



**Workshop on Local Government in Post-Conflict Situations:
Challenges for Improving Local Decision Making and
Service Delivery Capacities**

**ANNEX 21: Local Government in Post-Conflict Countries:
Lebanon Case Study**

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Note on Methodology

This study combined a review of selected internal UNDP documents, Internet-based research, field-based data gathering, as well as interviews and consultations with stakeholders. This study was not intended to measure or provide empirical explanations for the relative efficiency of local government functioning in post conflict societies. Nor was it developed to make statistically significant conclusions about UNDP's contribution to post-conflict recovery efforts. Rather it was developed to examine the practical questions set out in the introduction below.

BACKGROUND

Local Government is one of the key institutions for the delivery of services to local communities and for the nurturing of democratic practices around the world. However, local government in many developing and transitional countries tend to be ill equipped and financially not well prepared to perform all the functions and responsibilities assigned to them.

Armed conflicts or natural disasters are two central elements affecting the capacities of local government as providers of services and as schools of civic behaviour. The recent cases of Iraq, Lebanon, Somalia and Sudan have shown that capacities of local government capacities can be seriously affected by crisis created by either armed conflict or natural disasters.

The recovery of cities and areas affected by armed conflict or natural disasters is significantly hampered by the low capacities of local government. The delivery of services to local populations in these areas tends to represent one of the major challenges for the delivery of aid from national governments or international development agencies. Often the lack of capacities of local government is used as a justification for the long-term deployment of national or international NGOs for the delivery of basic services and the organization of reconstruction and recovery initiatives. This is done in most cases without simultaneous and appropriate actions aimed at the recovery and strengthening of capacities of local government. This affects long-term sustainability in the provision of services and undermines legitimacy of local government and local authorities vis a vis NGOs. Also, other experiences from the world have also indicated the local governance structures have played an important role in post-conflict recovery, peace building and reconciliation.

In order to improve assistance to countries in post-conflict countries it seems necessary to understand better what are the common challenges that local government in this situation faces for the performance of its two basic functions – delivery of services and local decision-making, as well as its role in community peace building and reconciliation.

It is also relevant to analyze recent experiences in building-up capacities of local government in post-conflict situation and to distil lessons. A systematization of such knowledge and experience will improve capacities for the provision of effective assistance to strengthen capacities of local government in post-conflict countries by UNDP and UN Country Teams.

The UNDP Democratic Governance Group (DGG) in the Bureau for Development Policy (BDP) is conducting a review of existing knowledge and experiences in the subject of local government in post- crisis/conflict situations at the global level. It will also be replicated at the Arab States regional level in order to draw comparative experiences from countries in the Arab States. The emphasis on the case of Lebanon comes as a result of the experience of the country in the post 2006 July war.

The research papers attempts to identify, systematize and disseminate relevant lessons for local government in post-conflict, using the Lebanon post-2006 war experience as a case study. It looks at the experience of municipalities in the country in responding to post-war needs, especially in (a) recovery service delivery, (b) local planning and decisions making, and (c) community reconciliation and peace building. The paper also identifies areas for further research and recommendations for to

increase capacities to support local government in post-conflict situations. Finally, the study collects references of online resources on local government in post-conflict countries that will allow the preparation of a specialized webpage.

Development theory and practice has generally advocated using *non-state* providers for the delivery of basic services in countries that have suffered from conflict and have weak state capacity or ruined infrastructure. This study, however, explores a case study that supports the growing consensus that municipal service delivery has a role to play in building the capacity and legitimacy of local government structures. As such, this paper centers on the following question: “How have local government structures in Lebanon served as development partners during post-conflict recovery, rehabilitation, and reconciliation?” With a focus on Lebanon in particular, the report analyzes what is actually happening on the ground and reviews what has been written – or what hasn’t been written - about LOCAL GOVERNANCE in POST-CONFLICT in the academic literature.

Each of the following questions will be considered in turn:

SECTION I. How has LOCAL GOVERNANCE served as a channel for POST-CONFLICT relief and development assistance in Lebanon – and in the Arab region?

SECTION II. How has international assistance helped to build capacity for LOCAL GOVERNANCE service delivery as well as local planning and decision making in Lebanon?

SECTION III. What challenges have been faced by UNDP in Lebanon and what lessons can be learned for capacity development of LOCAL GOVERNANCE in POST-CONFLICT?

SECTION IV. How can UNDP best contribute to sustainable post-conflict recovery and reconciliation through support for local government in Lebanon? What specific policy recommendations can be offered for future work in this area more broadly?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Local government is a key institution for the delivery of services to local communities and for the nurturing of democratic practices around the world. In “post-conflict” countries in the Arab region, local government has served to facilitate early recovery assistance to war-affected communities. Yet this has not been analyzed comprehensively or addressed explicitly in the academic literature.

The July 2006 war in Lebanon provides a case study on how development agencies worked with local government to recover service delivery and to strengthen local planning and decision making processes. It illustrates how international actors responded to a post-conflict situation while building the capacity of local government at the same time. Evidence from Lebanon suggests that supporting local government directly can contribute to the long term sustainability of post-conflict recovery efforts.

There are several concrete ways that local government structures have served as channels for post-conflict relief and development assistance in Lebanon. These include rubble removal, rehabilitation of key municipal infrastructure, assessment of post-war damage, and rehabilitation of livelihoods. During the early recovery process, local government structures in Lebanon engaged in deliberative problem-solving, planning, and decision making. Operational procedures, including contracts, work plans, and timetables, systematized the involvement of local government in relief efforts. But post-conflict recovery in Lebanon was more than just a technocratic exercise in reconstructing shattered infrastructure. Local governments also served as channels to revive economic activity and to encourage inter-communal peace building. Despite pre-existing administrative and institutional weaknesses, local government has played an important part in Lebanon’s recent post-conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction, and recovery.

