NEVER TOO EARLY TO PLAN

LESSONS LEARNED FOR THE POST-AGREEMENT RECONSTRUCTION OF SYRIA

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FOREWORD

Over the course of the past half-decade, Syria has seen 40 years of development gains unravel. Syria's widely recognized human capital has been forced into displacement inside the country, across the region and beyond as a result of the war, and much of the country's youth has gone years without access to formal education or vocational training. The local economy, labor markets, and systems which provide vital services to Syria`s population have collapsed or been severely damaged. The conflict in Syria not only represents a humanitarian challenge but also a profound development crisis.

The reconstruction of Syria, when the time comes and an agreement which ends the conflict has been reached, will require extensive human, knowledge and financial investments. It will also require robust, lasting and coordinated partnerships to support Syrians' efforts to bring the country back to previous levels of human development. The success of such an enterprise will also depend on all involved learning from previous mistakes and successes in dealing with post-conflict reconstruction. While Syria presents some unique challenges – and while many feel that it is premature to start thinking about reconstruction in Syria– it is never too early to start laying the groundwork for recovery through investments in resilience of human capital that still exists in Syria and the broader region. It is of particular importance that women be fully engaged in planning and implementation of future reconstruction efforts. In front of such historic and human challenges, learning from the past becomes imperative.

This paper presents a number of questions that the international community would need to consider before contemplating the monumental task of post-agreement reconstruction. Research has shown that the "how" of reconstruction – how it is planned, financed, governed, and monitored – is often as important as the "what" (i.e. the programming). It is understood that reconstruction, when the time comes, would inevitably take place alongside continued vital, large-scale humanitarian activities in nearly every part of the country. This will further stretch the capacities of international and Syrian actors in the country and will pose a number of challenges which will need to be carefully navigated.

This report is essential reading for all stakeholders interested in the post-agreement reconstruction challenges that will face the Syrian people.In assessing the experiences or conclusions of previous post-conflict reconstruction efforts, this paper presents a series of lessons and good practices from around the world. It will contribute to and deepen on-going reflection regarding how the reconstruction of Syria could be approached.

We thank the Sub-Regional Response Facility of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States for taking leadership in this arena and gathering relevant lessons from failures and successes in dealing with postwar reconstruction. We also encourage UNDP to deepen this research to ensure that any eventual international support to reconstruction makes the most of existing knowledge and practical experiences from past efforts.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the course of the past half-decade, Syria has seen 35 years of development gains unravel, and the country's reconstruction will pose an immense challenge for the Syrian people and authorities and for the international community. To support ongoing thinking about this looming challenge – and building off of major initiatives such as the National Agenda for the Future of Syria – this review presents a series of lessons learned and good practices from elsewhere in the region and the world. In total, 192 lessons were identified from across more than 70 academic and policy-oriented documents in the course of this deskbased study. These have been synthesized here and are divided among process and programmatic lessons.

PROCESS LESSONS

Research has increasingly shown that the "how" of reconstruction – how it is planned, financed, governed, and monitored – is often as important as the "what" (i.e., the programming).

Planning for Reconstruction: Planning must overcome institutional stovepipes, whether within governments or multilateral organisations, and be grounded in scenario-planning exercises that consider a full range of possibilities (i.e., not only best and worst-case scenarios but also a wide range of permutations). Broad-based strategies regarding reconstruction, the research shows, must be accompanied by more detailed implementation plans for individual areas and sectors and programmes that are comprehensive and clearly prioritised yet also flexible. Furthermore, planning must account for the priorities articulated by affected households and communities and should particularly reflect the interests of women, youth and members of marginalised groups.

Preparing for Reconstruction: On-paper plans must be accompanied by tangible preparations that require substantial time, technical expertise and expense. For instance, plans must be put in place to quickly lift or revise international sanctions to allow the importation of materials for reconstruction and to allow cash to flow back into the affected areas from the diaspora and the global public. On that same point, given that remittances in several post-conflict environments have exceeded 10% of GDP, those planning to play a major role in reconstruction must, in partnership with the private sector, consider how they can devise a system to enable financial transfers – including from the public and diasporas – as early as possible during the reconstruction phase (while also paying heed to concerns regarding support to proscribed groups).

Capacity building among women, men and youth will also be a major priority. This will include support for local and regional NGOs to help them contribute to reconstruction, to facilitate protection programming and to receive funds directly from the international community. Furthermore, it will be integral to build skills among Syrians, including among refugees and those inside of Syria, so that they can rebuild their own homes and obtain employment with large contractors eventually involved in rehabilitating infrastructure. Softer skills, particularly related to conflict resolution, will also be crucial given that any recovery process created the perception of "winners" and "losers" that may contribute to local and larger-scale conflicts and violence.

Financing Reconstruction: The mechanisms chosen to finance post-conflict reconstruction feed into all elements of programming, coordination and accountability. It will be integral to draw upon existing good practices such as the establishment of pooled funding mechanisms, particularly multi-donor trust funds (MDTFs) and the strengthening or establishment of aid coordination units. However, novel approaches may also be required given that many donors may be unwilling to pool their resources or publicly report on the assistance they are providing. In such circumstances it may be useful to ensure that technical standards are generally harmonized to avoid vast differences in road construction, levels of cash assistance, building standards, small business assistance, beneficiary selection (e.g., the inclusion of women and members of

marginalised groups) and so on. Those sorts of inequities may serve to divide the country at a time when greater unity will be required.

Securing Reconstruction: It is crucial to determine how adequate security can be maintained for the reconstruction process. International experience shows that working with private security contractors, non-state armed groups or even state security services can contribute to conflict recurrence or human rights abuses. International experience suggest that there is no alternative, particularly in divided societies with a high likelihood of continued violence, to international forces provided through a multilateral entity (e.g., the UN or a regional organisation).

PROGRAMMATIC LESSONS

Past experiences with post-crisis reconstruction speak to a range of sectoral lessons and good practices. While the full text examines sector-specific lessons and options, the following reflects a selection of key, overarching programmatic lessons that generally apply to all sectors.

- *Fully include women at all steps of programme design and implementation.* Women tend to be relatively neglected during reconstruction processes that often focus on infrastructure, security sector reform and the demobilisation of armed groups. Yet they have a right to benefit fully as men from reconstruction and have a demonstrated tendency to use resources, such as cash assistance, to benefit their entire households. Women are also considered crucial with regards to conflict prevention and resolution and should be at the core of planning, implementation and monitoring.

- *Root decision-making in highly localised analysis of the context, conflict, gender, marginalisation, markets and more.* Such analyses cannot only be conducted annually or at the national level. Instead they must be conducted at the individual district or community level in order to be particularly useful for planners and programme staff. Equally importantly, international and national actors need new means of making these analyses and their implications easily digestible for practitioners with limited time and familiarity with these sorts of analysis.

- *Rely on local markets where possible and responsible.* International actors should rely on local markets and firms wherever possible – and where those markets are not unduly controlled by particular conflict actors or factions – to provide the materials and services they require rather than bringing these in from abroad. Local procurement should be a particular priority, though local businesses should also be considered as partners in cash- and voucher-based approaches to basic service delivery.

- *Minimize subcontracting in order to improve efficiency and strengthen results.* Reconstruction operations have, around the world, suffered from high degrees of subcontracting, with donor funds often being allocated through a cascading array of implementing partners – each of which takes resources – before reaching intended beneficiaries. To address this challenge, funds must be provided to the agency that will actually be directly implementing the programme without going through numerous international actors. Policies must be put in place by donors to require very clear reporting on subcontracting or partnerships and the costs involved in order to strongly discourage this practice.

