

Rebuilding after war:

*a summary report of the
war-torn societies project*

Matthias Stiefel, WSP Director



WSP



PSIS

This is a preliminary record of the lessons gathered in the first four years of WSP's project activity in Eritrea, Guatemala, Mozambique, Northeast Somalia and at the central coordination level. A developed version of this report will be produced in early 1999 and take account of further input from WSP partners during the dissemination phase that ends in December 1998.

©WSP/UNRISD 1998

Table of Contents

Why this issue is important	5
How WSP began and what it is	7
1 The beginnings	7
2 The four country projects	7
3 The CCU and Geneva operations	10
What we learned about the challenges of rebuilding after war	12
1 Understanding the challenge	12
2 Understanding the actors	16
What this means and how we respond	23
1 Defining a new approach	23
2 Improving external assistance	28
What we discovered research as a tool for rebuilding	34
1 PAR as a tool for rebuilding	35
2 The WSP approach as an example of external assistance	38
What comes next implications of the WSP experience	42
1 How new are WSP lessons?	42
2 What are the implications of WSP's general lessons?	42
3 How useful are WSP's general lessons for reform?	43
4 How new is the WSP methodology and approach?	43
5 What are the implications and wider usefulness of the WSP approach?	44
6 What comes next?	44
Annex Senior advisors and donors	46

Rebuilding after war: *a summary report of the war-torn societies project*

Why this issue is important

Helping societies to recover from war and build sustainable peace has become a major task. It must be seen as an important and ongoing challenge, not only because more and more countries are affected by conflict but also because unresolved conflicts inevitably lead to instability. Sustainable and appropriate rebuilding after war is consequently also a prerequisite to the prevention of future conflicts.

Since the early 1990s almost a third of all countries in the world have experienced violent conflict, often internal war waged by and against civilian populations. Efforts to prevent or put an end to these conflicts have largely failed. Ceasefires often reflect nothing more than an imposed 'negative peace' rather than real peace. The root causes of the conflict remain untackled and continue to fuel cycles of violence. Almost inevitably, conflicts resume and, like a contagious disease, spread to neighbouring countries and regions and infect them.

The costs are enormous. Decades of development efforts are wiped out and the horrors of war leave festering wounds and bitter memories in the hearts and souls of people and nations that are not healed by the passage of time. Unforgotten and carried from generation to generation, they become the seeds of future conflicts. The unresolved legacies of today's wars are time bombs threatening our future.

It is evident, then, that the challenge of rebuilding societies after war is much more complex and difficult than the task of putting an end to fighting. Solutions cannot be imported: peace has to be built by the people themselves. But they cannot do it alone. The international community can and must help them to consolidate peace and overcome the legacies of war. If this does not happen, local conflicts will resume, again and again, threatening to destabilize larger regions, undermining development and devaluing hope for the future.

The challenge of rebuilding war-torn societies is therefore not a marginal issue of interest only to the countries affected and agencies specifically concerned with the issue, while mainstream development assistance continues apace. It is an issue that affects us all and should concern us all. If we don't get it right, we will not be able to secure peace, security and development for future generations. In the framework of current efforts to reform the United Nations and other regulatory mechanisms and institutions of the international community, we need to give more importance to this challenge when designing institutional structures, defining policy and programmes, and allocating resources.

Over four years – from 1994 to 1998 – the War-torn Societies Project (WSP), an experimental action-research process supported by 28 agencies and institutions, has attempted to throw some light on this challenge. It has sought to better understand the problems of post-conflict reconstruction and the role that different actors play in addressing them, and to formulate recommendations to improve assistance. This summary report reflects some of the lessons and insights gained in the course of WSP's first four years. It also documents discoveries made in the implementation of the project's experimental research methodology which itself became a precious tool for rebuilding.

How WSP began and what it is

1. The beginnings

WSP is a joint project of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and the Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies (PSIS) of the Geneva Graduate Institute of International Studies. It was launched in June 1994 not only to help societies emerging from major social and political conflict to identify, among the numerous urgent challenges facing them, which issues should be given priority as a matter of policy, but also to explore ways in which the international community could better assist them.

In the aftermath of the Cold War there had been a dramatic rise in the number of conflicts, particularly internal, in countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. These not only had huge implications for the structures of societies in these countries, but also posed a major challenge to those providing relief and helping in longer-term rehabilitation – be it social, economic or political.

The experience of UNRISD and PSIS, and of others involved in the delivery of aid, was discussed at a brainstorming seminar held in Cartigny, Switzerland, in 1994. This brought together, for the first time in such a form, representatives from war-torn societies and some of the major actors involved in international assistance. At Cartigny, these shared interests in post-conflict rebuilding laid the foundation for a concrete plan of joint action that would link research and policy. The War-torn Societies Project was born.

The essential premise of WSP was that post-conflict rehabilitation typically involves a whole range of actors – internal and external – but that it is often hampered by their lack of understanding of how some of the basic issues and priorities involved in rehabilitation relate to each other. This lack of understanding was seen to be compounded because the various actors did not effectively exchange information on their policy agendas, and by the limitations and inflexibility of some of the external actors' terms of reference.

2. The four country projects

With these initial assessments of some of the hurdles in view, WSP undertook to initiate, in selected war-torn societies, participatory action-research (PAR) projects. Essentially these would take the form of jointly sponsored research activities into priority areas for social and economic reconstruction. WSP's role would not be to undertake the research but to facilitate it, provide support and training where necessary and observe the process to learn from its implementation. In each country the local team would promote and mediate dialogue among the main actors involved through regular meetings in a neutral forum.

Research and policy action were seen as potentially related in several ways: research would help identify priorities for policy while also mapping out

what programmes various actors were already engaged in the participants in turn might not only respond to the research findings but call for new areas of enquiry, collectively steering the research into new or more directions. In the process it was expected that there would be value in promoting and facilitating dialogue about the research priorities and findings and about the policy agendas of the different participants: government agencies and other national actors, multilateral and bilateral aid agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The WSP approach was laid down in a Project Document accepted as a basis for action at the 1994 Cartigny seminar. The document outlined a number of crucial steps that were to be followed and elements that were to be included in each country project. In terms of organizational structure and staffing, this involved

- choosing a Country Project Coordinator/Director, necessarily a consensus figure, who would have overall responsibility for the project and for liaising with key government and external actors
- forming a Project Group comprising representatives of the main internal and external actors involved in post-conflict rebuilding, that would assume collective 'ownership' of the project,
- recruiting a Research Coordinator and other core researchers and
- providing for administrative support staff and logistic support

Operationally, the first task for the core research team was to prepare a Country Note. This was a substantive paper discussing the key social, economic and political conditions and requirements of the country in the post-conflict situation, and was to be prepared on the basis of both existing data and research and broad consultation with main internal and external actors. It would serve as a basis for discussion in the Project Group and for selecting usually not more than five key themes or Entry Points for research that could highlight policy issues in which different actors would be engaged.

For each of these themes a Working Group would then be constituted made up of representatives of the different actors with a particular interest or involvement in the policy area concerned. Members of these Working Groups would interact with the researchers and by implication with each other on the question of which issues would be given priority and how, and would generally give direction to the research and feedback on the basis of its preliminary findings.

In the conduct of the research activities and in Working Group deliberations, a special effort was to be made to ensure a meaningful 'policy mix' as well as 'actor mix'. WSP projects were expected to last approximately eighteen months, a period considered both necessary and sufficient to initiate a process that might eventually become self-sustaining.

At the Cartigny meetings a number of countries were considered as suitable candidates for the piloting of the WSP experiment. There was consensus that the criteria for selection should include regional diversity, different stages in the conflict-to-peace continuum and different types of ceasefire arrangements. It was felt that this would provide a mix of pilots that would broaden the lessons learned and introduce variables that provided learning experiences. In the event, four countries were chosen.

- Eritrea, where there had been a victorious liberation struggle and where a legitimate government with popular support was in place
- Mozambique, where the long-running internal conflict had run its course and internationally monitored elections had been held,
- Guatemala where 35 years of civil conflict had essentially run out of steam and where a peace agreement between the government and guerillas was to be signed
- Somalia where the breakdown of central government structures and failed international interventions had left a legacy of diversified regions, some of which were stable and beginning rebuilding (in the light of this, WSP initiated its Somali Programme first in the northeast and then in Somaliland)

WSP was launched in Eritrea in June 1995 in Mozambique in July 1995 in Guatemala in August 1996 and in Northeast Somalia – after a prolonged preparatory period – in January 1997. The Eritrean project ended with a final workshop in December 1996. Its life was officially extended until May 1997 to allow for the preparation of a successor arrangement, and then again to the end of October that year when WSP Eritrea was officially closed. In June 1997 it was decided to extend the project in Mozambique to the end of the year to allow for more effective dissemination of the research findings and further consideration of possible successor arrangements. Subsequently the transition phase was extended to the end of April 1998, at which time WSP Mozambique was closed.

The Guatemala project had its final workshop in March 1998 and was formally brought to a close the following month. The WSP Somali Programme continues, with activities now initiated in Somaliland as well as Northeast Somalia (Puntland).

In the first two countries where WSP projects were launched – Eritrea and Mozambique – the dynamics of the projects worked out quite differently as might have been expected in different contexts. In both countries, however, participants reflecting on their involvement in WSP Working Groups singled out the element of dialogue as having been of most significance in helping them better understand different actors' positions and policies. Representatives of NGOs or multilateral agencies, for example, reported that it was through WSP that they had come to better appreciate the rationale of government policies while participants from government or political organizations observed that WSP had provided a much needed venue for sharing some of their policy thinking with other actors engaged in reconstruction efforts. Beyond this, almost all quarters said that involvement in WSP had been a shared learning experience, and in a number of instances had helped to indicate attainable solutions to common issues.

A similar appreciation emerges from the WSP experience in Guatemala and Northeast Somalia where the project created a much needed democratic forum for all actors – particularly local and national actors – to meet and search together for a better understanding of common challenges of post-war rebuilding, and to search for new solutions.

In terms of providing a venue for creative dialogue and generating a sense of common orientation, from the initial country experiences it appears that

WSP may indeed have succeeded in transposing some basic elements of PAR from the micro to the macro context

3. The CCU and Geneva operations

Throughout the life of the projects, the Central Coordination Unit (CCU) in Geneva closely monitored the research activities provided back-up where necessary and arranged logistic support

The CCU also provided a vital link between the country projects and the 'friends of WSP' — not only the external assistance agencies and bilaterals represented at the Cartigny meeting, but others who manifested interest in the aims of the project in the form of financial support or valuable advice and professional input

A representative number of these supporters were invited to become part of the ongoing monitoring and evaluation process coordinated by the CCU, and formed the nucleus of WSP's Periodic Donor Consultation Process (PDCP). Through regular meetings and communications (formal and informal), these representatives of donors and agencies were not only informed of what was happening in the project but also consulted, used as sounding-boards for ideas and generally integrated into the development of both the theoretical and practical aspects of the project's development

Additionally, a small number of particularly experienced representatives of both donor and recipient countries made themselves available as advisors to the CCU. This Senior Advisory Group (SAG) was actively involved in the setting-up of the country projects, providing introductions that opened doors and gave WSP management access to political interlocutors at the highest levels and being available not only for strategic advice but to work within the country projects as advisors and evaluators as necessary

In this way, the CCU Geneva operation became almost a 'fifth country project' since it was evident that apart from the country-specific experiments that would generate insights and lessons on each country experience and feed into the WSP experience as a whole, there would be a range of lessons to be learned from the development and impact of the project on external actors at headquarters level

To this extent, WSP evolved in a number of different forms. It began as an attempt to find solutions to the difficulties the international community faced in responding to the challenges of conflict and post-conflict rebuilding. Once the field experience had begun, however, WSP took on a second manifestation as an internal, national process belonging to local actors involved in post-conflict rebuilding. In this guise, it was essentially a PAR project in which dialogue and research were joined to provide options for policy-formulation and priority-setting in each country. WSP in the field was also characterised by the neutral space it provided, the consensus-building and the dialogue it facilitated and the capacity-building it encouraged

At arms' length from these two processes, WSP was a theoretical research experiment. From inside and outside the WSP country projects, experience was gained in the relationships between research and policy-formulation, dialogue and research, and the application of research-action at micro- and

macro-levels. Lessons drawn relate to the methodology and processes involved, the nature of the research undertaken, and the positioning of research with relation to political rebuilding processes.

The CCU/Geneva arm of the project convoked a workshop in June 1998 in Bossey, near Geneva, at which the 'global' players — representatives of bilateral and multilateral supporters, PDCP and SAG members — came together to begin the difficult but vital task of translating some of the lessons learned in the first four years of the project into tools that might be used to effect change in the way external assistance agencies perceive, plan, implement and coordinate their work in countries emerging from war.

This dynamic meeting resulted in two important tools: *The Bossey Statement*, in which those present at Bossey recognised five truths that underlie their commitment to improve their actions in post-conflict countries, and five steps that might realistically be taken; and a series of *Practical recommendations for managers of multilateral and bilateral aid agencies* that outline a number of discrete areas in which review and reform might realistically and promptly be undertaken.

Building on the CCU/Geneva process and the work begun at Bossey, the final quarter of 1998 sees the launch of a communication and dissemination campaign that not only documents the WSP experience but also takes its lessons and results to a number of distinct target audiences drawn from donors, the relief and development community, the academic and research sector and the media. In this way the 'fifth country' experience feeds the lessons drawn in the four pilot countries into international debate on post-conflict rebuilding.

What we learned about the challenges of rebuilding after war

From the very beginning, WSP supported and monitored the action-research processes in its four country projects and systematically analysed the results. They were of two kinds: on the one hand, they took the form of substantive findings that emerged from the research, on the other they related to the political processes brought about by the project's participatory methodology.