Background

The Arab region has been riddled with crisis after crisis in recent years – from Iraq to Somalia to Sudan to Lebanon. These four countries have arguably witnessed more armed conflict during this time than the majority of the world's countries combined. Indeed there is extensive literature on conflict in each of these countries as well as “post-conflict” reconstruction efforts by the international community. In each of these countries, the United Nations itself has undertaken a wide range of relief efforts, conflict-management activities, and development interventions and has also generated volumes of reports, surveys, and crisis-analysis in the process. Meanwhile, scholarly research on the Arab region in this field has gravitated towards LG and decentralization, LG and service delivery, and LG and development in general. But there appears to be little emphasis in the academic literature on the comparative role of LG in “post-conflict” Arab countries – let alone on individual Arab countries themselves. This is particularly true in the recent case of Lebanon since the July 2006 war. The field research for this study attempts to help fill gaps in the literature by focusing on Lebanon as a case study.

The July 2006 war inflicted sudden and severe destruction in Lebanon - claiming over eleven-hundred lives, injuring thousands, and displacing hundreds of thousands. At the same time, military attacks wrought extensive damage on Lebanon's civilian infrastructure including bridges, roads, power plants, apartment buildings, houses, and public municipal buildings. Three targeted areas: the South, the Southern Suburbs of Beirut (SSB), and the Bekaa bore the brunt of the war. An untold number of lives and livelihoods were ravaged in local communities during this short period of time.

Despite this, Lebanon's recovery from the July war provides an interesting case study in post-conflict use of local governance for several reasons. Among others, these include the distinct duration and intensity of the conflict. Today the recovery phase is still not over, but yet the formal start and finish dates of the armed conflict can be neatly contained between July 12 and August 14, 2006. This allows for a clear demarcation as to when the “post-conflict/early recovery” period actually began. In addition, the intense devastation caused by the war meant that Lebanese IDPs faced an extreme lack of basic services upon returning to their villages. On the day that the cessation of hostilities took effect, returning IDPs were met with a sudden and urgent need for shelter, water, food, power, etc. Amid the rubble, there was also a glaring need for a functional, coordinating authority. The central government did not assume this challenge on a local level. Indeed, interviews conducted for this study indicate that local municipal councils emerged prominently and mobilized rapidly as the natural entity to assume this role throughout Lebanon's most war-affected areas.

Municipalities are the only decentralized structure in the country. Lebanon is characterized by centralization, with no decentralization legal framework- rather de-concentration of some administrative functions. In addition to weak capacities, municipalities lack financial resources and receive minimal and unpredictable funding from the central government. Yet, they managed to provide a skeletal backbone for basic service delivery and local representation in their respective communities. Their activities were usually restricted to minor infrastructure maintenance for basic services, also delivered by relevant line ministries of the central government. Municipal councilors interviewed for this report acknowledged the practical limitations of their abilities due primarily to their weak capacities, limited revenue base and related financial constraints. They lamented the gap between the broad scope of their legal purview and the reality of their narrow ability to supply their communities with much more than simple community infrastructure, including road lighting, building permits, and pot-hole repairs. After the July 2006 war, the dire post-conflict circumstances intensified popular demands for municipal representation, crisis response, and basic welfare provision. Significantly, municipal capacity was bolstered at that time with an influx of external humanitarian

assistance –largely from multilateral and bilateral donors working with relief and development agencies in Lebanon. The donor community at many times worked through UNDP to engage with LG in the PC environment in Lebanon.

The literature reviewed for this study suggests that one key issue for LG in PC contexts is the question of whether to reform or rebuild local government structures altogether. In Lebanon, however, this question did not apply on a practical level because the answer was so clear cut. Rehabilitation and support through pre-existing LG was the only real consideration for both external and internal actors. Unlike Iraq, occupation forces did not embark in Lebanon on a full scale “post-conflict” nation-building exercise. Rather, Lebanon’s local governance structures remained largely in-tact *despite* the war.

During the conflict, municipal council members, for example, were among those residents who sometimes did not leave their villages despite ongoing military attacks, often out of a sense of administrative duty to the community.

Municipal heads also served as emergency point of contact for village communications, and they often facilitated logistics and transport for residents back to villages post-conflict as well. In the immediate aftermath of the war, municipal councils maintained leadership roles often launching into action and serving as community hubs for local recovery efforts. Many municipal council members organized into working groups and task forces with sectoral coordination responsibilities. These local actors were clearly responsive to the needs of their communities in crisis.

UNDP provided and channeled considerable support to local communities through municipalities after the cessation of hostilities. This is in line with international literature that suggests that the role of external actors is inherently limited and that locally owned, endogenous interventions are preferable. Arguably, the most successful PC humanitarian relief efforts are those able to build on pre-existing relationships with local communities and governance structures. This was certainly the case with UNDP which had been working on municipal development initiatives in the South of Lebanon for the previous six years since the end of the Israeli occupation in 2000. During this time, UNDP was the main UN agency, other than UNIFIL, operating in the South. UNDP provided support and training to approximately municipalities on designing projects, writing proposals, convening meetings, preparing budgets, and conducting consultative processes in villages. During the 2000-2006 period, UNDP’s locally-based field staff also provided support to youth groups, former detainees, mine action assistance, and community cooperatives. Indeed, UNDP provided the bulk of the external development aid that these villages received between July 2000 and July 2006. As a result, UNDP already enjoyed a considerable wellspring of support in South Lebanon by the time that the July 2006 war erupted. As such, UNDP appears to have built solid groundwork for PC early recovery efforts.