- *Leverage new technologies.* The sharing economy makes it possible for individuals and businesses to open up their homes and facilities to displaced persons or returnees in need to temporary or transitional shelter. Mobile money allows funds to be transferred at almost no cost, particularly from the diaspora or from refugees to their families back home. Furthermore, low-cost tablet computers can be used to enable immediate access to e-learning for girls and boys even while schools are still being built – and telemedicine can bring added expertise into hospitals and clinics in remote or insecure areas. Taking advantage of these technological innovations will require up-front attention to power supply – including solar power – and internet connectivity across the

country in partnership with relevant authorities and information and communications technology companies.

CONCLUSION

The reconstruction of Syria will be a historically important and complex process, and it is imperative that planning begin as soon as possible rather than once the ink has dried on a hoped-for political settlement. Such a process should not be led by international experts or aim to produce a rigid how-to manual. Instead it should be driven by Syrians, including those displaced by the war, and should be flexible and inclusive. The international community must not repeat mistakes of the past. Programming must be rooted in local priorities, and communities themselves should be trusted to lead local reconstruction fuelled by flexible funding from the diaspora, the global public and the international community. Local organisations should likewise be closely involved in reconstruction – and not merely as sub-contractors for international organisations and NGOs. Instead, they must be prepared to receive funding directly. Wasteful subcontracting with negligible benefits cannot be allowed to persist. Lastly, technology must be used to enable cash transfers, to restore livelihoods, to enliven housing reconstruction and to facilitate health and education – even where these technologies mean that international actors will receive fewer resources for hands-on implementation. As has happened so frequently in past reconstruction processes, financial interests cannot be allowed to subvert reconstruction and marginalise promising ideas. The Syrian people deserve better than "business as usual".

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the past half-decade, Syria has seen 35 years of development gains unravel. Despite being classified as a middle-income country just a few years ago, current indicators place Syria's level of development alongside that of low-income countries such as Somalia. World Vision and Frontier Economics estimated that the conflict has so far cost Syria $275 billion in lost growth opportunities, an amount, which could rise to $1.3 trillion if the conflict continues through 2020. Focusing more on physical damage, the World Bank's Syria Information Research Initiative found that, as of May 2016, six major Syrian cities had experienced $6.0-7.4 billion in damage across their education, energy, health, housing, road, and water and sanitation sectors. A 2016 report from the UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA) estimates total housing and infrastructure damage across the country at $90 billion. Syria's impressive human resources remain but are scattered across the region and beyond as a result of war-induced displacement, and much of the country's youth has gone years without access to formal education or vocational training.

These challenges can be addressed as the reconstruction of Syria begins in the coming years. While Syria presents some unique obstacles – and while many claim that it is premature to start thinking about reconstruction – it is never too early to start looking around the world for good and not-so-good practices in hopes that Syria will someday soon be ripe for recovery. This review does not offer a strategy or plan for the reconstruction of Syria. Rather, it presents a series of lessons learned and good practices related to post-conflict reconstruction and transitions from around the world so that these may be taken up by international and Syrian actors so that they are better equipped once reconstruction becomes feasible.

This review has partly focused on lessons from countries with generally similar contextual features, including large-scale conflicts, heterogeneous societies, and pre-conflict middle-income status; these include locations such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iraq and Lebanon. That said, the author has also included lessons from other locations, including Afghanistan, Angola, Mozambique, Pakistan, the Philippines (Mindanao), Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda and elsewhere, where they appear relevant and well-founded.

In total, 192 lessons were identified from across more than 70 documents and were classified according to sector and theme. Lessons were only included where (a) contained in credible academic or policy research products and (b) based on credible qualitative or quantitative data information, including in-depth case studies, rather than on a particular author's reflections or perceptions. The most prevalent and relevant of these lessons were then consolidated for the purposes of this report. They are broadly divided among "process lessons" (e.g., how we plan for and finance reconstruction) and "programmatic lessons" related to particular sectors and issues.

2. THE RECONSTRUCTION CONTEXT: LIKELY FEATURES

At present it is not necessarily feasible to say what Syria will be like when reconstruction and recovery begin to move forward – or when that might be. However, experts and the available literature do point to a number of likely contextual features beyond the depth of destruction noted above. The following sorts of general hypotheses should, we learn from previous instances of post-conflict reconstruction , be accompanied by regularly-updated scenario-planning exercises that will enable those involved in humanitarian, reconstruction and development work to understand potential future contexts and how they would respond to each.

First, reconstruction will likely proceed in parts of the country even while a comprehensive peace deal involving all conflict parties – of which there are several hundred – remains elusive. That is, reconstruction may take place amidst either a partial political settlement involving only certain factions (e.g., the government and a range of more moderate opposition groups), or recovery may begin – without any political settlement – in certain areas amidst a "political and military stalemate and de facto partition" of the country. Violence will continue on some level, even in relatively stable areas, and conflict will continue to on an even larger scale in other parts of the country (e.g., those controlled by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL). An inclusive government of national unity, as has been seen in other post-conflict contexts, is relatively unlikely to emerge.

Second, reconstruction will take place alongside continued vital, large-scale humanitarian activities in nearly every part of the country. This will further stretch the capacities of international and Syrian actors in the country and will pose a number of challenges which will need to be carefully navigated. For instance, will reconstruction activities with governance or security components create tensions with humanitarian actors who have attempted, where feasible, to develop a neutral, impartial, and independent approach (i.e., one line with the humanitarian principles) in order to gain access and safeguard their operations? Likewise, there is a potential that programme designs will conflict with one another as, to provide one example, certain actors import large quantities of food aid while others attempt to revive local agricultural production. This is not to say that humanitarian assistance will not continue to be vital as a lifeline for hundreds of thousands of people, including women, men, youth and members of marginalised groups.

Third, the reconstruction process will be heavily affected by the informalisation and factionalisation of all elements of society, including governance and the economy. At present, particular factions – or umbrella groups representing several factions – govern particular sections of the country outside of government-controlled area and are affiliated with many of the country's most capable civil society organisations (CSOs). Furthermore, as a 2014 study found, unscrupulous businesses, smugglers, criminal gangs, and members of several armed groups "have emerged to exploit profitable opportunities created by the conflict" and have generated a massive informal economy that much of the population relies on for their basic needs. It will be difficult and dangerous to attempt to dislodge these powerholders in the course of reconstruction, though failing to tackle them could exacerbate corruption and allow these conflict actors to solidify their authority – often along political, sectarian, or ethno-religious lines.

Fourth, reconstruction is likely to involve a wide range of sources of financing, including OECD countries, UN agencies, and international financing institutions (IFIs) alongside Turkey, the Arab Gulf states, Iran, and others. Syria's dynamic diaspora, which has been closely involved in the humanitarian response, is also likely to play a significant role in financing, influencing and implementing reconstruction. While these diverse sources of financing mean resources will certainly be available, the political interests and socio-religious agendas of many of these donors – the largest of which have been actively involved in supporting particular parties to the conflict – will also mean that non-technical factors and motives (i.e., regional and international political, religious and security agendas) may pose an even greater-than-usual challenge for reconstruction planning and implementation.

Lastly, the reconstruction process may proceed, particularly at the outset, with relatively little direct presence from international experts from international organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which have thus far shown little willingness to deploy expatriate personnel inside of Syria as part of the humanitarian response in recent years. While this situation may change if reconstruction is preceded or accompanied by significant improvements in security, initial reconstruction may be implemented primarily by Syrians with external actors providing remote and/or sporadic support and oversight. Alternatively, certain donors may opt to rely on large contracting firms using private security, thus posing challenges related to cost, effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency. The literature widely notes that such firms often drove up reconstruction costs in Afghanistan and Iraq – and often supported local armed factions – without delivering quality programming.

3. PROCESS LESSONS: READINESS FOR RECONSTRUCTION

Research has increasingly shown that the "how" of reconstruction – how it is planned, financed, governed, and monitored – is often as important as the "what" (i.e., the programming). Hence, this section takes up process lessons from other contexts around the world.

