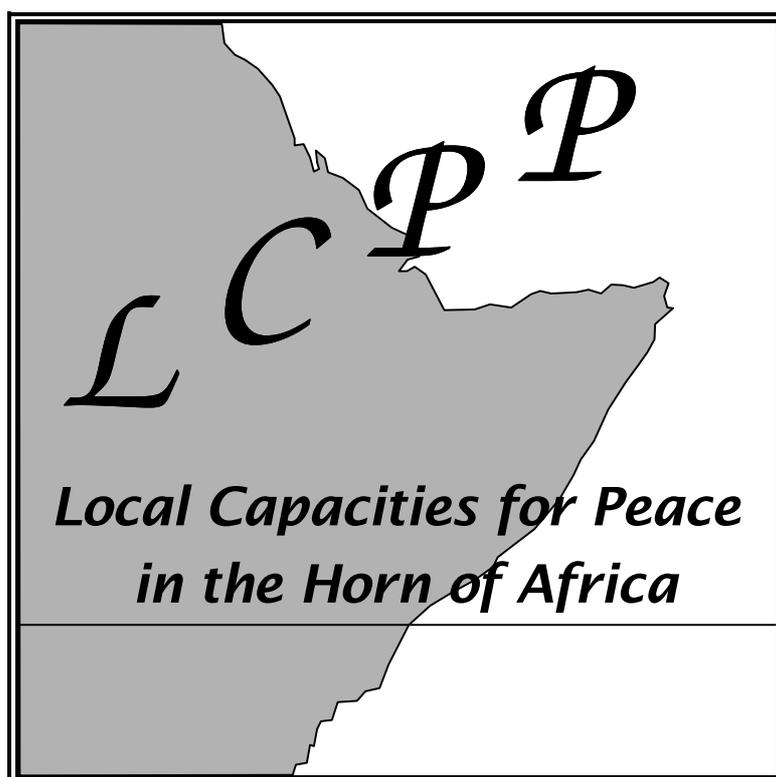


Local Capacities for Peace

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DO NO HARM



Summary of the “Local Capacities for Peace Framework”

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This summary was first produced for the “Local Capacities for Peace Project in the Horn of Africa”.
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History and Background of the Local Capacities for Peace Project

In late 1994 the LCP Project was launched to answer the question:

How may aid be provided in conflict settings in ways that, rather than feeding into and exacerbating the conflict, help local people disengage from the violence that surrounds them and begin to develop alternative systems for addressing the problems that underlie the conflict?

The LCP Project is a collaborative effort, organized by the Collaborative for Development Action in Cambridge, Massachusetts, involving a number of donor agencies (DANIDA, Sida, CIDA, UNHCR, DHA, OCHA, German EZE and AG/KED, Foreign Ministry of Norway, OFDA of USAID with more being added all the time), international NGOs (over fifty of them) and local aid workers.

The approach taken by LCPP was inductive, learning from local field experiences. Thus, fifteen case studies were conducted in fourteen conflict zones to examine the interactions of aid and conflict. From the cases, lessons-to-date were compiled in a booklet entitled *Do No Harm: Supporting Local Capacities for Peace through Aid*. This booklet formed the basis for over twenty-five feedback workshops carried out with aid workers in a number of countries in which they “tested” the lessons against their own experience, added to and amended them and, thus, improved them. The learning from the entire effort is now published in a book entitled *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—Or War*, (Lynne Rienner Publisher, Boulder, Colorado).

LCPP Nairobi has arranged workshops and trainings in the countries at the Horn of Africa as part of a broad and on-going dissemination effort. In addition, the project has worked with operational NGOs that are carrying out projects in conflict areas to apply the “Do No Harm” lessons in practice. LCPP staff and volunteers have worked with NGO field and headquarters staff to use the methods and approaches of “Do No Harm” to analyse the interactions between their aid programmes and the conflicts where they work and, then, to make appropriate adjustments to projects in order to ensure that aid does not do harm but supports local efforts toward non-war.

The word “conflict” here refers to negative, destructive (often violent) group interactions rather than to the variety of inter-group disagreements or other forms of constructive struggle by which social change occurs. It is for this reason that the thrust of the “Do No Harm” message of how aid and conflict interact is to push for aid agencies not to worsen conflict. The point, however, is not to avoid inter-group struggles or social change. Clearly, in all societies in the world, injustice continues to exist and aid organizations must be continuously engaged in working for greater, inclusive justice. The focus here is on how they can be aware of, and avoid inadvertently worsening destructive interactions that do not serve to promote and strengthen justice.