Immediately after the cessation of hostilities, UNDP was able to contribute to early recovery efforts in PC Lebanon with seed funding for rubble removal. This infusion of capital helped UNDP to reinforce its strong reputation as a reliable, responsive, and trustworthy development partner. Meanwhile, the overall objective of UNDP’s strategy for early recovery in post-conflict Lebanon was to “reduce conflict through an inclusive and sustainable recovery, reform, and development process...[with]...a seamless transition from early recovery into sustainable recovery and development, working both at the policy and operational level.” In this process, UNDP identified local government agencies as target partners for facilitating the local recovery process. Indeed, UNDP worked extensively - and almost exclusively - with local municipalities to implement its early recovery plan in the hardest hit areas of the country. UNDP used municipalities as direct implementing partners during the early recovery phase in order to serve its intended beneficiaries, namely the people living in conflict-affected areas. Based on interviews conducted for this survey, this seems to have provided a systematic, efficient,

and comprehensive approach for UNDP's crisis relief and development efforts after the war.

The case of Lebanon presents unique contextual challenges for post-conflict LG analysis. Some of these challenges are influenced by Lebanon's consociational model of government; the country's electoral law and associated constraints on local representation; strained political/economic conditions in the country; regional differences between different regions; and the legacy of the eighteen-year Israeli occupation, as well as the fifteen-year Lebanese civil war. Also included among the challenges to any analysis of LG in PC Lebanon is the prevalence of the resistance movement, Hizbollah, and its development NGOs, that operate throughout the South, Southern Suburbs of Beirut, and Bekaa, with popular grassroots support- which have taken an active role in Lebanon's post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation.

The specific nature of these challenges to the role of LG in PC is beyond the scope of this paper. Meanwhile, the role of LG in PC recovery is certainly complex and inter related with a multitude of factors. In any PC environment, LG cannot be examined independent from general political and socio-economic dynamics on both micro and macro levels. Lessons learned and challenges involved in support for LG in PC are directly connected to challenges faced on the whole in the country in the post-war period. The point here is that challenges to support for LG in PC should not be examined in isolation, but must be considered in context.

An examination of LG in PC Lebanon requires at least a cursory review of the country's administrative structure. Lebanon has four administrative levels: the central level, the regional level (*muhafazat*), the sub-regional level (*qada*), and the local level of municipalities. Below the central level, only municipalities are considered to be legally autonomous by law. Yet, they are still subject to financial oversight by the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities. Today there are over 800 municipal authorities in Lebanon representing an average of roughly 5,000 constituents each. Municipal authorities are comprised of the municipal head (or mayor) and the municipal council which is a decision making body with 9-21 members depending on the population of the municipality. The municipal elections of 1998 (followed by those of 2001 and 2004) were the first held in 35 years, and they offered the prospect of improved local governance in Lebanon. Yet their potential contribution to effective municipal management has been compromised by excessive control and interference from the central government, shortages in local and financial resources, weak administrative capacities, lack of transparency, and the absence of a well established database in the majority of municipalities. Nonetheless, municipalities played a key role in Lebanon in the aftermath of the July war.

SECTION I

How has LG been used as a channel for PC relief and development assistance in the Arab region – and particularly in Lebanon – if at all?

In Lebanon, LG has served as a channel for PC relief and development assistance in several concrete ways including rubble removal, rehabilitation of key municipal infrastructure, assessment of post-war damage, and rehabilitation of livelihoods.

Rubble removal

The removal of rubble from secondary roads in heavily bombarded areas was vital to facilitate the return of the displaced and to recover basic services. The rubble blocked roadways and disrupted the dissemination of power, water, food, etc. to returnees and residents. According to those interviewed for this report, UNDP drafted and executed over 100 contracts with municipalities for rubble removal in a period of two days. These contracts, ranging between \$2,000 and \$25,000 each based on proportional needs as established by UNDP's preliminary post-war damage assessment, effectively authorized municipalities to hire contractors or rent machines to clear rubble from their villages. Municipalities began the clearance process without delay.

Rubble removal was a key initial intervention. Many war-affected communities were essentially paralyzed by the sheer volume of rubble, and so clearance was a precondition for all subsequent early recovery support. Municipal councilors interviewed for this report spoke of the invaluable impact of UNDP's contribution in this regard. As indicated, rubble removal allowed for the recovery of service delivery once secondary roads had been cleared within villages and neighborhoods.

Infrastructure repairs and reconstruction

After the initial phase of rubble removal, municipalities continued to focus on the recovery of basic services through community infrastructure repairs and rehabilitation. They began to restore damages to secondary water networks, to sewage systems, to open drainage conduits, to street lamps and to resume solid waste removal. Several non-traditional donors worked through UNDP to provide PC assistance to local municipalities for this reconstruction work. Thus, UNDP became a gateway for multilateral donor PC support to LG, and UNDP worked with municipalities in identifying rehabilitation priorities, submitting work plans, contracting repair work, renting as well as purchasing machinery. To date, UNDP has helped to cover costs for recovery projects in over 200 war-affected municipalities.

At the same time, international NGOs also participated in direct support for municipalities during recovery and rehabilitation through supplying equipment for community services. These interventions successfully facilitated the municipality's recovery of service delivery in the water, energy and environmental sectors – particularly during the interim period while the central government was not able to provide water or electricity due to damaged distribution channels. This type of direct support to municipalities allowed it to assume responsibility for the delivery of basic community services, such as water and electricity as well as the removal of solid-waste in the community. On a practical level, then, municipalities received critical outside assistance that enabled them to perform their municipal functions and to provide their communities with a minimum of basic services.

More research is needed to guide development policy making in the field concerning recovery of LG service delivery in PC. Several baseline questions must be asked in this regard. What basic services are at issue in different PC contexts? What services are to be recovered? What services did LG structures deliver before the conflict?

After the conflict? How did this vary and how did this impact the prospect of inter-communal tension in PC? If at all?