3.1. PLANNING FOR RECONSTRUCTION

Particularly following the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, researchers and policymakers have looked into advanced planning for post-conflict reconstruction. A general consensus has been reached that planning must overcome institutional stovepipes, whether within governments or multilateral organisations, and be grounded in sober scenario-planning exercises that consider a full range of possibilities (i.e., not only best and worst-case scenarios but also a wide range of permutations). Broad-based strategies regarding reconstruction, the research shows, must be accompanied by

more detailed implementation plans for individual areas and sectors and programmes that are comprehensive and clearly prioritised yet also flexible.

Furthermore, planning must not only consider technical criterial but also the priorities articulated by affected households and communities; in the case of Afghanistan, for instance, research points to a major lesson learnt: much of the international response and the bulk of international spending focused on security sector reform (SSR) and governance for years despite numerous surveys showing Afghan were principally concerned with livelihood opportunities. Such lessons have, to no small extent, been learned and have led to initiatives such as the National Agenda for the Future of Syria (NAFS), which was launched in 2012 by the UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia and partners.

Equipped with potential scenarios and an understanding of the people's top priorities for reconstruction, national and, in most cases, international actors will also need to articulate a broad-based vision for the reconstruction process. This vision is often articulated in a reconstruction or development strategy, which may be accompanied by a series of more technically-focused documents. That said, reconstruction actors will face overarching, foundational questions – such as which model of reconstruction to adopt or how to balance the various models available to them. These models, which are implied rather than overtly stated in the available literature, include those noted below.

- *Technical and developmental:* This approach prioritizes the basic reconstruction of key pieces of infrastructure, including homes, energy supply, water and sanitation, transportation and so on. Reconstruction was treated as a means of repairing what was damaged, often under a mantra of "build back better". Such a model, akin to post-disaster reconstruction, was particularly viable when basic social, economic and governance institutions were seen as viable.

- *State-building:* Increased discussion of so-called "failed" or "fragile" states in the 1990s and 2000s led to an increase focus on strengthening public institutions, particularly when post-conflict governments were newly established, as in the case of governments of national unity. State-building often involved not only work on public administration but also attention to SSR, justice/judicial reform and elections. Some state-building models emphasized state-citizenry relations and promoting state legitimacy while others have traditionally been fixated on building a state which is considered strong enough to ensure order and manage threats posed by various armed groups which may remain active in the country.

- *Peacebuilding and social cohesion:* Where conflicts have severely damaged relations not only between the state and citizenry but also between various social, political or identity groups, a reconstruction model focused on peacebuilding and social cohesion may be more likely. This model places more initial emphasis on reintegrating displaced persons, addressing the legacy of war-time violence (e.g., through transitional justice mechanisms) and creating opportunities for people to come together on local recovery activities in order to rebuild social cohesion. Individuals and identity groups are the primary focus rather than necessarily the state.

- *Peace dividend approach:* Over the past decade there has been increased emphasis on melding the models noted above. The result is the targeting of reconstruction assistance, particularly related to livelihoods and basic services, where is it considered most likely to prevent spoiler violence and enhance the legitimacy of the state. Doing so – particularly when assistance is provided through or in the name of the state – is considered crucial in building peace and the state at the same time while also ensuring progress in tangible areas such as livelihoods and infrastructure. Such a model is often rooted in the belief that providing generous amounts of post-conflict assistance to the most peaceful areas will encourage potentially more unstable areas to follow suit (e.g., leading local leaders to engage with armed groups to discourage further violence).

The broad-based models noted above are not, however, approached in isolation. They often take place in parallel with differing degrees of emphasis at different times. Hence, reconstruction actors will need to consider what "hybrid model" they wish to craft based on a clear analysis of those factors which are most likely to contribute to the resumption of armed conflict. These deliberations must also consider the role of international actors in post-conflict transitions. Despite the traditional belief that external actors could, whether by overseeing reconstruction processes or establishing transitional administrations, create a space for local institutions and leaders to develop and take on greater responsibility, this core element of "liberal peacebuilding" has increasingly been questioned. Rather than strengthening local actors, international leadership has increasingly been seen as a self-perpetuating process that often prevents local institutions (particularly local state institutions) from building legitimacy or relations with the citizenry. Hence, more recent research emphasizes the need for international actors to create powerful incentive structures to encourage local institutions to gain capacity and actively and productively engage with their citizenries – rather than supplanting those institutions.

3.2. PREPARING FOR RECONSTRUCTION

On-paper plans must, according to the literature from Afghanistan, Bosnia, Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan, and elsewhere, be accompanied by tangible preparations that require substantial time, technical expertise and expense. These are the sorts of preparations which cannot only begin once it appears likely that a conflict will be de-escalating or ending. The following are some key areas where material preparations are generally, based on international lessons learned, required and where they have often been neglected in past reconstruction efforts:

- *Navigating sanctions:* International sanctions generally require several months in order to be modified or reversed in order to allow reconstruction to proceed relatively unburdened. Further time, as much as two years, elapses until banks and other businesses fully understand and trust the modified sanctions regime and are willing to enable the reconstruction process. Past conflicts show that even where humanitarian exceptions are established within sanctions regimes, these are often unclear or are inadequate when engaging with reconstruction programmes – which often require tightly-controlled items such as fertilizers, construction materials and major telecommunications or electricity hardware – rather than humanitarian assistance. Accordingly, officials from key governments and intergovernmental bodies may wish to have new policies and procedures ready for immediate review and approval once reconstruction begins so that months are not lost while determining how best to modify sanctions regimes. Global experience shows that governments and others should be prepared to clearly and unambiguously communicate to their own humanitarian, development and business (especially banking) communities what the revised sanctions mean for their work and liability concerns.

- *Enabling financial transfers, including remittances and diaspora contributions:* In post-conflict contexts such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, El Salvador, Haiti, Lebanon, Nicaragua and Serbia and Montenegro remittances from migrants and refugees comprised more than 10% of GDP. In Somalia, approximately four in ten households receive remittances from abroad, the total value of which is estimated at $1.3 billion. However in Somalia, in particular, this vital lifeline has periodically been undercut by international regulations aimed at preventing terrorism financing. As in Somalia, stakeholders – from international and local NGOs to entrepreneurs, refugees and members of diaspora groups – often find it challenging to transfer funds into post-conflict or mid-conflict contexts. Sanctions pose one challenge, including in the case of Syria, as well as counter-terrorism legislation and more technical factors (e.g., limited internet connectivity, the destruction of banking facilities in certain areas, difficulties transporting cash, lack of identification documents, etc.). As a result, resources are slower to work their way into contexts like Syria, and those needing to transfer funds may contribute to the black or grey markets by using poorly regulated (though vital) money transfer systems. To avoid such a situation, international experience shows that those planning to play a major role in reconstruction must, in partnership with the private sector, consider how they can devise a system to enable

financial transfers – including from the public and diasporas – as early as possible during the reconstruction phase (while also paying heed to concerns regarding support to proscribed groups). Such a system may also prove crucial in the event that cash transfers/ compensation are used to enable reconstruction and revive the economy.

- *Building construction capacity among affected communities:* Once reconstruction processes begins, the demand for construction skills increases dramatically. As Paul Collier wrote: "A construction boom will follow the arrival of peace as night follows day and so right from the start of the peace a shortage of construction skills can be anticipated. A priority is thus at an early stage to establish training facilities for basic construction skills and target training on precisely the young men who might otherwise be recruits into the reversion to violence." A shortage of qualified skills often hampers reconstruction, contributes to shoddy outcomes and drives up the price of semi-to-highly-skilled builders; in other cases foreign workers are brought in to fill key roles, thus hampering local economic recovery. To address this, Collier and others recommend building construction capacity on a massive scale among refugees, IDPs and others – including men and women – during a conflict, though such efforts are rarely undertaken to the extent necessary.