This section reports on the first type of results and presents some of the substantive lessons that we have been able to draw from the WSP experiment. It provides an insight into what we have learned about the very nature of the challenge of rebuilding after war and about the way external assistance could be improved.

It is not possible here to cover the issue in an exhaustive way, here we aim to highlight some important signposts that might help us to find our way through this complex issue and that may lead us to revisit successes and failures of rebuilding in a new light. Specific findings in the thematic areas on which the WSP Working Groups focused their research are not reported here because they are dealt with in detail in separate volumes published in the countries concerned (see page 47). While many important lessons have been learned in the course of this pilot project, they obviously do not cover all the issues at stake, nor even all the major ones. And since the pilot covered only four countries and by no means all the many post-conflict situations or experiences, the conclusions drawn here make no claim to being universally valid.

1. Understanding the challenge

The challenge of rebuilding war-torn societies is infinitely more difficult and complex than is generally recognized. It exceeds by far the challenges of 'normal' development processes which, in countries emerging from war, are amplified by the legacy of the conflict (physical destruction, lack of resources and manpower, institutional fragility, political volatility, social trauma), by the urgency of the problems, and by the simultaneous challenges of humanitarian relief and of military security. It is this complexity that multiplies the number of actors and agendas present in any post-conflict country and introduces logics and practices of assistance and intervention that often run counter to basic principles of development assistance.

The central, primary challenge of rebuilding war-torn societies has to do with mending relations and with restoring dignity, trust and faith.

Societies emerging from war face a range of problems on all fronts, all connected and all urgent. But one overshadows and affects all the others: the destruction of relationships and the loss of trust, of confidence, of dignity.

and of faith. More than the physical, institutional or systemic destruction that war brings, it is this invisible legacy, grounded in individual and collective trauma, that is most potent and destructive. It has the potential to undermine the solutions to all the other problems, be they economic, technical, institutional, political, humanitarian or security-related.

If people do not trust each other and lack trust and confidence in government and in the rebuilding process in general, then the best rebuilding strategies are likely to fail. Demobilizing and disarming combatants is likely to remain a sham if protagonists do not feel secure and have no trust in the political arrangements put in place. And the promotion of economic efficiency helps little if the confidence of investors and consumers in the stability of the system is not restored.

In Somalia, mistrust among the Somali people for government institutions has been one of the major obstacles to the restoration of administration at any level. People are simply too afraid that real authority bestowed upon any power structure may be abused or used against them. Similarly, Guatemala is an example of a society emerging from decades of civil war where destruction is much less physical than psychological, social and political. Rebuilding requires above all restoring confidence and trust in the legitimacy of public institutions.

The problems of fragile relationships between people and institutions are related to and compounded by deficits in the political development of the country: unclear, transitory or unstable divisions of power, transitory or immature political institutions, scarcely developed civil society and civic culture.

- War often leaves behind unresolved power struggles, particularly if a ceasefire was imposed on an unfinished civil war. Elections do not necessarily put an end to this. In the absence of a mature democratic system and of organized civil society, elections rarely lead to sustainable power-sharing arrangements, but rather to one party simply dominating another. 'Winner takes all' electoral systems aggravate this problem.

Angola is an example of a society where elections have not been able to bring peace but have rather reinforced cleavages and led to a renewed outbreak of war. In the absence of an acceptable power-sharing arrangement, neither of the protagonists, MPLA and UNITA, was ready to accept defeat in the elections, nor was able to do so without losing face.

- The chaos of war often destroys or discredits traditional social structures and authorities. New political structures remain fragile and immature, and new authorities often lack legitimacy and credibility.
- Post-war political systems and structures of governance tend to represent mixtures of authoritarianism and pluralism, as the tension between control and participation is particularly acute in such situations. Post-war governments are often beset by authoritarian or military legacies, and tempted by authoritarian solutions given the scale and urgency of the challenges facing them and the imperative need for direction, unity of approach and authority. They are, at the same time, aware of the need for broad popular support of rebuilding strategies.

Entrea is an example of this. The success of the liberation war brought to power the EPLF, a military and political front organization obviously more used to control than to widespread and uncontrolled participation. Since coming to power, the government has systematically tried to institutionalize a democratic practice which has not been easy in the absence of an organized civil society. Participation consequently takes primarily the form of state-organized participation, such as the National Service Programme.

- Unrealistically high expectations by the people, attached to the coming of peace, contrast with the low capacity of the state to deliver. This is likely to lead to disillusionment which in turn diminishes the credibility of the state. While people survive by being flexible and trying out new solutions, they find it hard to accept that government might do the same thing; rather they look for stability and predictability.
- New social groups who are politically aware and experienced (demobilized soldiers, returning refugees, returnees from the diaspora) tend to politicize the local scene.

In Guatemala the return of demobilized soldiers and ex-guerrillas to their villages has contributed to politicizing the local scene in the post-war period.

- External actors and forces continue to play divisive roles.

Problems of relationships between people and institutions are compounded by the lack of neutral spaces in which they can meet and talk.

- The politicized context leaves few neutral or impartial spaces for dialogue, and post-war political systems rarely provide institutionalized mechanisms for dialogue and communication.
- The authoritarian tendencies of many post-war governments are not conducive to constructive communication and genuine open dialogue. Often governments simply do not see the need to bring civil society in its widest sense into the policy debate and work on the basis that the urgency of the rebuilding task diminishes the need to take time for dialogue, and that civil society accepts this.

Problems of relationships between people are compounded by the difficulties of reconciliation.

- Painful and divisive memories of the conflict are difficult to set aside and are often exacerbated by inappropriate policies that are insensitive to the impact they may have on relationships and thus on the promotion of peace or of conflict.

This is particularly apparent and serious in cases like Rwanda or the former Yugoslavia, where the scale of horrors perpetrated during the war has left deep and seemingly indelible scars in the collective memory of people. But it is just as relevant and potentially destructive for the rebuilding process in most other societies emerging from war.

- Reconciliation, the healing of bitter memories, the mending of relations and the restoration of trust is an infinitely complex and delicate exercise and may take a generation or more. The fact that people are ready to work together in rebuilding programmes and projects does not necessarily mean that they no longer harbour resentments or that they feel reconciled with former adversaries. It often just shows that people are surprisingly pragmatic and ready to work with former enemies in the elementary pursuit of livelihood and security.
- The restoration of justice by itself does not heal relations, though it is likely to contribute to healing by attributing responsibility and punishing perpetrators of violence.

Post-war societies tend to be unstable, politically volatile and politicized to the extreme

- In such a context no problem, solution or policy can ever be purely technical – inevitably they will have an impact on or be perceived in terms of relationships and power.

The basic proposition we have argued is of course that the impact of war on people – the way they see each other and their government – is infinitely more important than the impact of war on material assets, structures and institutions. These lessons refer to a typical case of civil war. The Eritrean case, representing a rare case of a successful liberation war, is something of an exception that does not, however, invalidate the basic proposition. Having successfully won the war for independence and secession from Ethiopia, Eritrea emerged with a strongly united people and government. As the Eritreans often tell us, they are not 'war-torn' but 'war-born'. How easily unresolved legacies of past relations can however fuel renewed conflict is all too apparent in the renewed conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

The challenge of rebuilding after war is essentially a development challenge in the special circumstances of a war-torn society

Problems faced by different societies emerging from war are surprisingly similar – they are basically development challenges – related to growth, stability, sustainability – amplified and compounded by the multiple impacts and legacies of the war and by the simultaneous presence of humanitarian and security issues: military presence, displacement, people movements, family breakdown, increased health and sanitation problems and the suchlike. Challenges of political development – linked to the mending, building and clarifying of relationships among people and between people and institutions – are at the heart of the rebuilding challenge. This is common to all post-war societies, though the political configuration of actors – and thus the range of possible solutions, varies considerably depending on the type of war and the type of peace.

An unfinished civil war on which a ceasefire has been imposed from the outside – as in Bosnia or to some extent Mozambique – obviously produces a very different set of political actors and dynamics than a successful liberation war – such as in Eritrea – where a successful liberation movement acquires state power invested with the legitimacy and credibility of victory. A ‘failed state’ like Somalia presents yet a different type, and so does Guatemala. The project’s four countries were in fact chosen with this in mind, so that they might provide a roughly representative sample of different post-war political configurations.

- Because humanitarian and military security challenges are added to the developmental challenges, most post-conflict problems involve multiple policy approaches and multiple actors at different levels, from the local to the international. Efforts are sometimes made to adopt integrated approaches to assistance, but they are always complex and potentially conflictual because they imply being able to accommodate vastly different agendas and logics of action. It is because actors are aware of this, and because so many different actors are involved, that sometimes nothing gets done at all and sometimes all the problems are tackled at once.
- Humanitarian and security challenges are present and are real but usually they are temporary and do not alter the fundamentally developmental nature of the rebuilding challenge. Humanitarian needs often increase at the end of a war, mostly because of large-scale movements of people, and humanitarian relief aid responds to this, alleviating suffering and providing basic livelihood support. It helps people get through the most difficult phases after the war, but is probably not crucial in terms of the longer-term rebuilding process.
- Military security challenges are largely a reflection of the challenge of political development and this itself reflects the primary need to mend relations and restore trust. They cannot be tackled by military means alone but require that the root causes of distrust and insecurity – between communities and neighbouring countries – be resolved.

2. Understanding the actors

The real importance of actors in rebuilding processes does not seem to correspond to the importance and weight given to them at present by the international community or by the media. The importance and role of some actors – internal actors generally, the local people, the private sector, women – is greatly underestimated. In contrast, the importance and role of other actors – external actors generally, the United Nations and, to a lesser extent, the state and public sector – is overestimated.

Local, private and internal actors are the main forces of rebuilding.

The main resources that allow a society to rebuild after a war lie undoubtedly in the people themselves, their resilience, creativity, pragmatism and capacity to adapt.

- Local solutions and responses to rebuilding challenges are often more effective, cheaper and more sustainable. In addition, they contribute to restoring dignity, confidence and faith in local capacities to cope.

Northern Somalia, now Puntland, and Somaliland are examples of the strength and resources that local actors can mobilize to rebuild their regions. Both regions have been the most stable and secure since the collapse of the last Somali government, and have made greatest progress towards re-establishing functional administration. In recent years, they have received much less assistance than the rest of the country, and were largely excluded from UNOSOM's nation-building efforts.

- The reintegration of refugees, internally displaced people or demobilized soldiers and militia illustrates the importance of locally-prompted action. Experience shows that when people return to their homes of their own free will, rather than at the prompting of governments or international agencies, their reintegration is much more likely to be successful. Similarly, local societies, particularly in rural areas, have an astonishing capacity for receiving and reintegrating returning groups, as long as their 'absorptive capacity' is strengthened with minimal focused assistance.

Northern Somalia is a striking example of the capacity of traditional societies to absorb and reintegrate returning refugees. So is Mozambique, where the majority of returning refugees and internally displaced people returned to their areas of origin and were successfully reintegrated without much external assistance, to the surprise of international aid agencies who expected a much longer process and resulting conflict.

- National governments and international actors do not build sufficiently on local forces, dynamics and initiatives, either because they are not aware of them, or because they do not fit into programmes and projects designed in national capitals or in headquarters of aid agencies. Local people are often seen more as a liability than an asset.
- It may not be easy for governments and external actors to know about positive local initiatives and projects on which rebuilding activities could be built or which could serve as a basis for a wider rebuilding strategy. Moreover, in the absence of well functioning structures of political representation, it is difficult to associate local actors with national policy-making processes.

Women are more than just a special vulnerable group. They constitute an important social force which often plays a major role in the rebuilding of war-torn societies.

- Though women may have a part in the beginning of hostilities, they often become the first social force to actively labour for peace, because they are among those who are most directly exposed to the consequences of war as they try to struggle for the survival of their families.
- Women provide the backbone of survival economies in times of war and conflict and are often the first to develop and invest in small-scale informal economic activities. However, as economic activities become larger and more formalized, men tend to take them over.
- Women often provide the only social safety networks during and after war based on pragmatic and informal forms of cooperation and solidarity.

- Once peace returns, traditional social structures and gender divisions often reassert themselves. These may remove women from positions of responsibility assumed during times of war and return them to more traditional roles. This not only deals a blow to social and economic survival strategies and informal economic networks but becomes the source of new tensions and conflict.

The reconfiguration of roles in post-conflict society, in fact, goes beyond the return of women to their pre-conflict status. Social integration and re-integration are major challenges facing post-war societies and involve not only women but returning refugees and internally displaced people, ex-combatants, and members of the diaspora. The implications of this 'reshuffling' are dealt with in Women and post-conflict reconstruction: issues and sources, Birgitte Sørensen, WSP Occasional Paper No 3, June 1998.

Private sector actors such as traders, local entrepreneurs, returning members from the diaspora and intellectuals are among the most dynamic forces in a post-war society, but they can support conflict as well as peace

- Private sector actors do not necessarily all share the overriding primary objectives of rebuilding and may invest in and support peace and rebuilding or conflict and war, depending on their personal agendas.
- They will call for the restoration of security and the rule of law in support of economic activities but they may also contribute to and thrive on the criminalization of the economy. Often they do both at the same time.

In Mozambique, the rapid development of the informal sector has significantly contributed to economic development in the immediate post-war period. It has, at the same time, led to a rapidly growing criminal sector of the economy which escapes control and taxation by the government.

- They are often the only ones to have profited from the war and may constitute a powerful and unreliable parallel power structure which is difficult to control.
- Through the development of informal sector activities, they can contribute in important ways to rebuilding economic activity.

In Northeast Somalia, private sector actors moved in to fill the void left by the collapse of the state. Services unavailable before the war – such as telephone and TV networks, and air transport – are now widely accessible and represent, together with the import/export trade which is also controlled by the private sector, the backbone of the Northern Somali economy. They are unregulated and sometimes hazardous.