In addition, the LCPP approach is not directed toward urging aid agencies to change or add to their mandates and become, also, peace agencies. Rather, we focus on how aid agencies – both those that provide emergency assistance and those that are involved in supporting development – how they can do what they do best (relief and development) and, at the same time, ensure that their aid does nothing to worsen existing tensions and helps local people find options and alternatives to conflict.

Characteristics of Conflict Areas

The Context of Conflict

It has to be noted that the context of conflict is characterized by two sets of things – divisions, tensions and capacities for war on the one hand and connectors or local capacities for peace on the other hand. At this point, we are going to turn to more detail about how to identify and understand the divisions, tensions and war capacities.

A first step in doing this is to understand the context of conflict by identifying **WHO** is divided in any particular conflict area. In all areas, there are a number of inter-group or interpersonal tensions and disagreements. We are not equally interested in all of these; many represent healthy pluralism and differences. Rather, what we want to focus on are those divisions and inter-group tensions that either have in the past, or might in the future, turn into inter-group destructive conflict or inter-group violence. The point here is to try to identify those schisms that are important both in terms of the type of destruction they can produce and in terms of the numbers of people who are involved. When the important groups that are (or may be) divided are identified, then it is important to consider what are the sources of tension between these groups, how and why are they divided, how do the divisions and tensions show up between them.

Identifying Dividers / Sources of Tension

In addition, very often there are people who have an interest in warfare and who gain from it. There are also structures and systems that represent capacities for dividing people. These are the War Capacities that we refer to. Once the groups that are in, or potentially in, conflict are identified, then the focus should move to understanding the divisions, tensions and war interests. The LCP Project found some categories useful for understanding divisions, tensions and war capacities. These include:

Systems and Institutions

For example, the ways in which fighters are organized. Militia structures might be formed in situations where the central government is weak. Police departments can be organized to use one group to police another. Legal systems can discriminate against the rights of one group. Wells and power systems can be controlled by one side of a conflict.

Attitudes and Actions

For example, the violent acts that daily maintain the tensions in a society such as terrorism, like grenade attacks or bombs in marketplaces. Or the acts that explicitly target one group. These can be the police stopping one group at a checkpoint while letting another group go through. Racism can also be included into this category of dividers.

Different Values and Interests

For example, agriculturalists and pastoralists treat land use very differently. Also, religious values can be used to promote dividers, such as religious laws that are imposed even on people not of that religion.

Different Experiences

For example, history can be selectively used to highlight the times when groups were fighting one another rather than referring to times when they cooperated. Conflicts can also arise out of situations where groups have very different lifestyles, whether those differences are religious or economic, etc.

Symbols and Occasions

For example, one group can impose their holidays on the other. Or, alternately, they can prevent a holiday from being observed. Monuments might be destroyed or boundaries crossed.

Identifying Connectors / Local Capacities for Peace

In addition to the more obvious Dividers, Tensions or War Capacities, Contexts of Conflict are also characterized by Connectors or Local Capacities for Peace. It is important, always, to remember that:

- *More countries do not go to war than do.*
- *More people, even in war zones, do not fight than do.*
- *More people do not kill their neighbours than do.*
- *More would-be leaders try to excite people to inter-group violence than succeed in doing so.*

That is, non-war is, apparently, more common and more "natural" than war. There are many ways that people manage differences, disagreements, suspicions, etc. other than through destructive or violent conflict. However, we should not be too optimistic about capacities for peace or connectors. In a society where open conflict does erupt, these are clearly not strong enough or effective enough to prevent violence. They have failed by definition. Nonetheless, they have existed and some still exist; they provide a base on which future non-war or peace can be constructed.

What Do We Mean By Connectors?

In the midst of warfare, especially in situations of civil war where former fellow-citizens are fighting each other, there continue to exist a whole series of things that connect people who are fighting. These include:

Systems and Institutions

For example, in all societies where civil war breaks out, markets continue to connect people across the lines of fighting. Sometimes these involve formal inter-enemy trade; sometimes they involve women meeting at the market by the river-side one morning a week. Communications systems can provide linkages (for example, we have been told by many people that they value the BBC because they know that everyone on all sides of a war can hear the same information about what is happening); in some cases, irrigation systems, bridges, roads and electrical grids connect people in spite of war (in some cases, they are destroyed by warriors intent on separating people).