- *Spreading conflict prevention and resolution skills:* The reconstruction process in Syria will, like all recovery efforts, lead to tensions by creating perceived "winners" and "losers". These may exist between returnees and those who remained throughout the conflict, between individuals and families over land ownership, across the society over issues such as politics, identity and more. In previous crises, the need for conflict resolution has only been addressed in the midst of reconstruction. Yet lessons learned documents suggest that there may be benefits to promoting conflict prevention and resolution skills among refugees as well as among people in Syria – including women and men – even before reconstruction operations can begin on a large scale. Documenting and promoting these skills, which already exist in Syrian society, will help to ensure that reconstruction mitigates rather than exacerbates tensions.

- *Preparing local organisations to receive international reconstruction support:* International actors have a documented tendency to overlook and bypass local actors – thus reducing the relevance and cost-effectiveness of programming. Hence, even in the pre-reconstruction period, it will be integral to: (a) develop comprehensive databases of local organizations that may be interested in supporting the reconstruction process; (b) assess the capacity and affiliations (e.g., political, religious, etc.) of those groups; and (c) launch programmes to build the capacity of those local actors with regards to programme delivery and contract/grant management and accountability. While it may be difficult to provide this level of preparatory support to organisations based fully in the conflict zone, it may be more realistic when considering organizations which also have personnel in neighbouring countries or organizations which are led by members of the diaspora. In parallel, it will be integral for donors, UN agencies, INGOs and other international actors to consider how they can modify their policies and approaches to better support local actors. This may involve: (i) revising regulations and procedures which make it difficult for donors to finance local actors; or (ii) encouraging local actors to form coalitions or umbrella organisations that can interface on a larger scale with donors.

- *Building capacity among international organisations and NGOs:* In addition to building capacity among local actors, it will also be integral for UN agencies, INGOs and others to begin to assess their own readiness to support reconstruction. Doing so may entail a range of options including: internal planning and lessons learning processes, development of rosters of staff with requisite experience and linguistic abilities, the recruitment of additional regional staff members (likely on a contingency basis) and – crucially – the provision of intensive Arabic classes among a wide number of staff.

- *Devise strategies for communicating with affected communities:* Lessons learned documents commonly refer to the lack of adequate communication between international actors and local communities with regards to reconstruction. Expectations are poorly managed, and communities expect too much too quickly. Rumours surrounding sensitive processes like DDR and transitional justice raise tensions which international actors may find to mitigate. And, on a more basic level, those involved in reconstruction have little ability to gather information from communities without costly, time consuming and sometimes dangerous monitoring missions. Such challenges will exist in any context, but the pre-reconstruction phase presents an opportunity for information and communications technology (ICT) experts to work with humanitarian agencies, likely reconstruction actors, and others in order to develop a strategy and technical platform to address the need for improved, two-way communication.

3.3. FINANCING RECONSTRUCTION

The financial mechanisms chosen to finance post-conflict reconstruction are critical and feed into all elements of programming, accountability and more. Increasingly the literature reflects the diversity of funding streams and modalities. For instance the World Bank notes that in 2010 funding to "fragile and conflict-affected states" came in equal measure from official development assistance (ODA) – in the form of grants and concessional loans – and from remittances; the former was 40% of total financial flows while the latter was 38%. The remaining 22% came from foreign direct investment (FDI). A number of governments have been encouraging their business communities to engage with post-conflict contexts and have offered incentives for FDI, as was most notably the case with Turkey in Somalia.

Indeed, investment from private sources – many with close ties to governments in emerging economies – has not only grown but also taken on new forms. For instance, resource for infrastructure (R4I) models have emerged thanks to Chinese state-owned banks; these banks provide loans for infrastructure construction or reconstruction projects, almost exclusively awarded to Chinese firms, and are re-paid by the recipient country in the form of natural resources. Likewise, build-own-operate-transfer (BOOT) models have also emerged in which a private or semi-private company bids to construct a key piece of infrastructure and is repaid in the form of user fees (e.g., from electricity customers or tolls from a bridge). Both of these models have hazards and have often been described as predatory – short-changing the primarily sub-Saharan African countries that agree to them – though they do highlight the range of financing options that exist. Traditional grants and concessional loans are only a small part of the reconstruction-financing landscape, particularly in middle-income countries with access to natural resources and a high degree of international and private sector interest. The full range of financial approaches – and the role of remittances and diaspora contributions – must be factored into planning from the earliest stages.

That said, it is worth re-visiting some of the lessons learned, reflected in the literature, from more traditional forms of reconstruction financing.

- *Pooled funding mechanisms, particularly multi-donor trust funds (MDTFs), are crucial.* This is particularly true when they involve national government stakeholders and international community representatives and where their disbursement committees and procedures are adapted to the realities of post-conflict contexts. MDTFs such as the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), the International Reconstruction Financing Facility for Iraq (IRFFI) and numerous others are able to consolidate bilateral and multilateral financing, monitor spending and provide a strong degree of coordination. MDTFs are also able to ensure multi-year financing, which is another major lesson learnt given that planning for reconstruction – regardless of whether a trust fund it being utilised or not – requires predictable financing that goes beyond the yearly appropriation cycles of most donor governments. In addition, their ability to carry over funds from one year to the next is crucial given that research shows that post-conflict societies generally (barring exceptions) receive the greatest amount of assistance in the one to three years after

reconstruction begins – which then falls off as "donor fatigue" increases. The governance of MDTFs can also mandate robust requirements regarding monitoring and evaluation of major reconstruction projects; such evaluations have a greater impact on programme quality in conflict-affected contexts than even in more stable environments.

• *Sectoral trust funds can also have advantages in certain areas.* It is sometimes more feasible to convince donors to contribute to sectoral trust funds, particularly if a particular donor is appointed as the lead for a particular sector (e.g., the US for one sector, the EU for another, GCC members for others, etc.). Such a strategy was adopted to varying extents in the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) or the specific MDTF established for the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Trust funds for education are also increasingly common given that the education sector requires particularly predictable financing and operates according to a unique schedule (i.e., the school year rather than the traditional fiscal year).

• *Large-scale programmes:* In other cases large-scale programmes can help to attract multi-donor contributions and yield some of the same benefits, with regards to coordination and scale, as MDTFs. The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) in Afghanistan, although financed by a trust fund, is one such example of a large-scale initiative that can draw widespread donor interest behind a massive programme which nonetheless is implemented at the community level.

• *Aid coordination units must be established and/or strengthened.* Particularly in contexts with multiple resource flows, it is important to have a highly capable aid management unit to monitor donor contributions and the geographic and sectoral focus of spending. Such units have previously been established within ministries of foreign affairs or planning and international cooperation in past post-conflict contexts. That said, they may also be established, through multi-stakeholder agreement, by a relatively independent entity that can document donor contributions and provide regular reports on who is providing how much for what areas and sectors.

• *Project management units (PMUs) that manage projects in parallel with government entities tend to hinder capacity building.* International financial institutions (IFIs) that provide large-scale grant and loan programmes had traditionally relied on PMUs embedded within yet also autonomous from ministries and other national government institutions. Experience shows that, despite being instructed to build local institutional capacity, PMUs and similar structures tend to replace rather than enhance local capacities. Instead, more emphasis must be placed on models that include a phased handover of financial and programmatic management responsibility to local stakeholders.

3.4. SECURING RECONSTRUCTION

Particularly where reconstruction begins without a comprehensive political settlement – or where spoiler violence is likely – it is crucial to determine how adequate security can be achieved. International experience shows that several models have been attempted and that most are sub-optimal. Working with and through local militias has generally proven ineffective given that they may exacerbate tensions, contribute to conflict recurrence, undermine participatory governance and lead to predatory behaviour, as in the case of the Afghan Local Police, which was recently disbanded. Quickly building security services in the post-conflict country has likewise proven difficult and so time consuming that these nascent forces cannot be counted on to secure reconstruction during the first five years or decade. Global econometric evidence even suggests that increasing domestic security spending after a conflict significantly drives up the likelihood of conflict recurrence.

