NGOs AND PEACE BUILDING IN COMPLEX POLITICAL EMERGENCIES

Afghanistan Summary Paper

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER and INTRAC
THE CONTRIBUTION OF NGOS TO PEACE BUILDING IN COMPLEX POLITICAL EMERGENCIES

A DFID FUNDED RESEARCH PROJECT
UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER/INTRAC

Afghanistan Summary Paper

1. INTRODUCTION

The dramatic increase in humanitarian assistance by the international community in recent years has largely been in response to an upsurge in internal, ethno-nationalist conflicts. One of the principle characteristics of the humanitarian response has been an enhanced role for NGOs. However, this new role for NGOs has often led to their policies and organisational structures focusing on direct action and short-term planning. There is a growing realisation of the need to refocus NGO activities so that they enhance the capacity of agencies to prevent and mitigate the effects of violent conflict.

The British Government's Department for International Development (DFID), has funded the University of Manchester, in collaboration with the International Training and Research Centre (INTRAC) to conduct a two year research programme, to explore the potential contribution of NGOs to peace building\(^1\) in complex political emergencies (CPEs). The production of in-depth comparative case studies of NGOs in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Liberia, will lead to the development of guidelines to enhance the effectiveness of NGO policy and practice in CPEs.

Afghanistan was chosen as one of the case study countries for several reasons:

- it brings into focus many of the issues facing us now, in the "New World Disorder", including the breakdown of the nation state, ethnicity, nationalism, fundamentalism, displacement, sovereignty and the role of humanitarian agencies.
- the humanitarian aid community, and more specifically, the NGO sector, have accumulated a great deal of experience and expertise over the last seventeen years of the conflict. This experience needs to be more widely disseminated and shared.
- in recent years there has been a plethora of reports, papers and seminars on issues of development, humanitarian aid and armed conflict. However Afghanistan has tended to be underrepresented in this debate compared to, for example the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes and the former Yugoslavia. There is a need for more “fine grained” analysis and case study material from Afghanistan, which contributes to the wider debate on humanitarian aid, NGOs and conflict.

2. RESEARCH PURPOSE AND KEY THEMES

CPEs require new ways of thinking and new tools of analysis (Duffield, 1994; Borton, 1994; Adams and Bradbury, 1995). However in general terms, policy changes and institutional adaptation have been limited. This is partly due to the lack of demonstrable evidence that humanitarian interventions can build or reinforce peace.

\(^1\) We define peace building here as the promotion of institutional and socio-economic measures at the local or national level which address the underlying causes of conflict. It is not an event but refers to processes which occur before, during and after violent conflict. It is also not a specific activity, but a consequence of an activity; it is defined by its outcome or process.
Although anecdotal evidence from Afghanistan and elsewhere suggest that NGOs can help “build peace from below”, there is currently no clear set of evaluative indicators or methodology for assessing NGO performance in the area of conflict management and peace building.

Research Purpose
To provide policy makers and practitioners with the information and tools to assess and enhance the performance of NGOs engaged in relief, development, protection or peace building activities in situations of conflict.

Key research questions
The research will address the following questions:

A. What impact do NGO interventions have on the dynamics of violent conflict?
B. What kinds of NGO interventions can contribute to a peace building process?
C. How can such interventions be supported, strengthened and replicated?

It is recognised that NGOs in Afghanistan (and elsewhere) are a disparate group of organisations. The research will focus on a broad cross section of NGOs including international and local NGOs engaged in emergency relief, community development, protection or conflict resolution activities. The following typology will help in the initial mapping of NGO activities in Afghanistan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Third Party NGOs</th>
<th>Emergency relief/welfare</th>
<th>Community Development</th>
<th>Protection</th>
<th>Conflict resolution/ peace building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. What impact do NGO interventions have on the dynamics of violent conflict?

Our central hypothesis is that NGO interventions can have an impact on the dynamics of conflict, positive or negative, at least at a local level. The following three scenarios provide an analytical framework for exploring how NGOs affect and are affected by conflict;
1. **Fueling conflict**  
Poorly targeted or inappropriate relief aid provided by NGOs has often fuelled conflict. This has been well-documented in Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Liberia and elsewhere.

2. **A holding operation**  
NGO interventions represent a holding operation, in the sense that they can minimise the potentially negative impacts of aid while maintaining civic structures that would otherwise disappear altogether.

3. **Building peace**  
By intervening at critical thresholds in CPEs and providing strategic support to stabilising points within civil society, NGOs may be able to contribute to a peace-building process.