Attitudes and Actions

For example in the midst of war, one finds individuals and groups who continue to express attitudes of tolerance, acceptance, even love or appreciation for people on the "other side". One finds people who act in non-war ways, doing things that the war would dictate were wrong such as adopting abandoned

children of the “other side”, linking across lines to continue a professional association or journal, setting up new associations of people opposed to the war. They do these things because they seem “normal” or “right”. Often, they do not think of them as extraordinary or, even, as non-war.

Shared Values and Interests

For example, the common value placed on children’s health has been the basis for UNICEF’s success in negotiating days of tranquillity for inoculations against childhood diseases. Sometimes a common religion can bring people together.

Common Experiences

For example, war itself can provide linkages among different sides. Citing the experience of war and suffering as “common to all sides”, people sometimes create new anti-war alliances across boundaries.

Symbols and Occasions

For example, stories abound of the soldiers in the trenches in the First World War who, on Christmas eve began to sing “Silent Night” together, and then, they returned to war. National art, music, historical anniversaries, national holidays, monuments can bring people together or link them across differences.

These five categories are not meant to be conceptually tight and mutually exclusive; rather, they are meant to open up our minds so that we actually see how many things do continue to connect people even in warfare. To be able to recognize these and support them offers options for aid programmers in conflict settings.

What Are Local Capacities for Peace?

Every society has both individuals and systems that prevent every disagreement from breaking out into war and that help contain and move away from violence if it begins. These include justice and legal systems, police forces, implicit codes of conduct, elders groups, church or civic leaders, etc. The roles of conflict prevention and mediation are assigned to some people and institutions in every society. These are what we mean by capacities for peace.

We should, however, be cautious against “easy” identification of connectors or peace capacities. For example, many people assume that “women’s groups” are connectors or peace capacities, but experience shows that women’s groups can either be connectors or deeply committed dividers. Similarly, churches can serve to connect groups or they can serve to divide. One must always look, in context, for who is being connected and who is being divided and how this is occurring in order to do this analysis accurately. If people within one group are being effectively “connected” in order to oppose other groups with greater strength, it would be a mistake to identify this connection as one that is promoting inter-group harmony.

Aid’s Impact on Conflict

Unpacking the Aid Programme

To highlight all of the elements that, together, make up a field level assistance programme, and to encourage participants to look carefully at all the aspects of their own aid programmes as a step toward analysing their impacts on the context, it is necessary to unpack the aid programme. Here it should be noted that every one of the following elements involves decisions made at headquarters and/or field levels and that each decision has the potential to affect whether and how the aid programme interacts with the context of conflict:

General Questions

- Mandate?
 - Headquarters organization?
 - Fundraising Policy and Effectiveness?
-

Planning Questions

- Why?
- Where?
- What?
- When / How Long?
- For Whom (beneficiaries)?
- With Whom (local partners)?
- By Whom (staff)?
- How (strategies, approaches)?

The LCP Project's work with agencies providing aid in conflict has found very clear patterns in the ways through which aid interacts with conflict. Rather than be discouraged by the repetitiveness of these patterns, we are heartened, because if we can identify patterns of relationships, then we can anticipate them in different settings. If we can anticipate how aid affects conflict, then we can think of ways to avoid the negative, reinforcing impacts and encourage the positive, conflict-reducing impacts. Aid interacts with conflict through two media:

1. Resource Transfers

All aid programmes involve the transfer of some resources - food, health care, training, capacity building, etc. Experience shows that when outside resources are introduced into a resource-scarce environment where people are in conflict with each other, the local people see these resources as representing power and wealth and, thus, they become a part of the conflict. People in conflict attempt to control and use aid resources to support their side of the conflict and to weaken the other side.

2. Implicit Ethical Messages

Additionally, by the ways in which it is offered, aid carries a series of implicit messages that, also, have an effect on conflict.

Resource Transfers

There are five patterns by which resources could feed into, prolong and worsen conflict. These include:

Allocation Effects

Very often aid goods are stolen by warriors to support the war effort either directly (as when food is stolen to feed fighters), or indirectly (as when food is stolen and sold in order to raise money to buy weapons).