Restoration of Municipal Council Buildings

Evidence from Lebanon suggests that local governments may need direct support for their physical premises in PC. One example of this was UNDP's support for the restoration of municipal buildings and offices. Without a physical base for operations, municipalities could not effectively function or respond to the needs of their communities. In PC Lebanon several municipal buildings were partially or totally destroyed. According to mayors, restoration of municipal buildings was critical to the functioning of municipalities – especially in the face of so much surrounding destruction. Following the heavy bombardment which had destroyed 232 buildings and damaged 5000 housing units as well as 1500 commercial structures in one municipality alone, mayors indicated that the rehabilitation of municipal buildings had a positive impact on people. Operationally, the buildings served as an official place for residents to register their problems, concerns, and losses in the uncertain aftermath of the war, especially where municipalities were flooded with requests for assistance and/or reimbursement for damages. At a time when Lebanon's national government provided war ravaged municipalities with negligible financial support, local municipal offices served as a public locale for residents to voice their concerns about basic needs. Mayors indicated that the swift, organized, direct, immediate, and comprehensive support provided by UNDP contributed positively to municipalities, especially in comparison with other donors and agencies. They voiced concerns regarding the multiplicity of donors and international NGOs that visited villages but either did not respond with concrete initiatives, or did not want to implement projects responsive to felt needs.

Restoration of Livelihoods

Transitioning from the quick impact phase, UNDP's PC work with municipalities in Lebanon has also extended to the restoration of livelihoods, varying from reconstruction of temporary marketplaces to help regenerate the economic vitality of the community, to purchasing productive machines or replenishment of tools. This type of tailored support to LG in PC takes into account local context and potential for future development.

SECTION II

How has international assistance helped to build capacity for LG service delivery as well as local planning and decision making in Lebanon?

UNDP's early recovery assistance in Lebanon was meant to involve municipalities in local planning and decision making. The municipal councils as entities had already been identified as UNDP's target implementing partners. UNDP did not conduct a competitive selection process to choose these partners by soliciting bids or posting TORs. Rather, in the midst of the crisis, UNDP waived its standard competitive selection criteria for implementing partners, and it focused on one category of grantees – municipalities. In the case of Lebanon, this was consistent with UNDP's aim to strengthen local governance capacity for the delivery of public services during the post-conflict period.

Yet this approach raises several concerns. Did municipalities have the opportunity to build their capacity in the process? Were they able to drive local planning and decision making, and were they granted enough leeway and flexibility to determine their own priorities? Were municipalities allowed to chart their own course for project implementation? If so, then how participatory was the process? Did municipalities simply serve as rapid-fire conduits for donor funding? Did they have to spend earmarked grant money so quickly and so narrowly that they didn't even strengthen their own planning, decision-making, and administrative capacity in the process? These questions are addressed below, but they require closer analysis based on further research.

One of the main challenges in the process was for UNDP to balance the urgent PC response with a participatory approach to sustainable solutions. However, local municipalities appear to have engaged in local planning and decision making successfully with donor assistance. From the outset of early recovery, municipalities were actively involved in the rehabilitation of their communities. Meanwhile, UNDP's initial steps, including consultations with municipal heads about priorities and damage assessments, were followed by more formal and systematic planning processes. Contracts, work plans, timetables, and payment schedules all required municipalities to make decisions in a methodical way. All of this process on an operational level was a significant exercise in capacity building. Municipalities were involved in local planning and decision making in various ways. Minutes of municipal council meetings, for example, had to be recorded during deliberations on UNDP grants. Municipalities were also required to make formal, written acceptance of UNDP grants with the signed approval of all council members. The mayor of each municipality had to obtain the approval of the council when making grant decisions, and UNDP stipulations also required municipalities to designate one council member with responsibility for day to day follow-up on grant implementation. The council was then expected to submit tracking sheets, original receipts, and reports to UNDP regularly.

In parallel, UNDP field officers prioritized needs with local stakeholders. This was then concretized by the formulation of a work plan, reviewed, and certified at the UNDP office. Work plans were executed for each community in order to facilitate local planning, and UNDP engineers and field officers supported municipalities with technical implementation and engineering assistance, as well as for monitoring purposes. UNDP's reimbursement schedule also involved municipalities in the deliberative planning process, where UNDP made payments to municipalities in two

or three installments. It is still early to see whether this process increased the efficiency of municipalities due to this sort of planning and monitoring. But municipal councils certainly engaged in deliberative problem-solving and decision making processes as a result.

Throughout their post-conflict interactions with UNDP, municipal councils were under strict scrutiny and accountability. Naturally, municipalities had to plan, prioritize, and make decisions about relief assistance in order to fulfill their obligations during the reconstruction process. Presumably they were also able to play a more constructive role in planning for recovery and rehabilitation in their communities as a result.

Further research, and time, is needed to examine the impact of UNDP interventions on building capacity for LG planning and decision making. Was there any measurable difference in the administrative effectiveness and efficiency of municipalities - pre vs. post-conflict? Based on experience in Lebanon, how can international assistance best help recover local capacities for local planning and decision making in post conflict countries? What municipal practices during PC are institutionalized by LG? Why?

SECTION III

What challenges have been faced by UNDP in Lebanon and what lessons can be learned for capacity development of LG in PC?

Speed vs. Participation

As noted earlier, one of UNDP's primary challenges while working in a PC environment is how to respond urgently to crisis without compromising the participatory approach of its interventions. Providing humanitarian assistance post crisis requires immediate action without protracted deliberation. Involving local communities in prioritizing, planning, and implementing relief efforts is not always realistic during emergency situations.