The starting point for our research will be an analysis of processes at the community level. This “inside-out” form of analysis aims to counterbalance the prevalence of international relations type approaches to conflict analysis. There is a need for more detailed contextual analysis and an exploration of the internal dynamics of the Afghan conflict. Also it is frequently claimed that NGO comparative advantage lies at the community level; the research aims to test these claims by focusing on the space demarcated and occupied by NGOs.

There is a growing literature, internationally, which explores the relationship between NGOs, conflict, civil society and peace building. Issues and themes to have emerged in the recent literature include ideas relating to instability and turbulence (Roche, 1994), critical thresholds and stabilising points (El Bushra and Lopez, 1995), local coping mechanisms (de Waal, 1989), capacities and vulnerabilities (Anderson and Woodrow, 1988), constituencies for peace (Anderson, 1996) and social capital (Putnam, 1993). The research aims to build on some of these key themes and explore their applicability and relevance in the Afghan context. Process type approaches to conflict, for example are clearly relevant to the Afghan war, which has constantly mutated and changed during the course of the conflict. Similarly ideas about stabilising points, social capital and peace constituencies provide some useful tools for dissecting and analysing Afghan civil society. They also focus our attention on the kinds of structures and processes that NGOs can support to help ameliorate conflict and build peace. An avenue to be explored is the development of “peace auditing” methodologies to assess the outcomes of NGO activities in terms of peace building impacts.

**B. What kinds of NGO interventions can contribute to a peace building process?**

The development of a conceptual framework to answer the first question will lead into an analysis of the specific types of NGO interventions that can contribute to peace building processes. It is intended to explore the type, range and mix of interventions that might build local capacities for peace.
We have identified three broad modes of intervention employed by NGOs:

**Direct Intervention:** directly operational, delivering services or resources to beneficiaries without dealing with intermediary organisations.

**Capacity Building:** working through local organisations or partners and building their capacity to deliver services to local communities.

**Advocacy:** influencing or lobbying decision makers on the behalf of one’s constituency.

The following matrix is a point of departure for exploring how different modes of intervention and types of activities may have an impact on peace building processes. Examples of the types of activities which might fall into the different boxes are included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fuelling conflict</th>
<th>Direct Intervention</th>
<th>Capacity building</th>
<th>Advocacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• aid used to purchase arms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holding operation</td>
<td>• “smart” distribution of relief so that it does not increase underlying tensions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• support for local organisations such as irrigation councils, church-based groups etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacebuilding</td>
<td>• projects which bring different ethnic groups under the same programmatic umbrella</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• support for civic peace groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• advocacy which supports one of the warring parties to the conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• protection of civilians against human rights abuses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• advocacy for peace, justice and reconciliation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. How can NGO interventions which build peace be supported and replicated?

An exploration of the first two questions will lead to the development of donor guidelines for how best to engage with NGOs, and to integrate NGO interventions into a wider response. Although there is certainly more interest and a stated commitment to peace building amongst the donor community, the challenge is to translate this into coherent policies which provide NGOs with the space and support to develop long-term programmes.
The research aims to address the following policy questions:

- **how to develop policies which are based on an adequate understanding of the causes, dynamics and phases of the conflict?**

It is important for policy to be adapted to the local context and to distinguish between the generalisable features of violent conflict and the idiosyncratic. The research aims to generate findings and policy recommendations based on learnings fed up from the community level.

- **how to identify whether and which NGOs have a comparative advantage in peace building?**

Clearly, donors need to have an understanding of the dynamics of conflict and the type of organisations they are engaging with. The research will provide frameworks to help donors make more informed policy choices about which types of organisations have a comparative advantage, in which contexts and for which activities.

- **how can donors channel funding in such a way that it enhances NGO performance and accountability?**

Donor thinking and institutional arrangements are often based on linear notions of “relief” and “development”. Experiences in Afghanistan exposed the lack of institutional frameworks within which to provide assistance for transitional activities which are neither “relief” or “development” (Goodhand & Chamberlain, 1996). It is important to explore the kinds of policies that will provide sufficient space for NGOs to be innovative, while ensuring performance and accountability.