Figure 1. Peak military or peacekeeping presence in post-conflict contexts
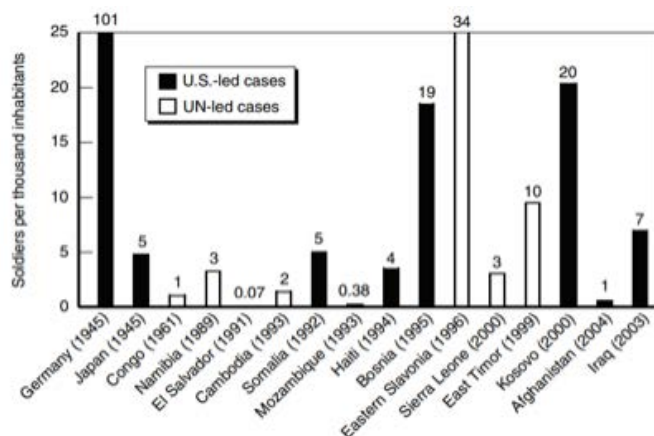
Source: Dobbins et al., The UN's Role in Nation-Building: From the Congo to Iraq, 2005.

International experience suggest that there is no alternative, particularly in divided societies with a high likelihood of continued violence, to international forces provided through a multilateral entity (i.e., the UN, NATO or a regional organisation such as the African Union). A key RAND review of international peace operations from the 1960s to 2005 shows that those missions – generally US or UN-led – were successful only if a significant international troop and police presence, along the lines of one peacekeeper to 50 local residents, could be established quickly and maintained for a period of five years to a decade or even longer. The 1:50 ratio is not a hard and fast rule, though it is equally clear that attempts at "light footprint" approaches have a far more limited record of success in preventing conflict recurrence in contexts ranging from the US in Afghanistan and Iraq to the UN in South Sudan and elsewhere. While the numbers of peacekeepers and duration of peacekeeping operations are not the only important factors, they are among the most important considerations to determine and arrange in the pre-reconstruction period.

4. PROGRAMMATIC LESSONS: DELIVERING RESULTS

Past experiences with post-crisis reconstruction speak to a range of sectoral lessons and good practices, which are captures below. This section does not comprise a full treatment of the literally dozens of sector- and issue-specific lessons which exist, and it tends to sidestep issues – such as large-scale infrastructure related to water supply, power and natural resources – that are too large and context-dependent to address here. Rather, the following includes a handful of the most common lessons which subjectively appear relevant to the future reconstruction of Syria.

4.1. OVERARCHING LESSONS

While a range of issue-specific and sectoral lessons are captured later in this section, a number of overarching points merit initial discussion.

- *Root decision-making in highly localised analysis of the context, conflict, gender, marginalisation, markets and more.* Analysis is important in all humanitarian and development work but takes on particular salience in situations of conflict. Actors will need to understand identity-related issues, the composition of various conflict actors and the relationships between them, the political-economy of armed groups and smuggling networks, forms and drivers of social and economic marginalisation and more. Such analyses cannot only be conducted annually or at the national level. Instead they must be conducted at the individual district or community level in order to be particularly useful for planners and programme staff. Equally importantly, international and national actors need new means of making these analyses and their implications easily digestible for practitioners with limited time and familiarity with these sorts of analysis.

- *Operate in a conflict-sensitive manner.* Equipped with detailed conflict and context analyses, past experience shows that reconstruction operations must be undertaken in a conflict-sensitive manner. While conflict sensitivity is often associated with field-level activities, such as not supporting one ethnic group in a community over another, it is important to note that conflict sensitivity applies in multiple ways. Reconstruction processes must be communicated in a way that manages expectations and reduces frustration with the inevitably slow pace of progress. Likewise, it will be important to demonstrate that technical criteria are guiding the allocation of aid and to minimise the perception that political interests and favouritism is guiding which areas receive what levels of assistance. Doing so will also involve coordinating donors to ensure that levels of assistance are relatively harmonised across different parts of the country.

- *Consult widely, and behave transparently.* Programming needs analysis, but it must also be informed by inclusive consultations with community and religious leaders, affected communities, members of marginalised groups and others. Those who are consulted must then be able to see how their input led into the design or roll out of a particular programme. Extensive consultation that does not have any evident impact is likely to exacerbate frustration with reconstruction actors. To this end, donors must be willing to enable their implementing partners to freely make adjustments requested by communities without necessarily needing to seek additional permissions (i.e., contract or budget amendments).

- *Fully include women at all steps of programme design and implementation.* Women tend to be relatively neglected during reconstruction processes, which tend to lavish particular resources on initiatives related to security sector reform, the demobilisation and reintegration of combatants, livelihoods for young men and other male-centric activities. That said, women are crucial stakeholders, have a right to benefit fully as men from reconstruction and have a demonstrated tendency to use resources, such as cash assistance, to benefit their entire households. Women are also considered crucial with regards to conflict prevention and resolution, particularly when they are trained and encouraged to do so in a culturally-sensitive manner, and in certain contexts may be effective in discouraging male relatives from engaging (or re-engaging) in violence or criminality.

- *Rely on local markets where possible and responsible.* The reconstruction process can not only help to rebuild a country but can also revive its economy. International actors should rely on local markets and firms wherever possible – and where those markets are not unduly controlled by particular conflict actors or factions – to provide the materials and services they require rather than bringing these in from abroad. Local procurement should be a particular priority, though local businesses should also be considered as partners in cash- and voucher-based approaches to basic service delivery. Doing so will require a detailed market analysis and also working with local businesses in order to determine what support (e.g., technical assistance or advance payment for the first contract) they may need in order to become suppliers to the reconstruction process.

- *Minimize subcontracting in order to improve efficiency.* Reconstruction operations have also suffered from high degrees of subcontracting, with donor funds often being allocated through a cascading array of implementing partners – each of which takes resources – before reaching intended beneficiaries. For instance, one evaluation focused on reconstruction in Afghanistan stated: "There is layer upon layer of donors, implementing agencies, contractors and sub contractors, each taking their share of the budget and generating a competitive culture in which the self-interest of each agency tends to come before the goal of helping Afghans". To address this challenge, funds must be provided to the agency that will actually be directly implementing the programme without going through numerous international actors. And policies must be put in place by donors and/or the host government to require very clear reporting on subcontracting or partnerships and the costs involved.

- *Leverage new technologies.* While not necessarily a key lesson from past reconstruction processes, it would be remiss not to highlight the phenomenal growth of new technologies in recent years and their relevance to reconstruction. The sharing economy makes it possible for individuals and businesses to open up their homes and facilities to displaced persons or returnees in need to temporary or transitional shelter. Mobile money allows funds to be transferred at almost no cost, particularly from the diaspora or from refugees to their families back home, and avoids the dangerous and risk transport of cash. Crowdfunding and "give directly" platforms can, if adequate infrastructure and expertise is available, allow communities or local NGOs to design projects and solicit support for them from the global public, traditional donors, diaspora networks and others. Reconstruction projects can be monitored using geo-tagged, time-stamped systems, which are already being used during the humanitarian response inside of Syria. Furthermore, low-cost tablet computers can be used to enable immediate access to e-learning even while schools are still being built – and telemedicine can bring added expertise into hospitals and clinics in remote or insecure areas. Reconstruction processes have never used these new technologies to the extent possible, though Syria presents an exceptional opportunity to refine and apply them in this formerly middle-income context. That said, doing so will require up-front attention to power supply and internet connectivity across the country in partnership with relevant authorities and information and communications technology companies.