In the case of Lebanon post July war, this was true during the PC early recovery phase. As indicated previously, rubble from the bombings paralyzed communities blocking transport and service delivery. UNDP immediately supported municipalities in rubble clearance. It is important to note that in the process of providing urgent support, UNDP did not neglect a participatory approach. As noted, UNDP field staff contacted mayors shortly after the war in order to conduct preliminary damage assessments and consulted with them to identify urgent priorities. Initially UNDP earmarked cash grants to municipalities for rubble clearance only, but UNDP gave municipalities increasingly more flexibility in determining their priorities later on in the relief process. With time, municipal councils were provided more room to deliberate, discuss, and select their own preferences in terms of programs and spending priorities.

Capacity development of LG in PC requires balance between quick response time and the participation of implementing partners and beneficiaries. One of the primary lessons learned from UNDP's balancing act between speed and participation in Lebanon after the July war is that the two are not mutually exclusive. As such, support to LG in PC must be expedient, but LG must be given sufficient flexibility to determine and respond to local priorities.

Sustainability of support for LG in PC

PC support for LG must aim towards sustainability. In PC Lebanon, as in other countries, UNDP faces the challenge of making durable contributions to the recovery of war-affected communities. The sustainability of support for LG structures, of course, ultimately requires ongoing and longer term investment. In Lebanon, this might eventually be possible through increased financial backing for municipalities from the central government or through further strengthening of municipalities themselves.

UNDP encounters the challenge of how to support inherently weak governance structures with limited self-sufficiency and limited financial means. Without fortifying the foundation of those structures, UNDP's PC contributions themselves can only be short-lived. Even worse, UNDP runs the risk of inflating local government structures temporarily only for them to deflate when PC donor assistance subsides. One common theme throughout the literature reviewed for this study is that local government structures are often limited because they do not have adequate financial means or administrative capacity to support their operations. How, then, can UNDP support LG in PC to create a more sustainable basis for recovery?

There are several recommendations that can be made to this effect. UNDP should not push for bold reform of intergovernmental fiscal relationships. Rather UNDP should influence and encourage the central government in providing sufficient and

predictable financial support for local governments – both during and after PC. In the case of Lebanon, for example, the central government should be expected to meet its legal obligations to provide municipalities with stipulated funding from the Independent Municipal Fund (IMF). UNDP should encourage the central government to allocate IMF funds to municipalities accurately and regularly throughout the year. Currently, the central government is distributing funds to municipalities from the 2005 fiscal year, and some municipalities have reported receiving no funds whatsoever from the central government since the July 2006 War. This type of situation breeds tension and resentment for the central government and can be a potential cause of conflict. Regardless of political affiliation, all local officials interviewed for this study expressed strong interest in receiving backing from the central government during crisis recovery.

Likewise, UNDP should encourage the central government to devise a needs based formula for distributing resources to LG on an emergency basis. One way to provide LG with assistance for conflict-incurred expenses would be for the state to provide LG with direct, partial reimbursement for local reconstruction expenses and recovery of service delivery. As discussed above, this should be part of a comprehensive, yet gradual, strategy to stabilize municipal finances. If UNDP does not advocate for incremental LG support, then fragile central/local relations will only deteriorate.

Similarly, UNDP should be aware of tools and resources already developed to support LG administrative capacity. These tools need not be PC specific. For example, in the case of Lebanon, various training materials, guidebooks, and electronic management systems have been created to strengthen municipalities. UNDP should facilitate the availability of such materials and programs. In Lebanon, the Center for Legislative Development (CLD), has created tools to help municipalities increase revenues, manage expenditures, improve productivity and increase transparency of financial transactions. These administrative management tools include software applications, e-municipality platforms, and municipal guidebooks, and they should be used to strengthen LG in PC. UNDP could facilitate the distribution of these resources to Lebanese municipalities through implementation programs in war-affected areas that have not yet received CLD training or support via this USAID funded program. Meanwhile, municipal resource centers might be created to strengthen such initiatives such as archiving and record keeping.

The question of sustainability was also raised by several of the mayors interviewed for this report. Most recounted successful capacity building experiences with UNDP, but some suggested that their experiences could have been better. One of their concerns centered on the issue of renting versus purchasing machinery and equipment. At least one municipal head surveyed for this report suggested that municipalities should have had the flexibility of purchasing rather than renting equipment for rubble removal. In his opinion, leasing machinery may have been the fastest solution in the short term, but yet it decreased overall efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the long run. Perhaps purchasing equipment would not have been a viable option at the time, but it does raise interesting challenges to the sustainability of PC relief assistance.

One of the primary lessons learned during this study is that capacity development of LG requires more than short-term cash infusions for urgent relief efforts. Donors are advised to help build longer-term institutional support for LG that will lead to self-directed sustainable development.

LG as Implementing Partners in PC

In the chaos of PC, it is important to manage the expectations of potential implementing partners and beneficiaries. This can be done through anticipating the

limitations of working with LG as implementing partners. In other words, the choice of LG as implementing partners can be limiting. UNDP focused the bulk of its early recovery support on municipalities in PC Lebanon. Perhaps this came at the expense of support for other local governance actors or at the expense of support for social programs. As one NGO representative suggested:

Municipalities are good with infrastructure and reconstruction. But in terms of the social rehabilitation of the community, NGOs are better at building collective capacities, providing psychological support, and encouraging psychosocial awareness. In general, NGOs are more flexible than government structures, and NGOs certainly are more creative in terms of social development. Of course, municipalities are a good convening forum, and development activities should be coordinated through them. Municipalities should be included - especially in emergency, but they are not sufficient. There is an obvious risk in putting too much investment into municipalities. In the end - what do municipalities really know about development?

Meanwhile, another NGO representative who worked back and forth between Beirut and Tyre during the immediate aftermath of the July war, observed the efficiency of municipalities on the ground during the early recovery phase. "Municipalities were quite effective and efficient after the war – certainly more so than the central government. During that time, not many agencies or NGOs were able to reach that level of depth. As an idea, it makes sense to support municipalities. Municipalities are here to stay. Even in times of crisis."