- **How are NGO interventions related to and integrated within a wider response?**

If they are not integrated within a wider response, then NGOs are often merely a substitute for political action. Policy makers need to locate NGO interventions within a broader multi-track approach (Rupersinghe, 1995). While focusing on NGOs, the research will also locate the findings within a wider debate on the complementarity of different forms of third party intervention.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS

The research will consist of the following three phases:

1. Development of Conceptual Framework
2. Field Research
3. Write-up and Dissemination
The key activities and timing of these phases for Afghanistan is summarised below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>WHO RESPONSIBLE</th>
<th>OUTPUTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PHASE ONE</strong></td>
<td>• literature survey</td>
<td>Jonathan Goodhand/David Hulme</td>
<td>• Literature review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1997 -</td>
<td>• develop conceptual frameworks</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Conceptual framework paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1998</td>
<td>• visit field sites and NGOs</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Selection of project partners and field sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• agency-based surveys</td>
<td>NGO collaborating partners/Jonathan Goodhand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• community surveys</td>
<td>Survey teams</td>
<td>• Organisational assessment framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• co-ordination/administration</td>
<td>Collaborative Enquiry Group/NGO co-ordinating body/Jonathan Goodhand</td>
<td>• NGO case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• dissemination workshop</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Community impacts case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PHASE TWO</strong></td>
<td>• macro survey</td>
<td>Local researcher/Jonathan Goodhand</td>
<td>• Overview paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1998 -</td>
<td>• agency-based surveys</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1998</td>
<td>• community surveys</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• analysis, write up, dissemination</td>
<td>Jonathan Goodhand/David Hulme</td>
<td>• Final report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PHASE THREE</strong></td>
<td>• organisational assessment framework</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Monograph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1998 -</td>
<td>• NGO case studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1999</td>
<td>• community impacts case studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• draft papers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• workshop report</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• practitioners’ source book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **RESEARCH OUTPUTS**

Overall the research aims to generate guidelines for NGO policy and practice at both the national and local levels. More specific outputs are:

- An organisational assessment framework for conflict resolution and peace building which will:
  - provide information on the extent to which different types of NGOs can contribute to conflict prevention, management and resolution.
identify in which areas different organisations or types of organisation have a comparative advantage.

pinpoint areas in which NGOs need to develop their capacity to have an enhanced impact on conflict resolution and peace building.

Use of the assessment framework in the agency-based surveys, will generate findings and recommendations for policy makers and practitioners on how to support and strengthen NGO capacities to manage and resolve conflict. More specifically the research will generate case studies and learnings on the following issues:

- how NGOs have had either a negative or positive impact on the dynamics of violent conflict
- the extent to which NGO interventions are informed by an analysis and understanding of conflict
- the impact of NGO interventions on local capacities and coping strategies
- an analysis of the specific capacities required by NGOs to support and nurture civic institutions in conflict
- the impact of donor policies on the capacity of NGOs to operate effectively in conflict

5. CONTACT DETAILS

Prof. David Hulme
Institute for Development Policy and Management
University of Manchester
Crawford House
Oxford Road
Manchester M13 9QS
Tel: 0161 275 2808
Fax: 0161 273 8829
Email: David.Hulme@man.ac.uk

Jonathan Goodhand
INTRAC
PO Box 563
Oxford OX2 6RZ
Tel: 01865 201851
Fax: 01865 201852
Email: intrac@gn.apc.org
113134.2114@compuserve.com
6. REFERENCES


Goodhand with Chamberlain (1996) "Dancing with the prince": NGOs’ survival strategies in the Afghan conflict in Development in States of War. A Development in Practice Reader.


INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

The Institute is a multi-disciplinary group within the University of Manchester. Its objective is to promote social and economic development, primarily within lower-income countries, by enhancing the capabilities of individuals and organisations through postgraduate education, professional training, research, consultancy, and advocacy.

The activities of the Institute include:

- Research into major issues of development policy and practice including rural development, human resource development and management, public sector reform, institutional change, economic policies, gender relations, poverty-alleviation and the environment.

- The provision of formal award courses at the University of Manchester leading to the award of Diplomas, Masters degrees and PhDs.

- The provision of shorter professional development courses and study seminars in aspects of development policy and management, based in Manchester or overseas.

- Consultancy, research and training work for international agencies, for national governments and institutions, for NGOs and other organisations.

Enquiries about the facilities of the Institute are warmly welcomed, and should be made by direct enquiry to the Administrator, IDPM.

Institute for Development Policy and Management
University of Manchester
Crawford House, Precinct Centre
Oxford Road, MANCHESTER M13 9GH UK
TEL: +44-161 275 2800/2804 FAX: +44-161 273 8829
Email: IDPM@MAN.AC.UK
Web: http://www.man.ac.uk/idpm/