4.2. THE RETURN OF REFUGEES AND IDPS

The return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their place of origin is often treated as one of the initial steps in post-conflict reconstruction (or at the border between reconstruction and humanitarian action). Host countries and communities may be eager for return and reintegration to begin, and displaced persons may themselves hope – unaware of the state of their home areas – to return. As a result, returns often take place too quickly at first, with displaced persons returning to areas with little housing/shelter, unclear and contentious land ownership issues, few livelihood opportunities, little law and order and a dearth of basic social services.

Hence, the primary lesson regarding refugee and IDP return and reintegration is to slow down the process. This will involve continuing large-scale humanitarian assistance to refugees and IDPs – as well as to host communities and countries – in situ while reconstruction proceeds for a period of one, two or more years. Spontaneous returns may also need to be avoided to some extent by communicating with affected communities about the conditions in their home communities. Objective criteria should be set to determine when a particular area is well suited to accept returnees; these may include the availability of basic services, including health, education, water, sanitation, garbage collection and electricity, and at least temporary or transitional housing. Once returns do appear particularly viable, a range of other lessons have been learnt.

- *Determine, as early as possible, where returnees hope to (or are likely to) settle.* In many cases returnees will hope to settle closer to borders – out of concern they may need to flee again – or may opt to reside in cities rather than returning to their communities of origin. Once it is clear where refugees and IDPs are likely to re-settle, reconstruction assistance, especially support to livelihoods, should be concentrated on these areas.

- *Adopt tailored approaches to encourage the return of refugees with particular skill sets.* These include, for instance, doctors, lawyers, scientists, agronomists, academics, engineers and other specialised professionals who could make a vital contribution to the reconstruction process – yet who are also the most hesitant to return (especially if they have received asylum in highly-developed countries). To encourage their return, special support programmes may be needed to, for instance, help them navigate administrative challenges and identify suitable housing and relevant jobs in their country of origin. In some instances, such as Somalia and Afghanistan, financial incentives were offered to encourage returns of particular categories of returnees.

- *Invest in mechanisms, whether traditional processes, the courts or specialised arbitration panels, to settle disputes over land and property ownership.* These panels may often have to deal with less-than-perfect information when settling disputes, but research has shown that resolving land disputes quickly is often more important than losing years while seeking further records before ruling on property ownership. In cases where a country has been subjected to intense physical destruction, authoritative records may never be available to the extent desired.

- *Develop innovative strategies for urban returnees.* Most return and reintegration programmes are predicated on returns to primarily rural areas. The situation is often more difficult when returnees did not formerly own land and instead lived in rented apartments. Likewise, the restoration of urban livelihoods, particularly in middle-income settings, often poses additional challenges that go beyond the traditional international livelihood package (i.e., tools and seeds for farmers and equipment or grants for small business owners). A dedicated process should be launched to delve further into this issue, which is likely to be particularly important in Syria (i.e., since even refugees originally from rural areas may prefer to re-settle in urban locales with greater access to job, aid and services).

4.3. HOUSING RECONSTRUCTION AND COMPENSATION

Housing is one of the most important issues with regards to post-conflict reconstruction. Stable, decent housing provides a basis for physical safety, particularly for women, children, and marginalized groups, and is crucial for physical health and a sense of psychosocial stability. To enable the rehabilitation of existing housing and construction of new housing, a number of lessons have been learnt.

- *Grants or cash compensation can contribute to local markets* for building materials and labour more effectively than large, donor-managed projects. These arrangements provide graduated levels of funding to households depending on whether their former housing was destroyed, partly damaged, or severely damaged. In Lebanon several billion dollars' worth of cash compensation were provided in this way, thus leading to relatively rapid housing reconstruction and economic recovery after the July 2006 war primarily between Israel and Hezbollah. In Lebanon and elsewhere, such compensation processes are imperfect, particularly where property records are unavailable or where housing had been owned by a small number of elite figures. International actors should err on the side of providing too-generous funding or compensation for housing reconstruction rather than slowing progress in order to attempt to avoid small amounts of duplication or corruption.

- *Provide targeted support to the housing sector.* The rapid pace of housing rehabilitation and construction after conflict often leads to less of an emphasis on quality, and relatively inexperienced individuals or companies may get into this business. To help ensure that shoddy construction does not create future problems, the international community can offer training on housing construction methods, make available easy-to-comprehend and culturally-appropriate housing designs with detailed specifications and bills of quantity and play a role in actively assessing the quality of housing built with support from the government or international community.

- *Women particularly benefit from rapid attention to housing reconstruction* for a number of reasons. Providing grants to women, such as female-headed households, for housing reconstruction provides them with a degree of agency and economic power that they otherwise might not have if external actors rebuild homes on their behalf. Furthermore, given that women are more likely – globally – to have home-based livelihoods than men, housing reconstruction indirectly contributes to their economic wellbeing and empowerment. Such lessons were identified in reconstruction process in Lebanon as well as Sri Lanka.

4.4. LIVELIHOODS AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Employment and income are among the important elements to local populations, along with security, in the aftermath of armed conflict. Livelihoods are not solely an economic concern but also feed into households' ability to meet basic humanitarian needs, to send children to education, to rebuild housing, to tend to healthcare needs and so on. Furthermore, repeated studies have shown a correlation between economic growth and a significantly reduced likelihood of conflict recurrence. Hence it is important to identify a small number of the most important lessons learned related to this crucial area beyond the broadest lesson: international donors must invest heavily – far more heavily than is typical – in livelihoods, economic growth and areas which are critical to economic growth in the short-to-medium term (e.g., the rehabilitation of key pieces of productive infrastructure such as ports, power supply, irrigation and urban transport).

- *Market analyses should be conducted regularly across a range of sectors and industries.* Such analyses should directly feed into the targeting of economic development activities. Furthermore, market dynamics should not just be captured at a high level but also at the local level in order to avoid common pitfalls of pay economic recovery initiatives: creating a range of similar small businesses which dramatically exceeds local market demand or providing vocational education and training in levels that local markets do not require.

- *Cash for work should be used heavily during the early stages of recovery* both as a part of reconstruction and as a means of transitioning households away from humanitarian aid. These programmes should be careful, however, not to drive up the price of wage labour in a given area, and payments should be capped at approximately 10-20% lower than the prevailing price of wage labour in an area. Furthermore, those designing such programmes should consider the adoption of "compulsory saving" components where those participating in cash for work initiatives have a portion (e.g., 25% in the case of one programme in post-tsunami Sri Lanka) of their payment placed in a bank account they cannot access for three months. Doing so increases programme participants' access to banking services, and in some countries the compulsory savings accounts have been used as collateral to allow households to obtain loans.

> *Box 1: The UNDP 3x6 approach to sustainable business creation*
>
> *In Burundi and Yemen, most notably, UNDP has adopted what it terms a "3x6 approach" that aims to help transition beneficiaries from short-term livelihood activities like cash for work to the creation of sustainable businesses. The first phase, dubbed "Inclusiveness", focuses on rapid employment activities and skills training for 2-6 months. Approximately half to two-thirds of the income earned at this phase is placed in an account in the beneficiary's name at a local micro-finance institution (MFI). During the second phase, known as "Ownership", those involved create business plans or something similar either individually or with others. Then during the final "Sustainability" phase, the individual or group receives a grant from UNDP which is normally three times the amount he/she/ they have saved during the earlier phases in the MFI. UNDP then, following a feasibility study of the proposed businesses, provides the beneficiaries' micro-SME's with investment support and facilitates market expansion. While the long-term impact of this relatively recent model needs further study, it is a promising approach that can and has functioned in post-conflict contexts.*

- *Local procurement should be used where at all feasible,* and donor regulations which complicate local procurement of humanitarian or relief materials should be revoked or temporarily suspended. Local suppliers, those from the country emerging from conflict, should be used even where they are most costly than international suppliers. In several instances local suppliers may need – and should receive – technical assistance from their would-be customers (i.e., international organisations, development banks, large NGOs) in order to be able to meet international specifications. Specific programmes to build the

capacity of local suppliers, while a recognised good practice, has rarely materialised in practice.