Managing Expectations through Better Communication

In addition, improving the management of expectations may be done through effective communication. In the case of Lebanon municipal council members were generally grateful for UNDP's support, but they expressed constructive criticism as well. For example, several mayors noted that UNDP's communication could have been better. Working to support local governments in PC environments requires careful communication and explanation of implementation strategies.

UNDP has successfully coordinated regular meetings with NGOs and other agencies in the South of Lebanon since the July war ended. This has helped to promote communication among agencies, civil society groups, and donors. In other areas coordination mechanisms were not as effective. This could have been attributed to the security situation or to the fact that UNDP was not as well established in other regions as in South Lebanon where UNDP had already generated significant good will before the war.

In any case, managing expectations of other members of the cooperation community could be achieved through better communication as well. UNDP's high profile in the relief and development community means that smaller groups feel sidelined and confused if UNDP does not initiate clear and effective communications about its programs and objectives.

SECTION IV

How can UNDP best contribute to sustainable post-conflict recovery and reconciliation through support for local government in Lebanon? What recommendations can be offered for future work in this area more broadly?

Arguments from the literature suggest the conflict mitigating potential of LG. Yet this study has limited applicability in the Lebanese context. This study could not pretend to tackle issues of community reconciliation in the context of the role of LG in the aftermath of the July 2006 war. The main reason is that the nature of the conflict itself involves different countries (Israel, Lebanon, and indirectly the United States, Syria, and Iran) and at least one non-state actor (Hizbollah). Although the July war certainly invoked pre-existing inter-communal tensions, this was not a conflict between Lebanese communities in those affected areas in South of Lebanon, SSB, or the Bekaa Valley. One could not talk about community reconciliation during the past year in Lebanon, as Lebanon-specific development initiatives would not reconcile the core issues related to the armed conflict with Israel. Likewise, when asked, most mayors interviewed for this study did not report any successful experiences of local government in post conflict in areas of community reconciliation.

Instead, for purposes of this report, it would be more accurate perhaps to refer to preventive peace-building within the areas affected by the war. Peace-building measures would necessarily include strengthening the conditions of intra- and inter-communal coexistence, stability, and integration.

In several villages that were destroyed in the South, residents sheltered in neighboring towns which remained completely intact during the 2006 war. This happened although there were past tensions among communities that harkened back to the period when the South Lebanese Army militia and its Israeli sponsors occupied the region. Seen from this angle, UNDP's involvement in LG support is fostering the foundations of peace-building and future community reconciliation by helping rebuild and empower villages; this could defuse brewing inter-communal resentment and strife originating from destroyed villages facing dire economic conditions after the July war. In this way, neighboring communities might move from a divided past to a shared future.

Meanwhile, the July war came when Lebanon had not yet reconciled the wounds of the civil war. As a result, the lingering strains of sectarianism and political confessionalism were exacerbated by the crisis. While magnanimous initiatives of cross-communal cooperation were displayed during the war in the form of reaching out to waves of displaced people and providing them with relief aid, feelings of victimhood and isolation have befallen the Shiite community which has born the brunt of the destruction.

It is a common view among the Lebanese that government institutions, including municipalities throughout the country, suffer from a historically low level of performance and a perception of chronic ineptitude. Popular dissatisfaction with the role of the government — central and local — typically breaks higher ground in times of crisis when public and relief services are most needed. As a byproduct of its assistance projects to LG in PC areas, UNDP is trumping some of the increasing discontent residents might have had with municipalities over the provision of relief and emergency services. Through PC rehabilitation and reconstruction local governments are able to diminish potential intra-communal conflict, increase their own legitimacy, and reduce reliance on non-state and external actors in some cases.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, providing support for LG in PC environments holds significant potential in the Arab region. As demonstrated in the case of Lebanon, local government can be used to reach beneficiaries comprehensively and systematically – especially where development agencies have already generated good will and trust among local communities as a result of previous work. This potential may be maximized through recovery efforts that build the capacity of local government in the areas of service delivery, local planning and decision making, as well as post-conflict peace building. Development agencies can play a useful role in supporting local government in post-conflict countries. The following lessons learned and corresponding recommendations are offered here in order to chart an agenda for future work in this area more broadly:

1. Lesson Learned:

Crisis and post crisis situations call for rapid and flexible interventions at the community level, but speed and participation are not mutually exclusive. Local governments are prime candidates for working with development agencies as implementing partners during post-crisis recovery.

2. Lesson Learned:

Post-conflict damage/needs assessments serve as a basis and as a reference for subsequent humanitarian assistance and development interventions.

3. Lesson Learned:

The turbulence of post-conflict situations can lead to hasty decisions and support for LG initiatives with only limited functional impact or results. This can come due to a lack of coordination between relief agencies, duplication of services to local communities, or undue focus on high visibility projects.

4. Lesson Learned:

Local government structures sometimes have only narrow purview over community infrastructure and service delivery. LG's willingness to undertake post-crisis recovery efforts may not be matched by requisite capacity, skills, or sustainable resource flows. Further, local government may or may not enjoy popular support among local communities.

5. Lesson Learned:

Local participation in PC rehabilitation requires input from a broad base of community representatives – beyond just representatives of local government.

6. Lesson Learned:

Pre-existing networks and relationships with local communities can be critical to PC recovery – especially for purposes of facilitating communication and humanitarian assistance. Likewise, working with local governments on development projects pre-crisis can foster trust and cultivate understanding during post-crisis.

7. Lesson Learned:

Capacity development of LG requires more than short-term cash infusions for urgent relief efforts.