- Refugees abroad – the diaspora – play an important role as a source of capital, expertise and qualified human resources, and in providing crucial international connections. Their return to their home country after war, often with relative wealth and a good education and professional background, can however constitute a mixed blessing. Those who stayed behind and fought often view them with mixed feelings: their integration into the society emerging from war is often difficult, and they can have a disrupting influence.

The media play a similarly important and potentially ambiguous role

- They can contribute in important ways to facilitate communication between people, actors and government and become a force for peace, reconciliation and consensus building
- They can however, just as easily be used by partisan forces to defend partisan interests and fuel conflict

**The state plays a crucial role and must be strengthened and supported
It should not be weakened by the equally important effort to support and
strengthen an emerging civil society.**

Neo-liberal advocates and proponents of civil society and of the 'grassroots' tend to minimize the role of the state and to accentuate its negative image as corrupt and inefficient, as a bloated bureaucracy engaged in the sterile struggle for power and privilege. This not only contributes to undermining the often already weak credibility and legitimacy of the state, it fuels distrust.

Perpetuating a negative image of the state greatly underestimates the crucial role that the state, and only the state, can and must play in the rebuilding process

- The state must take primary responsibility for restoring security and the rule of law, though civil participation may be necessary to support it in this function. This is a primary and crucial task that largely determines whether informal economic and social activities and networks, grown often out of survival strategies, develop into a strong national force or, instead, augment the criminal sectors of economy and society. The state's capacity to live up to this responsibility affects its credibility in crucial ways.
- The state fulfils important regulatory functions: protecting common and long-term rebuilding objectives from the private agendas of internal and external actors; and harmonizing local, regional and national interests.
- It sets priorities and defines rebuilding strategies, although these should result from a participatory and consensual process involving all the main forces of the country.
- The state's ability to fulfil its functions increases to the extent that it is seen as representing the main forces of society, and allows policy-making and rebuilding processes to be participatory. It decreases dramatically if the state is identified with partisan interests, representing one of the protagonists of war, or is excessively authoritarian.

The support and assistance external actors give to war-torn societies is important, though not determinant, and present forms of assistance are often ineffective, inappropriate, and can be harmful

External actors influence in important ways the dynamics of conflict and of peace before, during and after the outbreak of armed hostilities. Their role

in the outbreak of conflict is often important, though they rarely play the primary role since the roots of conflict are normally internal to each society. External actors also tend to play an important role in the formal ending of armed conflict, and their interventions at that stage often influence the political configuration of a society and consequently the stability and legitimacy of post-war political structures. The rebuilding process is thus crucially affected by the international environment and the presence and agendas of external actors.

In many cases where civil wars have dragged on for decades, (often starting during the liberation wars of colonial times, taking new forms as proxy wars during the Cold War and continuing in the nineties as expressions of internal struggles for power), external actors attempt at some stage to impose a ceasefire on an unfinished civil war through military or political pressure. This is often associated with politically expedient but often superficial assistance that does not tackle the root causes of conflict. It presents little more than a 'negative peace' which is hardly sustainable.

External actors cannot bring 'positive peace' to a country, peace that is sustainable because it can ensure social, political, economic and military security and stability and mitigate new tensions and conflicts. Such peace can only be built from the inside by local and national actors. External actors can and must help, though, by reviving, nurturing and complementing inherent local capacity for rebuilding with appropriate support, influence and assistance.

Helping societies to rebuild after war is extremely difficult, as experience shows, it easily becomes ineffective or goes wrong.

- This can be the case when external assistance is used to further the particular interests of the donor as part of a donor's larger agenda in a strategically important area, and when specific donor interests influence or determine the design of assistance policies. This is often the case to some degree, specific donor agendas often influence the allocation and form of assistance but they are rarely the primary reason or determinant of aid.
- It is more often the imperatives of domestic politics in donor countries that influence the attribution and form of external assistance, and that often negatively affect the design and quality of external assistance.
- Even if external assistance does not carry hidden agendas, it can have a divisive, corrupting or debilitating impact. Worse, it can unwittingly fuel tensions remaining from the war and contribute to renewed conflict. Reasons for this lie both at the recipient and at the donor end. At the recipient end, it is the extraordinary complexity of post-war situations, coupled with political volatility, that requires extremely careful, delicate and politically sensitive forms of intervention and assistance. Chances for external assistance projects to fail or have an unintended secondary or tertiary impact (by fuelling tensions and conflict because of inappropriate project design and execution), are much greater than in 'normal' development situations.

The ability of the international community – multilateral and bilateral agencies as well as NGOs – to understand complex post-war situations, to explore links between security, relief and development, and formulate appropriate policies has improved in recent years, but the capacity to operationalize these remains low

- Early attempts to rethink the role of humanitarian aid and its longer term impact and links to development assistance – expressed by the ‘continuum’ concept – have given way to a more sophisticated analysis that acknowledges that different challenges and policy approaches occur at the same time. This in turn has led to calls for ‘integrated strategic frameworks’ for action – a big step from the traditional call for simple coordination of activities
- New concepts have been coined such as ‘peace-building’, as distinct to peace-keeping, though their operational and practical significance remains ill-defined. The understanding of ‘conflict’ itself has shifted from a destructive process to be prevented to a potentially dynamic concept to be coped with and harnessed for positive development. This has led to an increased emphasis on the strengthening of local capacities to respond to and cope with crisis and conflict, as opposed to simply providing assistance to deal with the consequences of violent conflict
- Bilateral and multilateral actors and NGOs have formulated new policies towards crisis, conflict and post-war situations and, in some cases, have initiated corresponding institutional reform, often experimental
- Academic research, analysis and ambitious evaluation exercises have accompanied and given impulse to these advances in understanding, policy formulation and institutional reform. WSP has itself played a role and made a modest contribution to this process

WSP reviewed the way major bilateral and multilateral agencies have responded in recent years to the new challenges of crisis and post-conflict/conflict situations, in a survey detailed in ‘Lessons learned or lessons spurned?’ International capacities to respond to the challenges of rebuilding war-torn societies, Kenneth D. Bush, unpublished paper, June 1998

Despite such progress, the international community remains ill-prepared and ill-equipped to deal with the specific requirements of societies emerging from war. At the field level little has changed in the operational reality of aid.

- Institutional and operational tools of assistance often remain inflexible and are at times dysfunctional to the specific kind of assistance required in post-war situations
- New institutional units set up to deal with these issues often remain marginal, have little clout and few resources, and have little impact on the practice of mainstream assistance
- The sheer number of actors and agencies of external assistance is overwhelming and confusing to the recipients of aid. Agencies’ rules and agendas, often opposed to each other or in direct competition, divide local and national actors and disperse their strengths

- Assistance still tends to be paternalistic rather than empowering, and to import solutions and external models rather than accept impure and imperfect local solutions. 'Participation' and 'local ownership' often remain a sham. The urgency of problems is often used as an excuse for importing quick solutions. Donors do not find it easy to give up control to the recipients of aid. The presence of humanitarian relief and military actors and their logics and practices of intervention have negatively influenced development assistance.
- The role of fundraising and the media, in the cause of mobilizing public goodwill and financial support, may tend to provoke assistance actors to over-simplify complex challenges and represent both problems and solutions as visually discrete.
- External actors continue to shy away from the essentially political nature of the problems and solutions. They continue to treat rebuilding and relief as a primarily technical exercise, and to concentrate on the physical and institutional challenges of rebuilding, neglecting the more important challenge of mending relations and restoring trust and dignity. They tend to neglect the political context and ignore the political, social and psychological impact of their aid.
- External actors continue to assume that rebuilding war-torn societies is a short- to medium-term exercise that can be inserted into pre-defined bureaucratic plans and timetables. As a result assistance is often time-limited, irregular and inflexible.
- Relations between donors and recipients suffer from fundamental differences in perception and logic. Basic concepts such as 'self-reliance' and 'partnership' mean different things to them, and this is even more obvious the more one moves from theory and general policy statements to practical implementation.
- The net result of these developments is that the gap between policy declarations supported by political rhetoric, and actual results in delivery and implementation has increased. This has dramatic results: it inflates expectations and lowers credibility, it demoralizes and corrupts belief in the effort.

What this means and how we respond

1. Defining a new approach

There are no blueprints for rebuilding societies after war. While the objective, technical challenges and problems faced by societies after war are surprisingly similar in most post-war situations, the political context and configuration of actors, and the quality and nature of relations between actors and institutions, are unique to each case. Since it is precisely these qualitative and invisible legacies of war that determine the extent to which technical solutions can be applied to specific problems, it is not possible to draw up a blueprint for tackling the many challenges facing a society after war. At best general guidelines about priorities and methods of approach can be formulated. Nor is it possible to simply replicate policies that proved successful in one case in a new situation, although it is obviously possible to learn from past successes and failures. Concrete policy responses to specific rebuilding challenges must consequently be defined anew in each case and in accordance with given political realities.

General principles and objectives that should guide a new approach to rebuilding war-torn societies should take into account some of the main characteristics of the challenge outlined above:

- that the imposition or achievement of a ‘negative’ peace which usually follows the ending of armed hostilities is not sufficient but that the challenge is to build a ‘positive peace’, peace that is sustainable because it can ensure social, political, economic and military security and stability and mitigate new tensions and conflicts
- that this is fundamentally a development, not a humanitarian or security challenge,
- that the primary challenge has to do with mending relations and restoring trust, dignity and faith
- that local, private and in general internal actors are the main forces of rebuilding to be harnessed in a collective effort in which the state plays a key role
- that external assistance is important but requires major reform, primarily at the operational level

A special development approach must be developed, tailored to the requirements of post-war rebuilding

Such an approach must be based on a holistic and in-depth understanding of problems and of the way they relate to each other, of available resources, and of actors and their respective agendas. It must also consider the larger geographical influences and implications of problems and of possible policy responses. It must give particular consideration to political development which is as important as, and crucial to social and economic development.

Given the nature of the challenges political development is particularly important, but is often not given sufficient attention in rebuilding strategies

The United Nations has recognized that the central problem of Somalia today is one of governance. Without some kind of formula for the restoration of public administration, it will be impossible to find ways to provide social services, regulate economic activity, protect the environment, and promote reconciliation

A new development approach will have to take into account and target the root causes of war, as well as the tensions or problems that may emerge and grow as an unintended result of the rebuilding process itself and that may then become sources of conflict. It must also be based on a long-term perspective and strategy, since rebuilding a war-torn society can take a generation or more. At the same time, it must be able to accommodate both the need for urgent action in response to urgent problems, and the need for patience and the ability to wait for solutions to mature. Both may be equally difficult and are not common in traditional development approaches. The ability to respond urgently, through 'emergency development responses' requires flexibility, room for pragmatic *ad hoc* solutions and decision-making, possibly downward transfer of authority and special budgetary reserves. The ability to wait presumes exceptional sensitivity on the part of decision-makers to the evolving political and societal dynamics and much flexibility in timetables and rebuilding plans. All this has major repercussions on structures and processes at headquarters level.

Post-war development strategies must take into account and be responsive to humanitarian relief and military security challenges and be able to accommodate their objectives within the broader development framework. Human rights issues must be integrated into this broader framework.

Disagreements over the long- versus short-term perspective of refugee reintegration in Entrea was at the heart of the conflict between the Entrean Government and United Nations agencies. While the Entreans viewed resettlement programmes in terms of longer-term rebuilding processes and development, the United Nations agency viewed it as limited and short-term humanitarian assistance, in line with its mandate

- Humanitarian relief operations should be limited to alleviating suffering and providing basic livelihood support. They are exceptional interventions that respond to exceptional and temporary needs and are 'embedded' in an ongoing development process. They must remain well focused and be limited in time and should not become a substitute for development programmes.
- Protecting people is a political, not a humanitarian challenge and should be dealt with accordingly. Humanitarian aid cannot be a substitute for the political action that is necessary to ensure the protection of refugees and vulnerable groups.
- Humanitarian relief should be empowering, not debilitating, and should build on, strengthen and develop people's own capacity to cope with crisis.

- Military security challenges can often be responded to by appropriate and targeted development action. Development policies can contribute to consolidating and expanding areas of stability and reducing or encircling areas of conflict, and they can address root causes of insecurity by reducing distrust and promoting cooperation between conflicting parties, communities or neighbouring countries.
- Humanitarian relief and military security operations must not be allowed to affect the overall principles of the development approach such as participation and local ownership and responsibility.
- Human rights issues are important, both with regard to violations committed during the war, and the likely or possible violations of the post-war period. They should not be tackled however as a separate legal set of issues but be integrated within the broader development framework. With regard to the past, they are closely linked to the broader challenge of how a society copes with the past, of reconciliation. With regard to the present and future, they are closely linked to the challenges of political development.

Post-war development strategies must provide an integrated framework that is able to promote synergy and decrease contradictions between policies and actors addressing the multiple problems that all seem urgent and are all related.

- Priority-setting becomes at once more important and more difficult. It is crucial for two reasons: first because of the multiplicity of problems and challenges that require urgent action at the same time. Second, because different challenges and mandates may call for action that clashes with the action of other agents or with the broader and longer-term objectives of development. The setting of priorities, based on the 'weighing' of challenges and problems and the assessment of the potential 'conflict or peace impact' they have, is thus one of the most important and also most difficult tasks in a country that rebuilds after war. Integrated frameworks become 'strategic' frameworks precisely to the extent that they are based on a clear identification of strategically important priority areas for action.
- The definition of integrated frameworks does not replace sectoral policies, but these must be pursued with a clear understanding of wider interactions and of the overriding strategic policy objective. Monitoring and understanding the secondary and tertiary impacts of policy measures in different fields becomes extremely important.
- Integrated frameworks for action must be periodically redefined on the basis of periodic reassessment of problems, resources and priorities. This should be based on a participatory and consensual approach in which local and national actors play a main role.
- Policy mixes defined in such frameworks are not necessarily optimal from a technical point of view nor do they represent perfect solutions. What is important is that they are politically acceptable to all, and thus realistically attainable, and fit into the cultural and historical reality.