- *Leverage trade and investment in order to hasten recovery.* International assistance is only one means of promoting economic recovery, and regional and donor governments should consider other approaches as well. These would involve providing particular incentives for the country's citizens or businesses to invest in a post-conflict country or to import the products it produces (i.e., on a tax-free basis). Other more aggressive methods can also be attempted. For instance, in Afghanistan the US military ultimately engaged in proactive matchmaking between US and Afghan businesses with some degree of success ; such efforts are likely to be even more effective in middle-income countries like Syria with strong entrepreneurial cultures.

4.5. BASIC SERVICE DELIVERY

Basic services, including health, education, electricity and water and sanitation, are important to affected communities, though they also have historically been hard to establish after conflict for a number of reasons. Infrastructure may be built, but equipment, staffing and other recurring costs may not be adequately provided for in donor budgets. States are often minimally able to cover these costs or to effectively deliver services, thus leading to governance challenges as nascent post-conflict states receive blame for limited service provision. Furthermore, humanitarian actors providing services may tend to see their budgets decline in the post-conflict phase even before alternative service providers are available – or they may attempt to remain in place for too long and limit the emergence of more durable solutions. Depending on the nature of the post-conflict context, the state of social infrastructure and public institutions and more, a range of different lessons may apply. The following, however, are among the most frequently cited in the literature reviewed.

- *Consider a full range of service providers.* Particularly in post-conflict situations, states will generally have limited ability to provide services. Hence, reconstruction actors should consider the full range of potential service providers, from local governments to civil society, religious entities, the private sector and others (including social enterprises to be encouraged or established with international support). Communities should be consulted on the range of possible service providers, and careful analysis should be conducted to prevent the reliance on service providers that may exacerbate tensions (e.g., religious groups or political parties using education or health to disseminate a divisive ideology).

- *Assess the feasibility of cash- and voucher-based solutions.* Affected communities, like populations around the world, often prefer to have some flexibility with regards to service provision. Hence, using cash and vouchers to enable affected households to seek services from either public, private or non-governmental service providers affords this flexibility and can help to spur the development of low-cost service providers as have been seen in low-cost private schools in Pakistan or relatively cheap, private mobile clinics in refugee settlements in parts of the Middle East.   *Leverage new technologies for basic services.* As noted earlier in Section 4, new technologies are frequently being developed surrounding post-conflict reconstruction. E-learning solutions, telemedicine, solar power and low-cost household toilets are among the innovations that reconstruction actors should consider as part of their planning – either as transitional or long-term approaches.

- *Decouple the public's perception of services and governance and legitimacy.* Given that services are both incredibly complex and time consuming to establish, it is important to manage the public's expectations of what the state and international community can provide. Failing to effectively do so can undermine governance and state-building and increase tensions.

4.6. COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Community-driven development (CDD) has become a key element of post-conflict reconstruction in places as diverse as Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, DRC, Timor-Leste, Liberia, Nepal, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, northern Uganda, Aceh, Mindanao (Philippines). It involves mobilizing local participatory councils to identify, prioritize and partly implement relatively small-scale projects with financial support from the international community (generally alongside a community contribution in the form of materials and/or labour). In doing so it enables local governance, tangible local improvements in infrastructure (e.g., schools, clinics, markets, irrigation networks, etc.) and helps to restore social cohesion. Furthermore, the structures formed via CDD programmes can serve as useful conduits for other projects. This approach is feasible even in relatively remote areas where aid agencies may be unable or unwilling – due to complexity or insecurity – to visit on too regular a basis. In addition to broadly endorsing the use of CDD, the literature points to a range of good practices and lessons learned regarding this modality.

- *CDD should leverage opportunities for peacebuilding* by purposefully building relationships among neighbouring communities (particularly where they have a history of conflict) and among returnees and those who remained in an area throughout the conflict. For instance, communities can be provided greater levels of assistance based on the proportion of returnees they are welcomed, and grants can be offered not only for community-specific projects but also for those that involve two more communities.

- *Adequate technical assistance should be provided* to help communities assess needs and design the most appropriate projects. This is a process that can begin now, with reconstruction actors engaging with refugees in order to conceptualize likely projects and – with technical experts – develop detailed project outlines (e.g., for solar power projects) and Arabic-language materials to guide communities in implementing them. While international actors should not undermine the "community-driven" nature of CDD, they can ensure that communities are fully aware of the wide range of projects from which they can choose.

- *Register CDD councils at the community level as legal entities.* Doing so will allow them to access banking services, to receive funds from the diaspora or community members who are residing abroad. Legal status, often as a CSO or CBO, also enables them to pursue funds directly from donors, UN agencies, INGOs, the public (via online fundraising platforms) and through other means. Conversely, where CDD-created local councils are treated as a purely project-specific entity, their work may face legal challenges, and the may tend to wither once CDD-related grants are no longer available.

- *CDD projects can contribute to violence if too closely linked to counterinsurgency or statebuilding objective*s – particularly when there is no comprehensive political settlement in place. In the Philippines, available evidence shows that rebels were likely to attack CDD projects towards the beginning of implementation given that they were seen as an attempt to extend central government authority in the area.

- *Repeated evaluations have also shown that CDD projects generally have limited – if any – impact on local economic condition*s given that they tend to be small scale in nature and often concern social rather than productive infrastructure. Such a lesson is difficult to overcome unless CDD grants are exceptionally large (i.e., several hundred thousand dollars). Hence, those involved in CDD should be careful not to promise too much or suggest that the schemes will contribute to economic improvements or livelihoods.

- *CDD projects may lead to frustration with reconstruction actors* if – building upon the point above – they are not accompanied by larger-scale projects more fully focused on livelihoods and economic development. That is, CDD should be treated as an "appetizer" rather than as the "main course" when it comes to reconstruction – particularly in situations where popular support is critical for reconstruction actors' safety an ability to operate.

While some of the points above highlight the risks of CDD programmes, these issues are not raised as an argument against this model. Rather, they are simply lessons which have been learnt and which must be reflected in the design of CDD interventions and broader reconstruction processes.

4.7. CONSTITUTIONS AND ELECTIONS

Constitutions are a key component of post-conflict transitions, particularly where the conflict in question has ended decisively and peace has had time to solidify. Without these conditions – and where constitutions are drafted and adopted quickly and without time to build consensus – they may serve more as a forum for conflict and could contribute to a resumption of violence. Beyond the need to approach constitutions slowly, the literature also suggests that constitution-writing be stretched out over years and be used to promote dialogue and reconciliation (either as part of or alongside transitional justice processes).

The process of developing a constitution and preparing for elections has, in recent years, been attempted through the establishment of national dialogue processes such as the emergency and constitutional Loya Jirgas in Afghanistan following the 2001 Bonn Agreement, the Iraqi National Congress in 2004, the national dialogues in Yemen and Tunisia in 2013-14 and comparable processes elsewhere in the world. While many such processes are not seen, in hindsight, as particularly successful, their successes and failures point to some key lessons: (i) the purpose and intended outcomes of the national dialogues must be very clear; (ii) agendas and organisational structures should be kept simple and easy-to-understand rather than cluttered with too many issues and committees; (iii) participants should be selected according to clear criteria, likely involving a combination of appointments and local elections; (iv) communications around national dialogue processes should be carefully planned in order to promote transparency and manage expectations among the wider citizenry; and (v) such processes should be strongly encouraged to include women and members of marginalised groups.