8. Lesson Learned:

Smaller relief and development groups in the international cooperation community feel sidelined and confused if larger organizations do not initiate clear and effective communications about their programs.

9. Lesson Learned:

Post-conflict recovery can be more than just a technocratic exercise in repairing infrastructure.

10. Lesson Learned:

Support for LG in PC inevitably generates questions regarding the central government's ability to handle post-conflict rehabilitation. If the central government cannot provide predictable and sufficient funding to local governments, then this compounds challenges faced by local communities in PC. It also exacerbates tensions between central and local government structures.

11. Lesson Learned:

Post-conflict support for LG can result in unintended consequences – especially when similar actions are replicated over hundreds of villages and communities.

Recommendation:

Development agencies should respond quickly to crisis and post-crisis situations as they develop. They should meet and consult with local government representatives – preferably in person – as soon as the crisis allows. Support should be expedient, but local governments must be given sufficient flexibility to determine and respond to local priorities. Agencies must also adjust appropriately to the fast pace of post-conflict environments.

Recommendation:

Development agencies ought to conduct comprehensive due diligence to determine post-conflict needs across war-affected regions, communities, and sectors. They should consult and compare with others (including government agencies, local NGOs, etc.) conducting similar and simultaneous PC needs and damage assessments.

Recommendation:

Development agencies should develop and work within a needs-based formula for providing and channeling early recovery assistance to LG in PC. They should coordinate with other aid organizations to prevent duplication and overlap. Random patchworks of neglect and over provision of services should be avoided. Development agencies should determine which services, utilities, or infrastructure projects merit urgent rehabilitation during the early recovery phase. Then they should steer away from high visibility quick fixes that are primarily cosmetic and have limited functional value (e.g. do not repair street lamps unless electricity is in steady supply).

Recommendation:

Before supporting LG in the recovery of service delivery, development agencies should identify as a preliminary matter which functions, services, and utilities are within the purview (both legal and practical) of LG. They should determine the degree to which LG structures represent and work on behalf of local communities. They also must recognize the limitations of LG's technical expertise, and bolster it where possible.

Recommendation:

Development agencies should engage in meaningful participation with LG in PC, but also seek local input by reaching deeper into war-affected communities. They should not simply skim the surface in one geographical area. Agencies ought to work broadly in order to synchronize local development plans at the regional level while aiming for the fullest possible participation of local representatives by working with NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, etc. as well. They should extend their interactions well beyond local government, but they should not compromise rapid crisis response in the process.

Recommendation:

Development agencies should serve as a gateway for humanitarian support in complex emergencies. They should utilize local knowledge, contacts, and familiarity generated and cultivated over years of working with and among local communities.

Recommendation:

Development agencies should provide local implementing partners (i.e. LG) with sufficient tools in order to sustain long term development efforts well after the PC early recovery phase is over. They ought to help build LG capacity to conduct engineering and infrastructure repairs, and provide training for municipalities in social service programs as well. Agencies should build transparency and accountability into financial transactions with LG, and they should develop systems that will ensure the best use of funds, track expenses, and encourage improvements in management administration. Additionally, development agencies should identify and utilize pre-existing resources to help build capacity for LG in PC. They should make use of knowledge and programs that already exist, and they should strengthen the ability of LG to serve as a convening forum in order to generate local priorities and to address brewing community tensions and grievances.

Recommendation:

Development agencies should communicate with stakeholders, beneficiaries, and colleagues in the international cooperation community to ensure mutual understanding and manage expectations. They should also temper overoptimistic expectations in order to avoid disappointment.

Recommendation:

Development agencies need to diversify PC support to various implementing partners and aim for broad impact throughout PC communities. Meanwhile, they should also try to maximize the potential of LG service delivery to diminish social inequity, and they should devise programs that bridge various communities and diminish inter-communal tensions in the process. Agencies must be careful to avoid the creation of new grievances by distributing relief, reconstruction, and development assistance equitably. Support for psychosocial programs and livelihood interventions should be strengthened as well.

Recommendation:

Development agencies must anticipate that direct support for LG in PC will be interpreted as a lack of confidence in the central government's ability to manage reconstruction. They should identify ways to reinforce the central government so that it – in turn – can provide sustainable PC support to LG in the long term.

Recommendation:

Development agencies should address the prospect of negative externalities resulting from PC relief assistance – in particular environmental concerns. They

should, for example, work with implementing partners and beneficiaries to coordinate integrated environmental approaches to PC recovery efforts.

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On-line Resources

Academy for Peace and Development (APD)

The Academy for Peace and Development (APD) is a research institute in Somaliland. The organization convenes different sectors of Somaliland society to identify priorities in the process of rebuilding Somaliland. It also facilitates public dialogue on issues of human rights, democracy and good governance.

www.apd-somaliland.org/

Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)

ANND is an advocacy group that works on strengthening and shaping the role of civil society organizations in the Arab countries. It has three main programs: Development, Democracy, Globalization and Trade. ANND's Program on Development in Lebanon has conducted recent workshops and consultations on CSO Participation in Recovery and Development in Lebanon.

www.annd.org

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – Middle East Center

The Carnegie Middle East center is a public policy think tank and research center based in Beirut. It is concerned with the challenges facing political and economic development and reform in the Arab region. It brings together senior researchers from the region to work on in-depth research relating to critical matters facing the countries and peoples of the region.

www.carnegie-mec.org

Center on Democracy, Development, and Rule of Law, Stanford University, USA

CDDRL seeks to promote innovative and practical research on the design and implementation of policies to foster democracy, to promote balanced and sustainable growth, and to advance the rule of law in countries undergoing dramatic change.

www.cddrl.org

Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution

An academic research center that promotes active collaboration and exchange among academics and practitioners working the fields of human rights and conflict resolution. Promotes an interdisciplinary approach to peacebuilding.