- The integration of activities and the setting of priorities is easier, happens more naturally and becomes more realistic and do-able the closer decisions are to the field. Local actors, for example, tend to integrate relief and development activities more naturally than national actors, who in turn do so more easily and naturally than external actors.

In both Mozambique and in Entrea external actors participating in WSP's Project Group meetings tended to prioritize short-term problems resulting from the war, such as refugee integration and demobilization, while internal actors focused on longer-term rebuilding and development issues. In doing so they did not ignore the real need for short-term relief, but integrated it into a longer-term perspective. While external actors in Entrea, for example, wanted to select 'food aid' as a subject for research, Entreans redefined the focus in terms of longer-term 'food security'.

- Integrated frameworks should make it easier to define optimal policy responses (representing optimal policy mixes) for specific challenges faced in the rebuilding process. Such policy mixes are however not easily replicable, as they are situation- and context-specific.

Relationship-building and the restoration of dignity and trust must become explicit and overriding policy objectives in rebuilding strategies

Mending relations and restoring trust have been identified as the primary challenge of post-war societies. Relations must also be mended between the present, the past and the future to prevent bitter memories of the past from poisoning visions of the future. This does not mean restoring the past. It means defining new roles and sound relations between people, ethnic or religious groups, and between people and authorities. It means working out a new, common order of values. It means inventing a new and different future. The challenge of rebuilding itself, if approached as a common task, can heal relations and restore dignity, trust and faith in the future as people learn to cope with the past together and regain control over the present and the future.

- Relations can often be mended through the appropriate design of rebuilding strategies that pay proper attention to the political and relational context in which they are applied. Development or humanitarian rebuilding strategies should be designed and applied in such a way that they not only address their primary objective but at the same time improve relations and build trust. If they are poorly designed they can fuel tensions and lead to new conflict.

In Conflict, post-war rebuilding and the economy (WSP Occasional Paper No 2, February 1998), Gilles Carbonnier shows how crucial it is to assess economic policies not only in the light of their economic viability and effectiveness, but also and often more importantly with regard to their impact on conflict and peace. This is not easy and economists are not traditionally trained to evaluate the complex and essentially political and irrational factors that determine individual and collective behaviour in such situations. He also shows that, while pursuing macro-economic stability and economic efficiency, it may at times be necessary to set these aside and give priority to political stability, to restore a minimum level of predictability and to restore confidence among economic actors.

- Mending relations requires that ambiguous or unjust relations be clarified or rectified. This is one reason why it is so important to work out power-sharing arrangements between parties to a conflict. Third parties, often external actors, may need to play a mediating role. Power-sharing arrangements must be both realistic (reflecting the actual configuration of forces) and be perceived as equitable if they are to be sustainable and contribute to the consolidation of peace.
- Mending relations also requires that relations of trust be restored between the people and government and institutions. Setting up inclusive systems of governance and promoting consensual and participatory decision-making processes, greatly contributes to this, as does establishing transparent and regular communication and neutral spaces for dialogue. Authoritarian systems and practices of governance are likely to exacerbate old tensions and fuel distrust and conflict.
- Mending relations between people requires more than working together in common rebuilding schemes. It requires that bitter memories of the past linked to the horrors of war are healed. Justice alone cannot do this, but memories can stop hurting if there is reconciliation and the capacity to forgive. Reconciliation requires exposing, admitting the truth about atrocities of the past. This is why bodies such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, the Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico in Guatemala, or similar bodies or mechanisms that publicly expose the truth about what happened are so important.

Structures and mechanisms of governance should be as inclusive, consensual and participatory as is possible in an often basically authoritarian context

Rebuilding requires a collective effort in which the state plays a key role and which harnesses the combined efforts and resources of local people, private actors and new social forces. Consensus and participation are crucial for the optimal mobilization of resources. They are also crucial for the definition of a common vision and concrete policies if these are to be applicable and sustainable. What counts is not to find perfect solutions to the challenges, but politically realistic approaches supported by all the actors involved.

Post-war governments are inevitably torn between authoritarian inclinations on the one hand and the need for consensus and relatively large participation of main actors and forces in the rebuilding process on the other.

In the absence of mature and functioning democratic systems, imperfect mixtures of authoritarianism and pluralism must be accepted.

- Formal democratic processes should not be imposed artificially from outside. They are not a substitute for a mature democratic system and a strong civil society. There can be no instant democratization.
- Formal and informal mechanisms of inclusion and consultation, adapted to the cultural, historical and political context, must be encouraged and nurtured. They provide channels for participation and contribute to the gradual building of a democratic culture.

- Neutral and informal spaces for communication and dialogue need to be created where actors can consult and reach consensus outside of and as a complement to formal established political structures which are often exclusive and confrontational
- Authoritarian responses are not justified by the urgency of problems. Participatory approaches to problem-solving and policy-making may take more time, but policies based on the consensus of those concerned are usually more effective and more sustainable
- Local participation is necessary to diffuse local conflicts, to mend relations and solve problems at the local level

Rebuilding the country and restoring governmental legitimacy requires redefining relations between the centre and provinces, regions and local authorities

- The centre cannot rebuild by itself. It requires the active participation of provincial and local authorities
- Local participation makes no sense unless it is supported by decentralization of the state
- Decentralization of government functions must include the devolution of authority and resources
- Decentralization of the state does not necessarily imply federalism, but it does raise the potentially divisive question of the future form the state will take, and this will eventually have to be dealt with
- The decentralization of the state, and issues related to it, is more important than is generally acknowledged. It is the only theme chosen in all four WSP countries as one of the most important strategic issues for study

Somalis have entirely – and quite deliberately – dismantled the structures of the central state. The failure of UNOSOM, and other well intentioned peace initiatives, was in part predicated upon their failure to take this into account while devising power-sharing formulae that would have implicitly restored the dominance of the centre over the regions

2. Improving external assistance

The quality of external assistance to war-torn societies can and must be dramatically improved if it is to contribute effectively to rebuilding. This requires major reform and explicit political commitment. Both the approach and the operational practice of aid need to change, although operational practice reform is probably more important and more urgent. WSP explored these issues with senior managers from bilateral and multilateral agencies in a workshop held in Bossey, near Geneva, in June 1998. On the basis of WSP's and the participants' experience, a statement on improving external assistance to war-torn societies was prepared, and concrete recommendations were formulated in five specific areas

Reforming the approach

General guidelines and principles for a new approach to rebuilding war-torn societies, relevant to all the actors involved have been outlined above. These particular principles relate more specifically to aid agencies:

- Aid agencies must design a specific development approach to help societies emerging from war. It must emphasize integrated strategies, give particular attention to political aspects of development, and allow for urgent and rapid action.
- Agencies must recognize that peace and solutions to the challenges of war-torn societies cannot be brought from outside but must be achieved primarily by internal actors, and that local, private and internal actors generally are the main forces of rebuilding.
- Agencies must better identify positive local initiatives and dynamics that contribute to rebuilding, and attempt to build on these and strengthen them. This includes women's initiatives.
- They must encourage and give more responsibility to private economic actors, such as traders and local entrepreneurs, and to NGOs and civil society groups generally without, however, weakening the state or diluting its primary responsibilities.
- In the absence of mature democratic structures and strong civil society, aid agencies must be willing to deal with impure mixtures of authoritarianism and pluralism and refrain from imposing an artificial purity. What counts is not whether the system of governance replicates models of liberal democracies, but that it is inclusive (and thus reconciliatory) and allows for participatory processes. This may appear as a substitute for democracy and can lead over time, rather than instantaneously, to 'democratization'.
- Given such transitory and deficient political structures, agencies should encourage formal and informal mechanisms of inclusion, consultation and participation without weakening emerging formal structures and authorities. This includes the promotion of neutral spaces for communication and dialogue.
- Agencies must be careful not to weaken an emerging government and administration by using external NGOs as interlocutors and counterparts. This can undermine efforts at state-building. NGOs may manage resource flows that dwarf those of their administrative counterparts: their relatively generous salaries attract professionals away from public sector jobs, leaving government structures without adequate personnel and skills.
- They must keep in mind the overriding policy objectives of mending and building relations and restoring dignity and trust. The indirect impact of assistance policies on relationships often counts more than the immediate objectives such policies or programmes pursue.
- Aid agencies must attach particular attention to basic principles of development cooperation such as participation, self-reliance and local or national ownership. These are not only as valid in post-war situations as in 'normal' development situations, they are often particularly important because they can contribute greatly to

restoring dignity and trust in people and institutions. The scale and urgency of rebuilding challenges should not lead to their being set aside but, on the contrary, is a reason for giving them special attention.

- They must accept that integrated strategic frameworks for action must above all be defined at national level in a participatory way, and that local and national actors must play the main role in this process.

Current difficulties to define and agree on an experimental strategic framework for external assistance to Afghanistan is, at least in part, due to the fact that important decisions are taken at headquarters rather than at the local and national levels.

- Agencies must accept that the legitimate and useful space for external assistance must be periodically redefined through regular consultation between external and internal actors. This should be linked to a periodic joint assessment of problems, resources and priorities and this must be led by internal actors. External assistance should be carefully delineated and focused, and modalities defined in such a way as to complement and reinforce local and national resources and initiatives and break strategic bottlenecks. This requires regular and frequent consultation to avoid well-intentioned policies being worked out in detail in the headquarters of international agencies.
- They must understand and accept that the politicized and highly volatile nature of post-war environments greatly increases the level of risk. They must thus be willing to take risks and learn to manage risk efficiently.

Reforming operational practice

It is the operational practice of external assistance at the field level which ultimately determines how effective it will be. Operating in unstable, volatile, risky and politicized post-war situations is not easy, and it is not surprising that it is at the level of implementation of new policy approaches to post-war situations that international assistance most frequently fails. There is an urgent need for operational reform, not so much *what* is done but *how* it is done. There must be more listening and discussion and less imposition, more facilitation and empowerment and less control, more sensitivity to intangible processes and less emphasis on output and measurable results. There needs to be more quality, and possibly less quantity.

To help in the rebuilding of war-torn societies, external actors require in-depth, intimate knowledge and understanding of local and national actors, forces and dynamics

- Defining an assistance policy and implementing it requires clear analysis based on a holistic understanding of the post-war situation and the specific country context, the legacies of the war, the root causes of conflict, the different actors involved, and more generally the dynamics of peace and war.
- This is particularly important given the essentially political nature of rebuilding, which can turn the most trivial administrative task

into a political act. The effectiveness of international assistance depends on the ability to understand the political context and to fit constructively into it.

- What is required is more than technical knowledge, but a deep understanding of post-war rebuilding, of the subtleties of inter-group relations of issues of power-sharing and of reconciliation.
- It requires extensive preparatory work before intervening and, ideally, a long-term or continuous presence in the country.
- At the field level, external actors must build informal networks of relations and trust. These can provide not only important insights into local realities but also open up informal and flexible lines of communication that are a vital prerequisite to operational success.
- It also implies better and more effective sharing of information and knowledge.

Work in post-war societies requires a great degree of flexibility and the capacity to adapt pragmatically to a volatile and rapidly changing context. This implies far-reaching changes in the way assistance programmes are formulated, funded and implemented.

- It implies defining special and simplified administrative rules and regulations and accounting and financial procedures for work that give more flexibility and allow for quick action in crisis and conflict countries.
- Changing needs and realities must be taken into account in the periodic adjustment of programmes and delivery. This may imply rolling workplans and timetables that are regularly revised.
- It implies creating special budgetary reserves to allow operating budgets to be flexible so that they can be adapted at short notice in line with changing needs.
- In joint or coordinated assistance operations, coordination forums and mechanisms such as strategic frameworks must include provisions for the flexible reallocation of funds between sectors and actors.
- It implies delegation of authority from headquarters and capitals to field offices to allow operational decisions to be taken as near to the field as possible.
- Delegation of authority must be accompanied by improved and more regular reporting and communication to ensure accountability.

Work in societies emerging from war requires specially trained and exceptionally qualified field staff to cope and succeed in such difficult and unstable contexts.

- Qualities required are the ability to take and manage risk, the analytical capacity to understand complex situations in a holistic way, political acumen and maturity, pragmatism and creativity in dealing with multiple actors in rapidly evolving situations and exceptional commitment. Such work also requires inter-cultural, team-building and communication skills. All this is more important than academic, technical or administrative qualifications or indeed experience.

- A special system of rewards and sanctions for staff performance in crisis and post-conflict countries must be elaborated that recognises the special and difficult context of the work, rewards the taking and management of risk and sanctions incompetence or dishonesty
- Field staff in post-war situations require special headquarters support which can only be given if desk officers and managers at headquarters are themselves specially chosen and trained. They should be familiar with the specific country contexts their work relates to and with the special demands these contexts impose

To be effective, external assistance must be carefully timed to local dynamics. The failure of external assistance projects is often due to wrong timing

- There are important differences between the anthropological/political time in which reality in the field evolves and the chronological/bureaucratic time that governs international assistance agencies
- It is important to adapt external assistance to local political timing. This may require activities to be accelerated or slowed down. It may also imply that external actors simply need to wait and do nothing until a situation has matured and the timing is right
- Generally speaking, external assistance agencies must accept that rebuilding war-torn societies is a long-term process which evolves in often unpredictable and apparently irrational ways and that cannot therefore be easily planned. They must move away from a preoccupation with urgent action and quick fixes and define their role in a medium- to long-term perspective

The promotion of local and national ownership of external assistance projects can, at times, become an objective in itself since it contributes in important ways to building local capacities and to restoring confidence and dignity

- Promoting local or national ownership goes beyond participation. It implies transferring control from donors to recipients and accepting the implications this may have in terms of redefining objectives and priorities and 'nationalization' of the project
- It implies a common learning process during which local and national actors gradually acquire the ability and confidence to direct, while the role of external assistance is reduced to back-up support, facilitating, providing advice and, at times mediating between local or national actors
- Administrative donor control is replaced by collective social control and responsibility on the part of the recipients

Funding policies for assistance to war-torn societies must be designed so that it can respond to the concurrent needs for priority-setting, long-term regular commitment, and urgent action.