Market Effects

Aid affects prices, wages and profits and can either reinforce the war economy (enriching activities and people that are war-related) or the peace economy (reinforcing "normal" civilian production, consumption and exchange).

Distribution Effects

When aid is targeted to some groups and not to others, and these groups exactly (or even partially) overlap with the divisions represented in the conflict, aid can reinforce and exacerbate conflict. Aid can also reinforce connectors by crossing and linking groups by the ways it is distributed.

Substitution Effects

Aid can substitute for local resources that would have been used to meet civilian needs and, thus, free these up to be used in support of war. There is a political substitution effect that is equally important. This occurs when international agencies assume responsibility for civilian survival to such an extent that this allows local leaders and warriors to define their roles solely in terms of warfare and control through violence. As the aid agencies take on support of non-war aspects of life, such leaders can increasingly abdicate any responsibility for these activities.

Legitimization Effects

Aid legitimizes some people and some actions and weakens or side-lines others. It can support either those people and actions that pursue war, or those that pursue and maintain non-war (peace).

Implicit Ethical Messages

While aid carries the explicit message of caring for the needy, the way aid is given does also transfer some implicit messages. The LCP Project has identified seven types of negative implicit ethical messages. It should be noted that, while it is clear that the impacts of aid through resource transfers can be quite important for conflict, it is much less clear about the actual impacts of the seven implicit ethical messages described below. However, these ideas have come from aid workers who think they are quite important; they do not come from some "external evaluation" of how aid gets it wrong! Thus, it seems useful and even essential to consider them carefully and think about our own experiences with this kind of impact.

Arms and Power

When aid agencies hire armed guards to protect their goods from theft or their workers from harm, the implicit ethical message perceived by those in the context is that it is legitimate for arms to determine who gets access to food and medical supplies and that security and safety derive from weapons.

Disrespect, Mistrust, Competition among Aid Agencies

When aid agencies refuse to cooperate with each other, and even worse “bad-mouth” each other (saying things such as “we don’t work the way they work; we are better and they get it wrong”), the message received by those in the area is that it is unnecessary to cooperate with anyone with whom one does not agree. Further, you don’t have to respect or work with people you don’t like.

Aid Workers and Impunity

When aid workers use the goods and support systems provided as aid to people who suffer for their own pleasures and purposes (as when they take the vehicle to the mountains for a weekend holiday even though petrol is scarce), the message is that if one has control over resources, it is permissible to use them for personal benefit without being accountable to anyone else who may have a claim on these resources.

Different Value for Different Life

When aid agency policies allow for evacuation of expatriate staff if danger occurs but not for care of local staff, or even worse, when plans call for removal of vehicles, radios and expatriates while local staff, food and other supplies are left behind, the message is that some lives (and even some goods) are more valuable than other lives.

Powerlessness

When field-based aid staff disclaim responsibility for the impacts of their aid programmes, saying things such as “You can’t hold me accountable for what happens here; it is my headquarters, or the donor, or these terrible warlords who make my aid have negative impacts”, the message received is that individuals in complex circumstances cannot have much power and, thus, they do not have to take responsibility for what they do or how they do it. And, of course, this is what is heard from people involved in civil wars - i.e. “I can’t help what I do; someone else makes me do it.”

Belligerence, Tension, Suspicion

When aid workers are nervous about conflict and worried for their own safety to such an extent that they approach every situation with suspicions and belligerence, believing for example that these soldiers at the checkpoint “only understand power” and “can’t be trusted to be human”, their interactions with people in war zones very often reinforce the modes and moods of warfare. The message received is that power is, indeed, the broker of human interactions and it is normal to approach everyone with suspicion and belligerence.

Publicity

Finally, when NGO headquarters use publicity pictures that emphasize the gruesomeness of warfare and the victimization of parties, they can reinforce the demonization of one side in a war and, thus, reinforce the sense that all people on that side are evil while everyone on another side is an innocent sufferer. This is seldom the case and undermines the humanitarian principle. This, too, can reinforce the modes and moods of warfare rather than helping the public, or the agency’s own staff, find an even-handed way to respond to those on all sides who seek and want peace.