Following constitution-writing and potential national dialogue processes, elections are a crucial part of war-to-peace transitions, though international experience shows that they are fraught with complications. Eager to signify a "new beginning" or transition to democracy, elections have commonly been held, according to research and policy documents, far too quickly in the vast majority of post-conflict societies (few of which have had strong experience with participatory governance before the war began). As a result, rapid elections tend to cement conflict-era divisions rather than promoting issues-oriented, multi-party electoral contests. International best practice is increasingly for elections to be held only once security has been firmly established, once public institutions to monitor elections and govern the country are in place and once a culture of democracy has taken root. While most documents hesitate to put a strict timeline on elections, some materials suggest that elections should not be held any sooner than two to three years after a comprehensive peace agreement has been signed – or even far later if a country has limited previous experience with democratic processes and values. Once elections are held, awareness raising and independent monitoring are among the most important elements.

Even if elections do take years to develop, research also points to the need for reconstruction actors to promote civic participation and local governance as a means of preparing for national elections. As one study found in Iraq, the "transition to a truly healthy functioning democracy will require educating the population, both formally and informally, to accept democratic values, norms, and institutions and encouraging the growth of civil associations, which could take a decade or longer to foster". For instance, community-level elections for local development councils or committees may ultimately give rise to municipal elections and then feed into district or provincial-level elections. This bottom-up approach to elections not only builds public understanding of participatory governance (where it is not already present) but can also help to ensure that initial elections are issue oriented (e.g., focused on local development and basic services) rather than overly focused on identity or on national political issues.

4.8. DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILISATION AND REINTEGRATION

The disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of combatants, formerly seen as a staple of stabilisation and post-conflict programming has increasingly moved from a "must have" item to a step that should be taken "when feasible". Past contexts, from South Sudan to Afghanistan, Iraq and beyond, show that DDR is beneficial only when a range of conditions are met: (i) the conflict was decisively ended, generally through a comprehensive political settlement that ideally provides the broad outlines of a future DDR process; (ii) the demobilisation of armed groups will not create a vacuum that remaining insurgents, terrorist or criminal networks (i.e., those not included in the peace agreement) will exploit; (iii) the risks posed by armed groups outweigh any carefully studied contributions they make in terms of community security and dispute resolution; and (iv) adequate resources for DDR are (or will be) available to provide meaningful levels of psychosocial and livelihood support to former combatants for a sustained period of several years. In Libya, the absence of these conditions meant that DDR was more nominal and generally proved ineffective when it was attempted; in Afghanistan, analysts have suggested that the demobilisation of the Northern Alliance was only partially successful in breaking up armed groups and creating livelihoods – despite significant expense – and may have created opportunities for narcotics traffickers and the Taliban. In Nepal, limited support for DDR was repeatedly associated with the resumption of armed conflict.

Even where these pre-conditions have not been met, past contexts show that it is still possible to work with, most notably, non-state armed groups in a number of ways. In Libya, international actors were able to build relations with militias in order to partly document and monitor their weapons stockpiles – on the belief that monitoring will make these groups less likely to use or sell their arsenals. In addition, in Libya, Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere, armed groups were involved in mine action, rubble removal and other activities even before a formal DDR process was deemed feasible, thus allowing international actors to build relationships with these groups and plant the seeds of future DDR initiatives. Likewise, there is scope for providing construction training and cash-for-work support to young men and women in a particular area as an indirect means of promoting demobilisation and laying the groundwork for future DDR efforts. This sort of DDR-by-proxy (i.e., helping a larger cohort that includes a significant amount of former combatants) can also be particularly useful where much of the local population may object to a more overt DDR process that would be seen as rewarding perpetrators of violence.

In the case of Syria, DDR will need to be carefully weighed, and planning must begin sooner rather than later. Past experience shows that armed groups should be informed about DDR processes and their benefits even before formal peace talks begin, and combatants should be consulted on the design of a DDR programme without necessarily raising unrealistic expectations. Once the conditions are deemed ripe for a large-scale DDR process, it will be integral for regular, transparent monitoring of progress in disarmament, in particular, to prevent the perception that DDR is being done unevenly (i.e., focusing on certain armed groups but not others). Lastly, it will be useful to link DDR and any future SSR process so that at least a portion of former combatants, after necessary vetting, can be considered for inclusion in any future security services.

4.9. RECONCILIATION AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

Like DDR, a previous emphasis on transitional justice has increasingly been subjected to qualifications and may not be an automatic part of a liberal peacebuilding agenda. That is, transitional justice works best where conflicts have ended decisively, often through a negotiated settlement, where information can be widely collected on abuses around the country and where there is wide consensus on the need to account for war-time abuses in order to enable national reconciliation and healing. Where such conditions do not exist, there is a strong potential for transitional justice to be one-sided (i.e., focusing on abuses perpetrated by only one set of actors) and complicate the prospects for an eventual peace agreement; alternatively it could be used to inflame tensions and increase the likelihood of conflict recurrence.

Past crises have shown the benefits of building capacity for peaceful dialogue and conflict resolution capacity as a precursor to transitional justice. This may involve widespread training on conflict resolution methods among civil society organisations, armed groups, community leaders and ordinary households. Such skills will help to manage the disputes that will routinely arise during reconstruction, particularly when refugee return is also ongoing, and will simultaneously strengthen the basis for participatory governance. Furthermore, programmes related to refugee reintegration, CDD and DDR can include elements in which local communities document and begin to deal with the legacy of a conflict at the local level in order to build social cohesion.

Once circumstances are ripe for larger-scale transitional justice activities, international experience points to a range of good practices.

- *Provide support to civil society and local organisations* engaged with reconciliation, transitional justice and monitoring abuses. Doing so helps to ensure that these issues remain driven by local actors rather than being overly "internationalised".

- *Integrate reconciliation, transitional justice and development programmes.* For instance, compensation for war-time losses, in terms of lives and property, can help to provide a powerful symbol – as well as material support – to those who were the most affected.

- *Pursue accountability for the worst offenses or for particular categories of crimes,* including genocide and the systematic use of sexual and gender-based violence. Accountability may be provided through national or international justice institutions, including the International Criminal Court, in order to show that perpetrators are not being provided blanket impunity.

- *Consider truth and reconciliation commissions* in order to document war-time injustices and allow a process of national remembrance and mourning. These have been effective in South Africa and in a narrow range of other instances where they received widespread support after decisively-ended conflicts. They have been less effective where perceived as one-sided or where, as in Guatemala and El Salvador, they were approached more as narrow investigative processes rather than as vehicles for sharing stories and mourning as a nation.

5. CONCLUSION

The reconstruction of Syria will be a historically important and complex process, and it is imperative that planning begin as soon as possible rather than once the ink has dried on a hoped-for political settlement. Such a process should not be led by international experts or aim to produce a rigid how-to manual. Instead it should be driven by Syrians, including those displaced by the war, and should be flexible and adaptable. The international community must not repeat mistakes of the past. Programming must be rooted in local priorities, and communities themselves should be trusted to lead local reconstruction fuelled by flexible funding from the diaspora, the global public and the international community. Women and youth, in particular, must be particularly included in planning and implementation of programmes and should be reached through "mainstreamed" and targeted approaches.

Local organisations should likewise be closely involved in reconstruction – and not merely as sub-contractors for international organisations and NGOs. Instead, they must be prepared to receive funding directly. Wasteful subcontracting with negligible benefits cannot be allowed to persist. Lastly, technology must be used to enable cash transfers, to restore livelihoods, to enliven housing reconstruction and to facilitate health and education – even where these technologies mean that international actors will receive fewer resources for hands-on implementation.

More specific recommendations can be derived from the entirety of this report, which includes several dozen options for Syria, regional and international actors to consider as they develop their strategies for re-building Syria.

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