- Priority setting may be necessary not only because of the magnitude of demands but also to allow long-term and stable commitments. The regularity of assistance is often more important than the quantity: small but stable commitments are more useful to governments of war-torn countries than large but erratic assistance on which they cannot count. Irregular assistance greatly limits the capacity of national actors to plan rebuilding strategies and has a debilitating impact. On the other hand, however, long-term assistance can lead to aid dependency, and for this reason long-term commitments and partnerships require periodic reassessment of orientations, programmes, plans, and terms of collaboration.
- Assistance programmes to war-torn societies must be able to draw rapidly on funds to allow for 'emergency development responses' without having to resort to emergency funds set aside for humanitarian relief. A special category of funds may need to be created, with special rules and procedures for disbursement and accounting, adapted to the specific requirements of rebuilding after war.

Criteria for measuring success, effectiveness and efficiency must be geared to the specific situation of war-torn societies

- Given the nature of the challenges faced in post-war situations, results can often not be measured in terms of definite time-frames or tangible products. This makes the evaluation of assistance to war-torn societies difficult.
- Evaluation criteria must be geared to the overriding policy objectives of mending relations and restoring trust, faith and dignity. They must allow the measurement and evaluation of processes and of the intangible changes in relationships and perceptions which they produce, as much as end products and material outcomes.
- The indirect impact of assistance policies on relationships, and more generally on the peace and conflict dynamics of the country, often counts more than the immediate objectives they pursue.
- In general, influencing processes and the way people see themselves and each other and their authorities and institutions often counts more than producing measurable results.

What we discovered: research as a tool for rebuilding

When WSP set out to initiate research projects in selected war-torn societies, it decided to use experimentally a research methodology that had never been applied at national or macro-social levels: participatory action-research (PAR)

The basic principle of PAR is that researchers and social actors join forces in collective research and analysis. The social actors contribute their knowledge of the issues at stake and the researchers help to systematize this knowledge, carry out targeted investigations to complete it, and lead the collective analysis exercise. Social actors, who traditionally are the objects of research, become at the same time the active subjects of research. The potential importance and value of PAR as a research methodology is contained in the main assumptions on which it is based.

It presumes, for example, that if researchers and social actors work together as a team, in a collective effort of research and analysis, the results obtained are better and reflect reality more effectively, because the participants bring to the research exclusive knowledge and understanding which would not otherwise be available. This raises delicate questions of objectivity, but it is assumed that this bias can be addressed and excessive politicization of the research be avoided. It also presumes that the research results and findings are more useable since the involvement of policy-makers and other participants encourages them to apply the results and translate them into concrete policy and action.

PAR also presupposes that the very exercise of engaging social actors in such processes leads to political action which is generated by and unfolds in the very process of research. It presumes to provide an answer to the problem of transferring ownership of the research results and processes to those ultimately intended to benefit from them, and that the value of this by far exceeds possible limitations on scientific rigour.

In implementing PAR in the four WSP pilot countries, the country projects rapidly evolved from an admittedly unconventional research project, but a research project nevertheless, into a much more complex exercise in which the interactions between internal and external actors and among internal actors that resulted from the methodology occupied an increasingly important space. By applying this interactive and participatory methodology, WSP had set in motion open-ended processes of policy dialogue involving key internal and external actors, processes which were eminently political in nature. These proved to have an intrinsic political value. The topics of research – carefully chosen after long consultations and negotiation involving all the actors – were important and useful in their own right, as were the substantive results and findings of the research. But additionally the process of consultation – and of providing neutral spaces for dialogue and communication in political environments where previously such spaces were rare or non-existent, acquired value in itself.

Results from these action-research processes were thus of two kinds, each valuable and important in its own right. On the one hand, substantive findings were produced covering specific issues or ‘Entry Points’ as well as general questions relating to rebuilding war-torn societies and external assistance. On the other hand, inter-active processes of consultation and analysis, essentially political in nature, contributed to dialogue and communication among key actors.

It is the combination of these two that produced the most important practical results. It enabled key actors to reach an understanding on policy priorities and facilitated consensus-building around strategically important issues of rebuilding. It is in this very practical application of the WSP methodology and approach in four concrete settings that the project had its most significant impact.

What the project's experience confirms is that PAR can contribute to rebuilding not only in the traditional sense of generating insights and better understanding of complex problems – this any research is supposed to achieve. PAR also greatly increased the applicability and relevance of the research results and, beyond that, facilitated and led to the integration of research findings into the policy-making process. This had been anticipated and hoped for when the methodology was chosen at the beginning of the project. What was not expected, however, was the wider political impact that the project had through the generation of processes of consultation, dialogue and consensus-building among internal and external actors. PAR, the experience showed, became in itself a useful tool for rebuilding in the countries concerned. It may well be able to fulfil such functions in other settings and may help address some of the challenges outlined above.

1. PAR as a tool for rebuilding

WSP experience has shown how PAR, taking the form of inclusive policy debate and processes at national and local levels and involving a wide range of local and possibly external actors, can contribute to promoting a better and more comprehensive understanding of complex post-conflict situations. Such processes represent an invaluable source of information and tools for analysis. They can help in setting priorities and defining the responsibilities of internal and external actors and improve understanding between them. They can also provide a 'reality check' for assistance actors and can help to limit and manage risk. Apart from their inherent merits, such processes can play a critical role in transforming relations and building trust among different actors by providing neutral spaces for communication and dialogue. They consequently also contribute to building a democratic culture and society.

PAR can promote better understanding of the holistic nature of complex post-conflict problems

- Intellectual and analytical clarity is particularly important for policy-makers in post-war societies given the complexity and urgency of the challenges that they face. Policy-oriented research thus has an important role to play.
- The active involvement in the research process of internal and external actors, representing different agendas, objectives and mandates, facilitates the understanding of the holistic and interrelated nature of the problems faced in post-war societies.
- The participation of policy-makers in participatory research processes may create problems of objectivity, but it provides access to information and increases the relevance and likely impact of the research.

- Participatory research processes need to be led and animated by impartial researchers who can not only counterbalance the subjectivity of participants but can contribute or call on, specialized technical expertise if necessary

PAR processes can facilitate the search for more integrated policy responses and make them more acceptable to the actors concerned. They can provide an ideal forum for periodic collective assessments of the situation, the definition of strategic frameworks for action, and the setting of priorities

- Helping participants in a collective research process to see problems from the various actors' perspectives leads not only to a more holistic understanding but also quite naturally to more integrated policy responses. The fact that the actors are directly involved in the process and participate in the definition of policies greatly increases the chances that they will actually be applied
- PAR can provide an important opportunity for internal and external actors to collectively analyse the legacy of war to assess problems, needs and resources, and to define strategic frameworks for action and set priorities
- This is particularly the case if the PAR exercise can provide a 'neutral space' – which in the case of WSP took the concrete form of Working Groups and the Project Group – which allows participants to 'depoliticize' issues by examining them from a more objective technical and scientific perspective. This is important in highly politicized post-war environments and is probably a prerequisite for the definition of 'optimal policy mixes' and of strategic frameworks for action

In Mozambique, the Ministry of Labour and AMODEG, the association of demobilized soldiers, started discussions within the WSP Working Group with radically opposed points of view. The joint research exercise allowed both parties to see what the real situation was, and this helped them to meet eventually on a more realistic middle ground which was more in tune with the reality of the problems

- The credibility of such a space is closely linked to the academic quality and the seriousness of the research that underpins the collective assessment exercise. It also depends on the perceived neutrality and impartiality of the researchers who provide the substantive support and impartially facilitate the process
- Researchers must play multiple roles in such research processes: they must carry out preparatory research to provide substantive support for the discussions, animate the meetings, and mediate among antagonistic agendas
- The real value and usefulness of such an exercise is linked to, and increases with the informal, almost private character of the setting and the non-binding nature of agreements
- It is important that such consultations remain complementary to formal processes of representation and decision-making and are not perceived by government as challenging these

In both Guatemala and Mozambique, the governments were at times uneasy about WSP, fearing that opposition forces might make use of it or that decisions on policy – which are the realm of government – might de facto be taken within WSP groups. In both cases the publication of results and recommendations allayed such fears and demonstrated the impartial and constructive nature of the work

By providing a neutral space for dialogue and communication, PAR can generally contribute to consensus-building and to promoting a democratic political culture

- The neutrality of the researchers and the research process is crucial. It must remain independent from any of the actors and institutions, including the government, and must be able to resist attempts by some actors to monopolize it, control it, and use it to further their own agenda. In a context where consultations are usually initiated or controlled by the government or one of the main political parties, it can be difficult to set up such a research and consultation process without being seen as either pro- or anti-government.
- The research team should therefore be led by a 'consensus figure' chosen after consultation with all the main actors.
- The research process must be inclusive – open to all the main actors, and must maintain a balanced representation. This can be difficult if, in the post-war period, the society develops rapidly and becomes more differentiated and complex with the emergence of new social and political forces. It is the inclusive nature of the process that provides it with the necessary political legitimacy.
- The research process must continue over some time, at least a year or more, for the actors to get used to it, to dispel initial suspicion, and for participants to get to know each other.
- If such participatory research processes are well established and have gained respectability and legitimacy, they may also be able to play a role in preventing conflict. They can indeed provide an informal yet legitimate space – rare in post-war environments – where actors can discuss issues on which there is disagreement even if talks and negotiations are deadlocked on the formal political level. PAR collective research can neutralize politically divisive issues and allow protagonists to discuss them without losing face.

PAR processes can help to clarify and improve donor/recipient relations and improve the relevance and impact of external assistance

- They provide useful forums for regular consultations between external and internal actors.
- They allow external actors to engage on an informal level with internal actors and so help establish better relationships.
- They help external actors to listen and to better understand local realities and perceptions.
- They create transparency by exposing individual agendas in the course of collective research and discussion.
- They can help to periodically define the useful space for external assistance.

2. The WSP approach as an example of external assistance

While the potential value of PAR as a political and operational tool for rebuilding came as a discovery, WSP's experience in the four country projects produced a further set of insights that had not been expected. As the project took form in the field it was rapidly confronted with the all too familiar set of difficulties that external assistance projects face in the difficult and complex environment of post-war societies. The project responded creatively to these challenges, with experiences in each country project being put to good use in the one that followed. As a result, a distinctive project approach gradually took shape which has come to be called the WSP approach'

Discussions on WSP's operational experience with senior managers from bilateral and multilateral agencies suggest that in many ways the WSP approach indicates possible solutions to the practical operational problems that external assistance actors commonly face working in war-torn societies. WSP may therefore have, to some extent, wider exemplary value

Defining the WSP approach

First, what is 'the WSP approach'? There is no simple definition because one of the characteristics of the approach is precisely its capacity to adapt to specific local circumstances and needs. WSP evolved in different ways and took different forms as it became nationalized in the four different country projects.

Some elements of the WSP approach, however, are

- the use of PAR methodology at the macro-social or macro-political level, with experimental attempts to extend it simultaneously to the local and grassroots level

In Entrea, Guatemala and Mozambique, the macro level corresponded to the national level. In the Northeast of Somalia, PAR exercises were started at district level and extended to the 'zonal' level (Puntland). In Somaliland, PAR exercises were initiated in the capital and will eventually extend to the level of administrative sub-regions.

- the 'impact' orientation of the project which is directly linked to the use of PAR methodology and which is evident in the concern always to go beyond the formulation of lessons and analysis and to positively influence emerging policy and make a direct contribution to the rebuilding of war-torn societies
- the participatory approach which extends well beyond the use of PAR as a research methodology, and is founded on the principles of collective responsibility and ownership of the project. This principle has been applied at all levels: from the global to the national and, where appropriate, also the local level. The project was always presented as, and understood to be the collective property of the actors involved in the rebuilding process, external at the global level, internal at the local level, internal and external with a predominance of internal actors at

the national level. From the beginning, WSP considered the participants to be the project's real stakeholders. In time they considered themselves in this way too and accepted to share responsibility for the outcome of the project.

- the effective transfer of ownership of the project to the Eritreans, Guatemalans, Mozambicans and Somalis, a logical extension of the principle of participation. This led to the rapid 'nationalization' of the country projects. As a global project with a distinct identity, WSP was never meant to be more than a facilitating catalyst and a source of advice and, initially, financial support.
- the 'multiple identities' of WSP, again a logical consequence of the principles of participation and local ownership.
- the combination of flexibility in execution with coherence and single-mindedness in pursuing the basic approach. This gave the project the capacity to adapt to local contexts without compromising on end objectives.
- the 'integrative' design and approach: integration of research, participatory consultation, strategy design and priority setting, policy formulation and action; integration of different policy responses; integration of actors through interaction among inside and between inside and outside actors.

Some operationally relevant lessons

The WSP approach offers interesting answers to many of the problems that beset external assistance to war-torn societies. To what extent the approach as a whole is replicable or transferable to established aid agencies is still being explored. Some of its concrete operational experiences, however, are of direct and immediate relevance to aid agencies if they are to reform and improve their operational practice in war-torn societies.

- The WSP experience in local participation and national ownership is important because it shows that this fundamental principle of development assistance, which has particular importance in societies emerging from war and to which much lip service is paid, can actually be adhered to and implemented. Transfer of ownership implies a long and difficult learning exercise, involving both external and internal actors.