It is important to note that aid workers could also transfer positive Implicit Ethical Messages which would show examples of different behaviours and mentalities. Contrary to the seven messages listed above, these positive messages could be:

Non-Violence

Cooperation, Coordination, Use of Synergies

Accountability and Transparency

Equal Concern, Justice, Empathy

Responsibility

Politeness, Confidence, Trust

Balanced Reporting

Framework for Programming Options

Lessons Learned

The lessons learned through LCPP are:

1. *That the Context of Conflict is characterized by two sets of things:*
 - a) *The Division and Tensions between groups and what might be called War Interests or Capacities for War that we all know exist in conflict settings.*
 - b) *Surprising and far more interesting is the fact that the context of conflict is also characterized by things that connect the sides at war and by what can be called local capacities for peace. The reason this is important (and this should be clearly emphasized) is because we all expect conflicts to have divisions and tensions and war interests, but we do not expect to find connections and peace capacities. Thus, very often, as we provide assistance in conflict settings, we inadvertently direct the aid in a way that it reinforces the divisions and undermines connections. If we are aware of this, then we can think more clearly about how to design aid programmes in a way that we avoid those negative side-effects.*
2. *When aid is given in the context of conflict, it becomes a part of that context and, as such, either reinforces and exacerbates the divisions and tensions or supports and strengthens the connectors / capacities for peace.*

The Elements of an Aid Programme

Aid programmes are multi-layered. Involved in the “package” of aid are headquarters, policy makers and field activities. Aid programmes reflect an agency’s mandate, its headquarters arrangements and styles, and its fundraising approaches and successes (or failures). In addition, an aid programme involves decisions about whether and why to intervene in a given situation; about when and for how long to do so; about where to work; with whom to work; what kind of staff to hire and how; and finally, about how to carry out the programme. Each of these decisions has its own effects on the Divisions / Tensions and Connectors / LCPs.

How Aid Affects Conflict

From looking at many different projects in many different settings, it has been possible to identify clear predictable patterns of how aid affects conflict. There are two basic ways this occurs:

- a) *Through Resource Transfers. Aid involves provision of some resources and these can become a part of the conflict as groups vie for their share or try to keep others from getting access to them.*
- b) *Through Implicit Ethical Messages. Aid carries the explicit message of caring about suffering. By the ways in which it is given and the actions of staff, it also carries several implicit or tacit messages and these can affect the context of conflict.*

Programming Options

It should be noted that, when the impacts of aid on conflict become clear, if some of these are negative (i.e. worsen divisions or weaken connectors), then there are always programming options that can be tried to avoid having these impacts. Or, if the programme seems to be missing opportunities to have a positive effect (i.e. reducing divisions or supporting connectors), there are always options to improve impacts. Experience shows options do exist and that creative aid workers have, in fact, developed many of these that improve projects in context. However, while the patterns by which aid interacts with conflict are predictable and show up across different contexts, the options for ensuring that the impacts are positive rather than negative always must be designed by taking the specific, local circumstances into account. Thus, it is impossible to generalize about “what works”. Using the ideas and clarification of relationships that the LCPP has gathered, aid workers can apply them to any local situation and come up with a relevant and appropriate set of ideas for their own circumstances. Nevertheless, any option found to reduce a negative impact or to enhance a positive one must be checked again, against the other side of the chart. The process of programme design and redesign is a dynamic, rather than static (once and for all), process. Even conflict itself is dynamic so that a “divider” today may be a “connector” tomorrow and vice versa. The tool can and should be used iteratively and repeatedly as a check on programme effects.

Redesigning the Aid Programme

Experience shows that aid workers are usually very able to take the LCP Project tools and use them to analyse their situation, and the positive and negative impacts of their aid on conflict. However, very often, even with this awareness, they have difficulty thinking of programming options. There is a strong tendency to think that there is only one way to do things or to assume that the way that programmes have been done in the past cannot be altered.

*It is important to keep in mind that most of aid’s impacts on conflict have several dimensions. We have found in many places that it is important first to “unpack” the problem (that is, really analyse why and how aid is having the identified impact) in order to come up with a “package” of solutions that involves several different steps to be taken to address the issue realistically. **The way to do this is to use the Framework**, looking at a complete aid programme in its context in order to identify all the ways in which that aid programme interacts with the conflict. Once this is clear, then the next step is to think of options, in that context, for delivering the same goods without having the identified negative impact and, where possible, enhancing the positive impacts.*