society. Even a little mistake may trigger conflict reoccurrence (Collier, 2000). The challenge for NGOs might be again facilitating ‘a continuous learning mentality’ amongst actors involved in conflict sensitive development program. Learning is never stopped because a conflict sensitive program has been produced. Further, a mechanism for feedback and coordination should be established in order to, for instance, make sure who will be in charge to initially respond, how a problem in program implementation should be respond, and other issues related.

5.3. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is important stage because it provides learning fresh learning materials for NGOs from what have been done. Citing a phrase from the wise-man, ‘successes and failures are a good teacher’ means that what we learnt from it may determine our steps forward. In conflict sensitive development program perspective, an activity is assessed toward the achievement of its goals, objectives, methods of program delivery and outcomes. Leak in each step may diminish accountability and credibility of NGOs and in turn jeopardize peacebuilding process.

In the field, in terms of the assessment of suitability of the outcomes and objectives as focus of program evaluation, the main challenge is related to how program

managers and other actors involved in conflict sensitive development program interpret cause and effect link of certain outcomes to its objectives. Crucial question should bear in mind is 'whether the outcome or a certain change in post conflict society is a result of the intervention within conflict sensitive development program or other factors contributed'. Some programs may have a direct impact of certain behavior in post conflict society, while other may affect indirectly. For example, the link between building schools and peacebuilding; in this matter, schools could a safe place for children from both side in conflict to meet and contribute to peacebuilding or school availability could be viewed only as a rights for post conflict society ; thus it depend on how we interpret it. (McCaffery, 2007). In short, the process of sense-making about the impacts of program interventions is important for program managers which requires on the spot check and more learning.

6. Conclusion

Peacebuilding is a buzzword in NGOs practices, which can be understood differently. The way NGOs understood the meaning of peacebuilding depend on the context of conflict and the needs of people they are working with. Such understanding is important not only as foundation for promoting conflict sensitive development to be integrated into formal development program design and implementation, but also may equip NGOs to solve potential challenges to work in partnerships with development policy makers. The complexity of conflict in terms of its root causes and potential interventions requires capacity building to facilitate learning and innovative actions for sustainable peacebuilding.

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