Even before initiating the country projects, WSP spent much time discussing the idea and possible use of the project with all the actors concerned, and from the beginning made it clear that this was going to be 'their' project, which WSP could help them to initiate. Responsibility was shared from the outset and ownership gradually moved from WSP to the participating actors. To be successful, such exercises must be pursued with sensitivity and require above all commitment to end objectives, unity of purpose and mutual respect.

- Extensive preparatory work was crucial for the success of WSP, as it allowed the project not only to carefully identify and define the useful 'space' it could occupy within local rebuilding dynamics, but, equally important, it provided an opportunity for informal consultations with

key actors and this prepared the ground for their active participation in the project. As WSP gained experience it gave increasing importance to this preparatory work which was relatively short in Eritrea and Mozambique but took more than six months in Guatemala and well over a year in Somalia. Unless external actors have a continuous presence in the country, such extensive preparatory work is indispensable and should precede any assistance activities.

- In-depth understanding of the local situation is vital. WSP's use of PAR, taking the form of inclusive policy debate that involved a wide range of actors, and the extensive network of interlocutors this created gave it a comprehensive understanding of local dynamics and forces. The PAR process represented an invaluable source of information and a unique tool for analysis. Assistance actors should facilitate, support, and participate in such local research, analysis and consultation. They should create mechanisms to ensure that insights and intelligence gathered in these processes are automatically fed into the system both at headquarters and in the field.
- The special skills and competencies of particularly senior staff – their knowledge of the local situation and of local actors, their ability to deal with interlocutors in a highly politicized and possibly antagonistic context, their ability to manage risk – was critical for the success of WSP projects. This experience is equally valid for assistance projects of bilateral and multilateral agencies: the special skills, attitudes and local knowledge of staff dealing with aid beneficiaries are likely to be a decisive factor in determining the positive or negative outcome and impact of such projects.
- Specialized staff training and special headquarters support are both important. WSP learned, at its expense, that even carefully selected and qualified staff need intensive preparation before the main activities of the project start, and that they must benefit from regular training throughout the project. On-the-job training through trial and error is inevitable. There is also a particular need for regular support from headquarters in the form of periodic visits, common assessments of the situation and definition of priorities. Assistance actors should attach particular importance to the adequate preparation and training of staff involved in conflict and post-conflict situations. This implies special training courses to develop the competencies required.
- WSP projects required frequent redefinition of workplans, timetables and continuous adaptation of the modalities of project execution to changing local realities, so flexibility must be ensured. This put heavy strains on administrative support staff at the central level and created complex problems of budgeting and accounting. The success of WSP projects depended, however, on the central unit's willingness and capacity to accept and make room for such changes. This is obviously relevant to external assistance projects in general.
- WSP grappled with the problem of evaluating essentially qualitative processes of relationship-building and dialogue by combining internal and external methods of evaluation. The project used the mechanisms set in place for PAR to carry out collective assessments.

These internal evaluation exercises by the participants in the WSP project themselves, and taking the form of a subjective assessment of the project's results yielded particularly interesting results. External assistance actors should use such participatory evaluations pragmatically: they are by nature subjective and selective, but often they reveal best how participants and intended beneficiaries of projects perceive and assess the projects and their impact. They need to be complemented by more objective external evaluations.

What comes next: implications of the WSP experience

1. How new are WSP lessons?

Many of the general lessons and insights gained in the course of WSP's first four years are not necessarily new. Some were formulated as hypotheses at the beginning of the project, others were formulated in the course of the project by WSP and others. Some seem obvious or banal, either because they are indeed obvious or because they have been co-opted by the international community over recent years and have become something akin to buzz-words. Such is the case, for example, of the concept of an 'integrated strategic framework'. Some, however, are new or offer a new understanding of old problems.

But the fact that some of the lessons do not seem new does not mean that they are not true, relevant and important, and that they need not be repeated. Experience shows that, while some have been used and have inspired new policy and guidelines, few have been effectively translated into operational reality at field level.

And so they bear repeating, with the weight and legitimacy that four years of systematic and independent research and inquiry confer on them. It is also important to go beyond simple restating, and to help the move towards operational implementation. What makes many of WSP's findings precious is not so much the content of the lesson but the increased applicability and relevance of the findings, a result of the participatory process through which they emerged and which involved the very actors who will have eventually to implement them. At the global level, where lessons might be adopted by the international community, their usefulness depends on whether there is sufficient political commitment to initiate and see through the reforms the lessons call for.

2. What are the implications of WSP's general lessons?

The general lessons and insights about post-war challenges call for major and profound rethinking and reform of the approach to rebuilding societies after war. They also call for an urgent rethinking of external assistance to societies emerging from war, both in general approach and in operational practice. Much progress has been made in the analysis of post-war challenges and the formulation of new policy. Less progress has been made in operational practice. This is probably the most difficult to achieve, not least because of the resistance to change inherent in all big organizations. Reform is all the more difficult when domestic politics in donor countries interfere and result in mixed signals and demands, obstructing coherent pursuit of reform.

Reform can, however, be pursued one step at a time, with small and practical changes in concrete operational areas. A June 1998 workshop that

WSP held with senior managers from assistance agencies made some progress in this direction by formulating precise recommendations for change in selected areas. To carry through such reform will nevertheless require political commitment and support from the highest levels.

3. How useful are WSP's general lessons for reform?

As is to be expected from findings produced by research and evaluation reports, WSP's general lessons are of limited direct use for reform. They may, at best, offer new perspectives on old problems, based on a better understanding of the challenges faced in post-war societies.

To make WSP lessons directly relevant and useful for external and internal actors, WSP lessons need to be translated into 'tools' – practical guidelines and recommendations that can help policy-makers to formulate better policies and operational actors to better implement them. Such translation cannot be done by WSP alone, but must be done together with those who will eventually make use of the lessons and the tools. And the resulting tools will be even more useful if the potential users are discretely defined and delineated, so that the tools can be 'customized' to their needs.

In mid-1998, WSP began such a process. It organized one experimental workshop where it shared lessons and insights with one specific group of end users – senior managers from bilateral and multilateral assistance agencies. The result was encouraging and produced both a general statement and a set of specific recommendations for improving external assistance to war-torn societies. It will be necessary to repeat this experience with other groups of end-users and, particularly, to extend it from the donor community to recipients of aid.

4. How new is the WSP methodology and approach?

PAR methodology was developed in the late sixties and seventies and gained popularity among committed social scientists as a way in which research might contribute to necessary social and political change. It was applied at the level of discrete social groups – peasant farmers, agricultural labourers, slum dwellers, workers, indigenous groups – and was designed to empower them in their struggle against landowners, industrialists, dominant ethnic groups and, often, the state. It was thus essentially confrontational in nature.

What is new about WSP's use of PAR, and what had never been tried before, is that WSP applied it primarily at the macro-social and macro-political level – usually the national level – and that, rather than limiting it to discrete homogenous groups, WSP involved as many relevant actors as possible. This made it into an exercise that essentially involved consensus rather than conflict. In this way it became a political and operational tool for the rebuilding of societies after war.

The WSP approach, going beyond PAR, is obviously new as it was created and shaped in the course of the four-year pilot project. While it was from the outset based on a series of largely theoretical precepts, in its present form it is very much the product of a continuous creative adaptation to new challenges by a group of committed social scientists and actors, working both at the central level in Geneva and at the field level in the four countries.

5. What are the implications and the wider usefulness of the WSP approach?

The implications and wider usefulness of the WSP approach for researchers and committed social scientists has still to be examined and discussed. It obviously raises quite fundamental questions on the role that research can play in societies emerging from war, and this needs to be reflected on not only by researchers but also by national governments in war-torn societies and by external assistance agencies.

We have seen that the operational experience of WSP has some relevance and exemplary value for the practice of external assistance to war-torn societies. Beyond this, an important question is whether the WSP approach as a whole is replicable by, and thus potentially useful to other actors and institutions. This question cannot be answered theoretically and requires experimentation in concrete settings. One of the points requiring attention is to establish how important some of the specific institutional and personal characteristics of the pilot WSP set-up are for successful implementation. The question of replicability was raised at the Bossey workshop, and the general view was that external assistance agencies could well take on board many of WSP's lessons and insights, and maybe parts of its operational experience, but that they were probably not able to replicate the WSP approach as a whole.

A further important question raised was to what extent the WSP experience and lessons drawn were influenced by the choice of countries, and whether the approach would have yielded different results in different political and cultural contexts. Finally, equally relevant questions raised concerned the precise moment or state at which a country was 'ready' for a WSP project. This quite naturally led to questions on the relevance and applicability of the WSP approach not only to post-conflict situations, but also to conflict and, above all, pre-conflict situations. Experience indicates that the approach is probably not applicable in a society which still is in the midst of armed conflict. However, the WSP approach may well be relevant and applicable in pre-conflict situations. This raises important new perspectives that need to be explored.

6. What comes next?

WSP was a pilot project, limited in scope and time, with a fairly well-defined objective. Throughout its life, the project management received requests to extend WSP to other countries emerging from war and to continue, if necessary, through the creation of a successor body. It refused this

temptation, arguing that for the purpose of this pilot exercise the experience of the four countries was sufficient that given the difficulty of the exercise the project's resources were in any case stretched beyond the limits, and that questions of what would happen after the project were premature

By mid-1998, the country projects had ended in three of the four countries. As this document is in preparation, in Guatemala and Mozambique the WSP-initiated processes continue in a different form and under different auspices. The project's experience has been documented and analysed and, at the central level, lessons have been drawn and recommendations formulated for the project's main stakeholders. The question of a possible successor body to WSP now emerges again and is being discussed with some of the bilateral and multilateral agencies who were part of the WSP exercise.

A first argument for the creation of a successor body is simply the useful role that the project has been able to play in the four pilot countries and the desire to extend such activities to other countries that might benefit from it. This is based on the assumption that existing agencies and institutions would not be able to replicate the approach.

A second argument points to the limited scope of the pilot WSP experience and the need to refine the methodology and approach by carrying out projects in different cultural settings and political environments.

A third and final argument points to the need to test the relevance of the approach at different stages of post-war rebuilding and, importantly, in pre-conflict settings.

Arguments against a continuation of WSP are the relatively high cost of the projects and the reluctance to create yet another institution or project that would be active in an already over-crowded field.

WSP has been a difficult but incredibly enriching experiment that has in some ways changed many of those who were involved in it. The processes initiated and carried through at country levels and the discussions and consultations carried out at the global level, are seeds of change that have been sown. They will hopefully grow and develop in their own way, in their own time. Some have already started to push up shoots.

Annex: Senior advisors and donors

Senior Advisory Group (SAG)

Joseph N. Garba
Curt Gasteyger
Dharam Ghai
Michael Møller
Jonathan Moore
Vladimir Petrovsky
Michael Priestley
Mohamed Sahnoun
Rubén Zamora

Periodic Donor Consultation Process (PDCP)

Bilateral participants

Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, USA

Multilateral participants

EC, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOCHA, UNOPS, UNV, WHO

Other organizations

ACORD, Carnegie Corporation, ICRC, IDRC, MacArthur Foundation

The WSP Dissemination Phase

This summary report is one component of a wider exercise of not only evaluating the first four years of the War-torn Societies Project, but also of sharing this evaluation and the lessons learned during the project with a wide variety of interested audiences. The lessons have been compiled into a set of core reports that analyse the WSP experience in the four countries in which it was piloted, document WSP's operational experience at field and headquarters levels, and draw conclusions on the project overall.

The War-torn Societies Project: the first four years

(an overview of the WSP experience and lessons learned, forthcoming early 1999)

WSP in Eritrea (an account of the project in Eritrea)

WSP in Guatemala (an account of the project in Guatemala)

WSP in Mozambique (an account of the project in Mozambique)

WSP in Somalia

(an account of the ongoing project in Northeast Somalia)

WSP in practice (an account of WSP's operational experience forthcoming early 1999)

In addition to the reports, three companion volumes are being published in collaboration with WSP successor bodies and/or regional publishers in the countries in which WSP has completed its pilot work:

Post-conflict Eritrea: prospects for reconstruction and development
published in association with The Red Sea Press

From conflict to dialogue: the WSP Guatemala way (English) and

Del conflicto al diálogo: el WSP en Guatemala (Spanish)

published in association with FLACSO

(Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales Sede Guatemala)

Rebuilding through dialogue: the Mozambican way (English) and

Reconstruindo pelo dialogo: o caminho de Moçambique (Portuguese)

published in association with CEDE (Mozambican Centre for the Study of Democracy and Development)



WAR-TORN SOCIETIES PROJECT

UNITED NATIONS RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES



Improving external assistance to war-torn societies: the Bossey statement

We, a group of international agencies, experts and governments, have come together at the invitation of the War-torn Societies Project (WSP) at Bossey, Switzerland, to consider the contribution of WSP to our understanding of the difficulties and opportunities faced by international assistance actors in post-conflict situations. We have also considered to what extent the WSP experience can help us in addressing some of the shortcomings of our present practice. In discussion, we have identified the following urgent but also realistic steps that we can take

First, five truths that underlie our commitment

- 1 Assisting societies to recover from conflict and crisis has become a major task for which we are ill-prepared but which must come to be seen as an important and ongoing challenge. Preparing our agencies to respond to it requires major reforms and explicit political commitment. Post-conflict rebuilding is crucial because it is an important prerequisite for the prevention of future conflicts.
- 2 Post-conflict rebuilding is essentially a development challenge in the special circumstances of a war-torn society. It requires a special development approach emphasizing integrative strategies, political development, and rapid and flexible action. The essential, primary challenge of rebuilding war-torn societies has to do with mending relations and restoring trust and cooperation among people and groups, including political actors, and institutions.
- 3 Local and national actors have the greatest capacity and responsibility to rebuild after war, their efforts are often the most efficient, informed and sustainable. The main task of external actors must be to revive, nurture and complement inherent local and national capacity.
- 4 The politicized and volatile nature of post-conflict environments increases the level of risk. International assistance to rebuilding war-torn societies must imply willingness to take risks and the ability to manage risk efficiently.
- 5 The quality of post-conflict assistance is more important than its quantity. The quality of external assistance depends, among other things, on our ability to better understand the societies and processes which we support, on the selection of people we send to the field, on our ability to adapt flexibly to rapidly changing circumstances, and on our ability to effectively plan and coordinate our activities within an integrated rebuilding strategy. Reform in these areas is linked and must be pursued together.