www.fletcher.tufts.edu/chrcr

Center for Legislative Development - Lebanon

The Center for Legislative Development is a USAID funded project providing direct support to municipalities in Lebanon. It has published municipal handbooks and citizen guides, and it has conducted trainings for Lebanese municipalities as well.

www.suny-cld.edu.lb/

Center for Research and Development Somalia

CRD is an independent not-for-profit research center aimed at promoting the social, economic & political rebuilding of Somalia. The Centre utilizes Participatory Research as a means to facilitate processes of dialogue, consensus building, policy development and institutional capacity building at the national and local levels.

www.crdsonalia.org

Crisis States Resource Center (CSRC)

CSRC is an interdisciplinary research centre at the London School of Economics. It seeks to identify the ways in which war and conflict affect the future possibilities for state building, and it distills the lessons learned from past experiences of state reconstruction. CSRC analyzes the impact of key international interventions, and the center also seeks to build academic knowledge, contribute to the development of theory, and inform current and future policy making.

www.crisisstates.com

ELDIS

ELDIS is an online gateway to information about development policy, practice, and research. It offers country and regional profiles as well as extensive resources on conflict, development, and public administration.

www.eldis.org/

The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC)

GSDRC is a resource center that aims to support the knowledge needs of the international development community in relation to governance, conflict and social development. Funded by the UK Department for International Development, the GSDRC has topic guides with background information on various themes including fragile states, conflict, service delivery, governance, and aid effectiveness.

www.gsdrc.org

The Initiative for Inclusive Security

The Initiative for Inclusive Security is a research, policy, and advocacy center funded by Hunt Alternatives and developed to highlight practical models and strategies for the inclusion of women in peace-building efforts worldwide.

www.huntalternatives.org/pages/20_about_the_initiative.cfm

Iraq Studies Institute: The Iraq Studies Institute was established to promote, conduct, and foster research, study and analysis relating to the current political, economic, and social developments in Iraq through direct polling, data collection, and analysis. Activities involve, research, training-education, and dissemination of information.

www.iraqstudies.org/

Iraqi Governance Report (IGR)

The IGR is an on-line publication/newsletter analyzing governance in Iraq, and it is affiliated with the Institute for War and Peace Reporting which aims to promote peace and democracy through free and fair media. It also operates reporting, training, and capacity building programs in several war-affected countries – including Iraq - and receives funding from the International Republican Institute.

http://www.iwpr.net/archive/igr/igr_002.pdf

Lebanese Center for Policy Studies

www.lcps.org.lb

LCPS is an independent, not-for-profit policy research institution based in Beirut. It has undertaken major research projects, published influential studies, and organized conferences and public debates dealing with significant issues of political, social, and economic development in Lebanon and the Arab region.

Lebanon Support

Lebanon Support is an online resource center created for those working on recovery efforts in Lebanon after the July war. It has served as a platform to consolidate various types of data available and to allow various actors to identify gaps, needs, shortages, and any other critical situation faced in the coverage of relief assistance in Lebanon.

www.Lebanon-Support.org

The Mediterranean Development Forum

The Mediterranean Development Forum (MDF) partnership, beginning in 1997, is comprised of Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA) [think tanks](#), the United Nations Development Programme, and the World Bank Institute. The partnership is dedicated to empowering civil society to participate in shaping public policy; making a contribution to the policy debate in key areas of regional interest; improving the extent and quality of research on economic and social policy issues; and creating vibrant networks of development actors in the region. The partnership promotes activities supporting policy dialogue culminating in a Forum held approximately every 2 years: [MDF1](#) in May of 1997; [MDF2](#) in September of 1998; [MDF3](#) in March 2000; and [MDF4](#) in October 2002.

www.worldbank.org/mdf/about.html

Programme on Governance in the Arab Region

POGAR aims to assist government actors, civil society, and the private sector to improve governance processes in the Arab states, always with a view to achieving sustainability. POGAR assists in a governance-augmentation process that is owned and managed by the countries themselves by offering an array of options, rather than blanket prescriptions, and working in partnership with actors in the region to identify needs and solutions.

POGAR's program activities relate to Rule of Law, Participation, and Transparency and Accountability. These activities include rendering policy advice, engaging in institutional capacity building, and testing policy options through pilot projects. Since its inception, POGAR has launched projects to promote dialog about judicial reform; build the capacities of parliaments, particularly in the area of information-management and research capabilities; and educate governance actors about methods for combating corruption.

www.pogar.org

[Puntland Development and Research Centre \(PDRC\)](http://www.pogarc.org)

PDRC is non-governmental development and research center located in Puntland, Somalia.

www.pogarc.org

Rebuild Lebanon

Rebuild Lebanon is an official website of the Lebanese government developed to strengthen human, economic, and infrastructure recovery following the July war. It includes detailed information about post-conflict projects, programs, donations, and financial compensation.

www.rebuildlebanon.gov.lb

Research Triangle Institute (RTI)

Iraq Strengthening Local and Provincial Governance Project (ISLPGP)

RTI's website provides information about this USAID funded project that aims to improve the management and administration of local, municipal, and provincial governments in Iraq. It provides technical assistance and training to local government-elected officials concerning the roles and functions of local government officials and agencies; and to support the establishment of a legal framework for a democratic, representative, and participatory form of decentralized government in Iraq.

<http://www.rti.org/page.cfm?nav=377&objectid=91AD4ED9-F623-4C93-8CCF98BA9F7C82F5>

Sudan Studies Association (SSA)

SSA is a United States based group that promotes scholarly research, knowledge and understanding of Sudan. It holds an annual conference that attracts written submissions from leading scholarly researchers in the field (i.e. May 2008 "Sudan's Wars and Peace Agreements").

www.sudanstudies.org

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