Second, five steps we can take to make a difference

1 Information

We recognise that, to be useful and effective, external assistance actors require acute political analysis and profound knowledge of local actors and dynamics. To move towards this, we can

- undertake extensive preparatory work before intervening
- develop relationships with a variety of local interlocutors and actors
- collect information on a long-term basis and share it more effectively

2. People

We need to review personnel procedures and practices with a view to recruiting, training and promoting exceptional and appropriate staff for post-conflict work, while rewarding achievements and sanctioning incompetence. We recognise that necessary skills include maturity, political acumen, analytical ability and good judgement, commitment, creativity, and the ability to fit into a team.

3 Flexibility

We acknowledge that current practices and procedures for programming, financing and administering assistance greatly limit our flexibility and our ability to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. Sectoral programming and financing does not allow us to respond in an integrated way to complex challenges. Standard administrative procedures lack the necessary flexibility and have become an obstacle to effective assistance in post-conflict situations. We should therefore consider, among other things

- delegating more authority to the field, and adapting reporting regulations accordingly
- facilitating the periodic adjustment of programming and execution to changing needs and realities
- allowing greater flexibility in workplans and timetables to adapt timing of project execution to local dynamics
- creating special budgetary reserves to allow for flexibility and quick response

4 Planning

We realize that external assistance to post-conflict situations must be part of an integrated rebuilding strategy that sets priorities and provides the framework for effective planning and coordination of activities. Such a strategy must be defined periodically at field and national levels in a participatory and consensual approach involving all actors concerned, with internal actors playing the lead role. To move towards this we should

- support such processes of common analysis and priority-setting and participate in them
- facilitate the implementation of rebuilding strategies defined in these processes by adapting our own policy approaches accordingly and creating a supportive environment

5 Evaluation

We should review the criteria by which we judge success and measure the efficiency and effectiveness of interventions with a view to ensuring that they are not a means of justifying past action but of improving future actions. In particular, we should

- measure the political and social impact of our actions
- value the process as much as the results and consider intangible as much as tangible results of assistance



We have drafted this statement in a spirit of cooperation and with a desire to better fulfil our respective roles in the process of post-conflict rebuilding. We urge our colleagues who are equally committed to effectively delivering external assistance to war-torn societies to consider these short lessons, reflect on the message they carry and consider their relevance and adoption.

Bossey, Switzerland, 29 June 1998

Participants at the Bossey Workshop

Bernardo Arevalo de Leon, WSP Guatemala, Guatemala
Omar Bakhet, UNDP, ERD, New York
Tom Beck, USAID/PPC, Washington
Christophe Bouvier, UNOPS/RESS, Geneva
Catherine Boule, WSP/CCU, Geneva
Matt Bryden, WSP Somalia, Nairobi
Nat Colletta, World Bank, Post-Conflict Unit, Washington
Miguel de Brito, WSP Mozambique, Maputo
Oto Denes, WSP/CCU, Geneva
Marika Fahlen, Swedish Foreign Ministry, Stockholm
Matthias Finger, expert, Geneva
Pierre Gassmann, ICRC, Colombia
Elizabeth Gibbons, UNICEF, Office of Emergency Programmes, New York
Martin Griffiths, UN, OCHA, New York
Jack Hjelt, USAID, Kigali/Washington
Agneta Johannsen, WSP/CCU, Geneva
June Kane, WSP/CCU, Geneva
Michael Keating, UNDP Afghanistan, Islamabad
Randolph Kent, expert, London
Caroline Lavoie, CIDA, Ottawa
James LeMoyne, UNDP, RBA, New York
Michael Mahdesian, USAID, Bureau for Humanitarian Response, Washington
Elena Martinez, UNDP, Operations Support Group, New York
Paula Newberg, expert, Washington
Matthias Stiefel, WSP/CCU, Geneva
Sarah Todd, DFID, London
Bernhard Wenner, GTZ, Maputo
Alfredo Witschi-Cestari, UNDP, Afghanistan, Islamabad
Ruben Zamora, WSP/SAG, El Salvador



WAR-TORN SOCIETIES PROJECT



UNITED NATIONS RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES

Improving external assistance to war-torn societies: Practical recommendations for managers of multilateral and bilateral aid agencies

From 25 to 29 June 1998 senior representatives from international organizations and donor agencies met with WSP staff in Bossey, near Geneva, Switzerland, to jointly explore the wider relevance and applicability of WSP's experience to policy makers and operational actors. The objective was to translate selected WSP lessons into practical tools that could help international assistance actors improve their assistance to war-torn societies. To do so, workshop participants identified specific areas where WSP's lessons and operational experience are directly relevant to the perceived needs of international assistance actors or the shortcomings of current practice. Concrete discussions concentrated on five such areas:

- the need for profound understanding and analysis of local situations
- the need for qualified and appropriate field personnel
- the need for flexibility and adaptability of external assistance
- the need for new criteria for measuring success, effectiveness and efficiency
- the need for participation and local ownership

In each of the five areas, workshop participants compared the experience of assistance actors, and the specific problems they face in this field, and the respective WSP experience. WSP lessons and operational experience were thus confronted with participants' own extensive experience and their knowledge of the institutional, political and resource constraints proper to their agencies. What resulted in terms of analysis and understanding of the problems and possible solutions was more than the sum of the two parts and represents a first concrete product or "tool" emerging from WSP's drawing of lessons exercise.

Following are specific recommendations that were formulated for the five areas selected and discussed during the workshop. Reform in these areas are clearly inter-related and must be pursued together. They will hopefully prove useful to bilateral and multilateral assistance agencies. They are underpinned by, and complementary to a general statement about improving external assistance to war-torn societies adopted by participants at the workshop.



1. Profound understanding and analysis of the local situation is fundamental

The problem

- the information available to assistance actors about post-conflict situations is usually insufficient, both in quantity and in quality, and often not sufficiently relevant to the central challenges of war-torn societies it tends to be sector-specific rather than comprehensive, it focuses more on technical issues than central political and cultural issues, it is often skewed to meet institutional practices
- assistance actors do little or nothing to involve those who know best the local situation - local actors - in the situation analysis They may pay lip service to the role and importance of local actors but rarely listen to them
- where information is gathered or does exist, it is not shared not at headquarters, nor between donors and agencies, nor among agencies in the field
- even when it is shared, it is rarely used to carry out a collective situation analysis that could inform more integrated policy responses
- gathering and analyzing information is not seen as a mainstream activity – often it has to be done by staff in spare time
- aid agencies have little "institutional memory" information, analysis and understanding of local contexts and of operational experience therein is not stored and used systematically It tends to get lost when staff changes and when institutional reorganization takes place
- aid agencies are not "learning organizations" their ability to assimilate information and to change activities in the light of information and experience gathered is limited

Recommendations

- collect information which is relevant to what has been defined as a central challenge of rebuilding - the mending of relations and the restoration of trust between people and institutions This implies more than technical knowledge and understanding It implies understanding the political context and dynamics, the subtleties of inter-group relations, issues of power sharing and of reconciliation
- give more importance to in-country sources of information and diversify them, including local, private and non-governmental interlocutors Check information and analysis periodically through local interlocutors, including specifically those directly affected by external assistance
- recruit outside experts to help gather and analyze information
- change present procedures and terms of reference of staff to permit field staff and operational agencies to collect, analyze and share information as part of their regular mandate



- create effective internal mechanisms for assimilating new information and analysis and reviewing activities accordingly
- introduce protocols to clarify the basis for information sharing and solve problems of confidentiality who can or should share what type of information, how and when
- provide extensive briefings before posting staff to war-torn and crisis countries, including the history, culture, current political analysis, information on key local groups and actors, etc (see below point 2 – recommendations on staff)
- limit turn-over of staff and plan replacements such as to ensure continuity of knowledge (see below point 2 - recommendations on staff)
- create a new mechanism, possibly anchored in a joint UN/World Bank/WSP mandate, to ensure joint analysis and sharing of information by main assistance actors *before* defining international policy responses to crisis or post-conflict situations, and periodically *during* and *after* the crisis/conflict This mechanism should be as regular and recognized as the Consultative Group mechanism

WSP experience.

WSP experience has shown how participatory action research, taking the form of inclusive policy debates and processes at national and local levels and involving a wide range of local and possibly external actors, can contribute to promoting a better and more comprehensive understanding of complex post-conflict situations. Such processes represent an invaluable source of information and tool for analysis. They can help in setting priorities and defining respective responsibilities of internal and external actors. They can provide a 'reality check' for assistance actors and can help to limit and manage risk. Apart from their inherent merits, such processes can play a critical role in transforming relations and building trust between different actors by providing neutral spaces for communication and dialogue.

Assistance actors should

- i) consider how to facilitate and support such local research, analysis and consultation processes. This may imply linking up with, encouraging or supporting the creation of local policy research and analysis institutes
- ii) engage and seriously participate in such processes. This requires that such activities are foreseen in the terms of reference of field staff
- iii) create mechanisms to ensure that insights and intelligence gathered in these processes are automatically fed into the system – both to the local Director/Head of Agency and to other levels – at headquarters and in the field
- iv) create mechanisms to ensure that policy decisions about external assistance, as well as the broader policy discussions among external actors such as inter-agency consultative mechanisms, are informed by such local research and consultation processes



2. Staff quality and specific personal competencies appropriate to post-war situations are essential

The problem

- work in war-torn societies and generally in crisis and conflict situations is particularly demanding and requires a special type and quality of staff. The difficulty stems both from the volatile and politicized context and from the need to simultaneously deal with developmental, humanitarian, political and security issues
- present personnel and recruitment procedures and practices are not geared to such special requirements. procedures are too rigid and complex for the staffing needs of war-torn societies, terms of reference do not recognize the special attributes and qualities required for such postings, staff are often recruited on an *ad hoc* basis with availability rather than suitability as the key factor, staff unwanted elsewhere are often assigned to crisis countries, recruitment cronyism is frequent
- the system of rewards and incentives is not suited to the tasks required. Posting to war-torn and crisis countries is not sufficiently valued. crisis country staff are sometimes treated as somewhat deviant or otherwise professionally suspect
- personnel management skills are weak, both at headquarters and in the field, there is a gulf between 'cowboys' and 'clerks'
- there is a culture of suspicion of outsiders with specialist skills, yet assistance organizations often do not have the right skills internally
- international organizations 'steal' qualified staff from local organizations or NGOs, thereby reducing local capacities
- political support from Executive Boards and special resources necessary to revamp recruitment and personnel procedures are lacking

Recommendations

- gain high-level recognition that "crisis" work is a norm in today's world, not an exception, and that special personnel measures are necessary to select a specially qualified type of staff and enable it to carry out its work efficiently
- create special recruitment procedures and criteria for "crisis work" recognizing that staff working in war-torn societies and in crisis and conflict situations need a particularly high level of commitment and special qualities such as the ability to take and manage risks, analytical capacity, political acumen and maturity, sophistication and creativity in dealing with difficult and rapidly evolving situations as well as inter-cultural, team building and communication skills. Also, knowledge of local languages is crucial. They furthermore need to be able to understand and work within a broad set of interrelated issues ranging from development to humanitarian relief and security questions



- explore possibility of creating (or re-energizing existing) UN-wide recruitment and personnel procedures for war-torn societies
- recruit staff in view of creating integrated teams with complementary qualifications, promote team work
- take the necessary time to identify, enlist and prepare the right people and teams if possible *before* initiating activities in a crisis or conflict situation
- enable and support crisis country staff to hire specially talented outsiders beyond the normal development circles
- enable and support crisis country staff to hire and train suitable local staff
- create special training programmes for staff working in conflict and crisis situations, and relevant support staff at headquarters. Such training programmes should focus both on the development of special qualities required and on country/field-specific information and analysis. Joint or complementary training programmes should be worked out with other external assistance actors in war-torn societies and between development and humanitarian actors (e.g. UNDP, World Bank, ICRC) (see below)
- establish mechanisms facilitating on-the-task training of junior staff by inserting them into functioning teams in crisis and conflict and post-conflict countries
- plan replacement and rotation of field staff in such a way as to ensure continuity of knowledge and understanding of local situations and not to disrupt special contacts and relations of confidence established with local actors (see above - point 1)
- elaborate a special systems of rewards and sanctions for staff performance in crisis and post-conflict countries that ensures recognition of the difficulty and special context of work, rewards the taking and management of risk and sanctions incompetence or dishonesty
- ensure special headquarter support for field personnel in post-conflict and crisis countries with desk officers and managers familiar with the specific countries and with the special demands proper to these contexts
- create special personnel support for staff in war-torn societies including, for example, special insurance and health care (including mental health), family support, etc
- explore the possibilities for building up specialized teams for work in war-torn and conflict societies that would be on stand-by and could be assigned at short notice to support multilateral and bilateral agencies in the field. Such teams would need to be composed of complementary experts with extensive experience of conflict/post-conflict situations and specialized experience in areas such as analysis, institution building, electoral assistance, reconciliation, integration of displaced people, etc
- impress on donors and members of Executive Boards the need for revamping personnel and recruitment procedures for crisis, conflict and post-conflict countries, but ensure that the core cost implications (e.g. executive searching, proper training, special support, incentives and reward mechanisms) are well understood

SS



WSP experience.

WSP experience has shown that in post-conflict situations the special skills and competencies of particularly senior staff - their knowledge of the local situation and of local actors, their ability to deal with interlocutors in a highly politicized and possibly conflictual context, their ability to manage risk - is one of the most important factors determining the success of a project or initiative. This experience seems equally valid for assistance projects of bilateral and multilateral agencies: the special skills, attitude and local knowledge of senior staff and of all staff dealing with aid beneficiaries are likely to be a decisive factor in determining the positive or negative outcome and impact of assistance projects.

WSP experience has also shown that, even with qualified staff, intensive preparation and regular and repeated training during the project activities or mission are indispensable. Also, on-the-task training - through trial and error - is inevitable.

WSP experience has finally shown that in post-conflict situations there is a particular need for regular substantive support from headquarters - in the form of periodic visits, periodic common assessments of the situation and periodic definition of priorities.

In the light of and building on WSP and their own experience, assistance actors should attach particular importance to the adequate preparation and training of staff sent to or involved in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Assistance actors should more concretely.

i) organize in crisis and conflict countries familiarization workshops for all international staff, covering history, culture, local actors and groups, and a political analysis of current affairs and providing a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted rebuilding challenges. These should be compulsory for field staff and necessary time must be allocated for them. Such workshops could be run by WSP teams, where they exist, or by local nationals, whether from the academic world, private sector or elsewhere. This might represent an opportunity both for them and for external assistance actors to establish links and start a pattern of periodic exchanges and joint analysis.

ii) organize periodically in post-conflict and conflict countries special training courses, open to all assistance actors including donors, NGOs, UN and national interlocutors. The Resident Coordinator might be best placed to organize these on the basis of consultation with other players and appropriate resource persons. Such courses should be specifically adapted to the country in question, would teach participants to integrate conflict, relief and development issues, and would typically cover areas such as inter-cultural skills, negotiation and team building, political analysis, participatory techniques (assessment, monitoring and evaluation, community mobilization, etc.), and risk management. They might be part of a broader range of training opportunities which include project planning and



management, human rights, gender, - all adapted to special context of war-torn societies and conflict countries

iii) organize periodically, at headquarters, special training sessions for all staff responsible for or otherwise relating to conflict and post-conflict countries to review the situation in specific countries and generally to familiarize headquarters staff with the specific conditions, context and needs of external assistance in conflict and post-conflict situations. Courses could be country/region specific or focus on specific administrative, managerial or operational aspects of external assistance to such situations. Some of these courses should be organized in common with other agencies and comprise staff of developmental, political, security and humanitarian actors in order to foster integrated understanding and analysis of challenges

3. Assistance organizations working in war-torn societies must be adaptable and flexible

The problem

- even when accurate information and analysis are available and qualified staff is in place, assistance organizations are rarely able to adapt policies and practices to the rapidly changing contexts and needs of crisis and conflict countries. This is primarily due to current financing and programming procedures and administrative rules
- funding and institutional arrangements in donor countries and within the UN and multilateral system usually separate relief, development and political assistance. This greatly hampers flexibility
- donors don't trust assistance actors' judgment regarding management or use of funds. Resulting accountability requirements work against flexibility
- current programming procedures, within agencies and even more so at inter-agency level, do not facilitate the periodic adjustment of plans to changing contexts and needs
- administrative regulations - regarding financing, accounting, recruitment, procurement, etc - are generally too rigid to allow for efficient operational assistance in crisis, conflict and post-conflict situations
- field offices do not have sufficient autonomy and authority to adapt the implementation of policies and projects to local realities. Too much decision-making power is vested at headquarters or in capitals where staff is not familiar with operational constraints and opportunities on the ground
- bureaucratic reporting mechanisms discourage field staff from searching for flexible and creative solutions to new challenges
- the political impulse and will - whether from donors or senior managers of international organizations - to drive financial coordination and administrative change is often missing



Recommendations

- recognize the urgent need for reform of financing, programming and administering mechanisms and procedures of assistance to war-torn and conflict countries as an essential pre-condition for making such assistance efficient and effective. Institutional reform efforts in the UN and in multilateral and bilateral agencies must be driven/informed by the particular requirements of assistance to war-torn, crisis and conflict countries
- ensure that coordination fora and mechanisms for external assistance to crisis and conflict countries, such as strategic frameworks, include provisions for the flexible re-allocation of funds between sectors and actors
- revamp Consolidated Appeals from being 'project shopping lists' to being more programmatic, allowing more intelligent funding by donors in a way that respects collectively identified priorities and the integrity of multisectoral or regional programmes
- involve donors more in programme prioritization with a view to generating trust in the collective judgment of assistance actors as to how funds should be spent, including at short notice
- create special budgetary funds to allow for emergency assistance, not just in relief but also in development and political fields
- define special and simplified administrative rules and regulations and accounting and financial procedures for work in crisis and conflict countries that give more flexibility and allow for quick action. This implies also that technocrats and administrators in headquarters and capitals need to become familiar with/understand the special characteristics of war-torn and crisis countries (see above - point 3 on staff)
- foresee and facilitate the periodic adjustment of programming and execution to changing needs and contexts. Allow for rolling timetables and workplans that can flexibly adapt to local political dynamics
- create budgetary reserve funds to allow for adaptations of operating budgets at short notice in line with changing needs in the field
- devolve authority to the layer best informed and placed to exercise it. In general, delegate much more authority to the field to allow for operational decisions to be taken as near to the field as possible
- improve communications with the field and tighten reporting requirements in line with delegation of authority but give more value to substantive and political over administrative reporting

WSP experience.

WSP experience has shown how important it is for external assistance to be carefully timed in terms of local dynamics. To be effective, external assistance activities must be in tune with the anthropological/ political time at which reality evolves rather than follow the bureaucratic chronological time. This may require accelerating actions or, on the contrary, slowing them down or simply waiting until



the timing is right This implies continual adaptation of workplans, timetables and corresponding budgets

WSP experience has also shown that, given the volatility of conflict/post-conflict situations, the lack of experience of agencies in providing assistance to such situations, and the magnitude of necessary administrative reforms, attempts to improve international assistance to war-torn and crisis countries must be understood and accepted as an ongoing learning exercise The need to learn from the experience and to flexibly adapt actions needs to be an inherent part of this exercise

Given present experience,

Assistance actors should

- i) create experimental spaces - institutionally and geographically - where agencies can test new procedures and regulations and search for new creative solutions Such pilot experiments should be carried out in a low-key way and staffed with specially selected personnel They will require close collaboration between field and headquarter staff
- ii) continue and expand at the inter-agency level present experimental approaches, such as the Strategic Framework Approach, carrying it out in a low-key way, protected from over-exposure and unrealistic expectations It will require effective collaboration and partnership among different agencies who will need to set aside turf wars and competition
- iii) ensure that both pilot experiments, at agency and inter-agency levels, are carried out in close association and with the full participation of local actors and intended beneficiaries of assistance such as to ensure that it is the needs of the field that inform the reform process of the agencies, and not the reverse

4. Criteria for measuring success, effectiveness and efficiency must be geared to the specific situation of war-torn and conflict societies

The problem.

- current monitoring and evaluation criteria have little or nothing to do with the central challenges faced by war-torn societies, namely the mending of relations and the restoration of trust between people and institutions Rather than measuring the political and social impact which external assistance has, they tend to focus on administrative performance and quantitative changes
- there is insufficient discussion and agreement on more appropriate criteria to be used to measure intangible results such as trust, cooperation, coordination, consensus, legitimacy or credibility of institutions in a crisis country

59



- measuring the success and impact of processes is not easy
- current accountability requirements do not allow for innovative forms of participatory or self evaluation by beneficiaries
- external evaluators are often ignorant about the political and cultural context in which projects and processes take place and about the special characteristics and needs of crisis countries and war-torn societies

Recommendations.

- develop and agree on new criteria to measure success, effectiveness and efficiency that are geared to the specific challenges war-torn societies and conflict and crisis countries and to the overriding objectives of external assistance to such countries (see below)
- make sure evaluators are thoroughly familiar with the specific contexts and needs of war-torn and crisis countries and situations
- measure and value processes, and the intangible change in relationships and perceptions which they produce, as much as end products and material outcomes
- keep always in mind the overriding objectives of mending relations and restoring trust between actors and institutions The direct or indirect impact that assistance projects and activities have on relationships often counts more than the immediate objectives pursued by these activities
- attach particular importance to measuring impact on political development and to measuring success in terms of social and political objectives
- analyze particularly the respective peace/conflict impact of external assistance, e g the extent and way in which external assistance strengthens/weakens directly or indirectly dynamics and forces of peace or of conflict at various levels (local, national, regional) Focus particularly on impact on original root causes of conflict and on new emerging tensions and possible sources of future conflicts
- in cases where peace agreements have been signed, analyze the extent to which external assistance contributes concretely towards the implementation of such agreements
- be aware that long-term impacts often are more important than short-term results Be aware of the catalytic - positive or negative - impact assistance activities can have
- use new methods of participatory, internal and self-evaluation in conjunction with traditional methods of external evaluation (see below)
- learn from techniques used in other fields (e g participatory research, political campaigns, public opinion research) to measure intangible results and qualitative changes in relationships and perceptions

WSP experience.

WSP experience has shown how mechanisms set in place and methods used for participatory action research can successfully be used to carry out collective assessments and internal evaluation of projects and activities Internal and



participatory evaluation of activities by participants and intended beneficiaries of assistance should be carried out with a pragmatic approach they are by nature subjective and selective, but often they reveal best how participants and intended beneficiaries of projects perceive and assess projects and their impact They need to be complemented by more objective external evaluations

In attempting to evaluate its own activities - particularly the collective research/analysis and dialogue processes that it initiated - WSP has used some of the following criteria

- * the frequency and regularity of meetings, and the contents and quality of exchanges taking place (formality/informality, creativity, innovative character of results, etc),
- * the products resulting from these exercises, and the demand for and use made of them
- * the direct/indirect impact on policy or organizational change

Some of these criteria may more generally serve to measure the impact of external assistance on relationship building and other qualitative processes Additional criteria assistance actors may use are

- * the change of perceptions and attitudes both among local actors(between groups, parties, the people and government, etc) and between internal and external actors
- * the range and frequency of participants' involvement in processes and activities supported by assistance actors The time, energy and resources they voluntarily contribute to such activities is an important indication of the extent to which they identify with them (indicator of national/local ownership - see below)

5. Local participation and national ownership

The problem.

- external assistance actors too often treat local actors mainly as 'victims', or as 'the problem', or at best as passive aid recipients and beneficiaries of assistance rather than as the main agents of recovery and rebuilding which they are This is particularly pronounced among humanitarian and military/security actors
- the proportional increase in humanitarian and security operations has negatively affected the general practice of international assistance to war-torn and crisis countries, including development assistance, by emphasizing authoritarian or paternalistic attitudes and practices
- "participation" and "national ownership" too often are only bannerwords that do not reflect the reality of relationships between assistance actors and recipients and between external and internal actors



- urgency of problems and lack of local human and institutional resources are often used as an excuse to limit participation and justify the import of solutions from the outside
- despite having greater interest, knowledge and capacity, local actors are often not involved in planning or managing assistance activities
- external assistance to conflict and war-torn countries often does little to identify local actors and dynamics of peace and reconstruction, to strengthen them, build on them and develop local capacities
- lack of knowledge of local contexts by external agencies' field staff, and lack of skills in the field of relationship building and inter-cultural communication greatly limit the chances for real participatory engagement with local actors (see point 2 on staff)
- lack of effective participation by local actors in needs assessment and project design and implementation, and insufficient transfer of ownership of and responsibility for projects and activities, is a main reason for the low sustainability of external assistance projects

Recommendations

- Identify periodically at the field level, in joint exercises with local actors, the role, scope and form of external assistance, starting with an assessment of problems and available local and national resources and proceeding to define external assistance in a focused way in order to complement and strengthen rather than substitute local efforts (see below)
- associate local actors and intended beneficiaries of assistance from the beginning in the definition of needs and priorities, the design and the implementation of projects
- use assistance projects systematically to build and strengthen the confidence of local actors in their ability to cope and solve their problems This involves targeted training
- transfer gradually responsibility and ownership of projects and activities to them This must imply that they participate in the provision of resources and first share, then assume responsibility for the success of activities
- accept collective social control and responsibility of beneficiaries and local actors in replacement of administrative control by donors and external actors
- respect local solutions and priorities
- identify systematically local resources, actors, experiences and dynamics that contribute through new and original activities and initiatives to the consolidation of peace and the rebuilding of war-torn societies Design assistance projects in such a way as to strengthen them and build on them
- understand and accept that external assistance actors should ultimately be accountable to the people and authorities of the countries they purport to help rather than to their own agencies or to donors
- give more importance to and facilitate communication between external and internal actors Ensure transparency and facilitate understanding Be sensitive to

62



local actors' difficulty in understanding the intricacies and vocabulary of international assistance agencies

WSP experience

WSP experience has shown how the "legitimate and useful space" for external assistance can be periodically defined at the field level in joint participatory exercises involving internal and external actors. Methods of participatory action research can help to stage and run such collective assessment and priority-setting exercises. Local and national actors must take the lead role in such processes which, often, need to be mediated by a consensus figure. WSP experience generally shows that the involvement of external and internal actors in participatory action research exercises can greatly improve communication and mutual understanding.

WSP experience has also shown that the transfer of project ownership to local and national actors is possible but that it implies a long and difficult learning exercise, involving equally external and internal actors. To be successful such exercises must be pursued with much sensitivity and require above all commitment to end objectives, unity of purpose and mutual respect.

Given the difficulty, but also the importance of such processes, and the state of current practice,

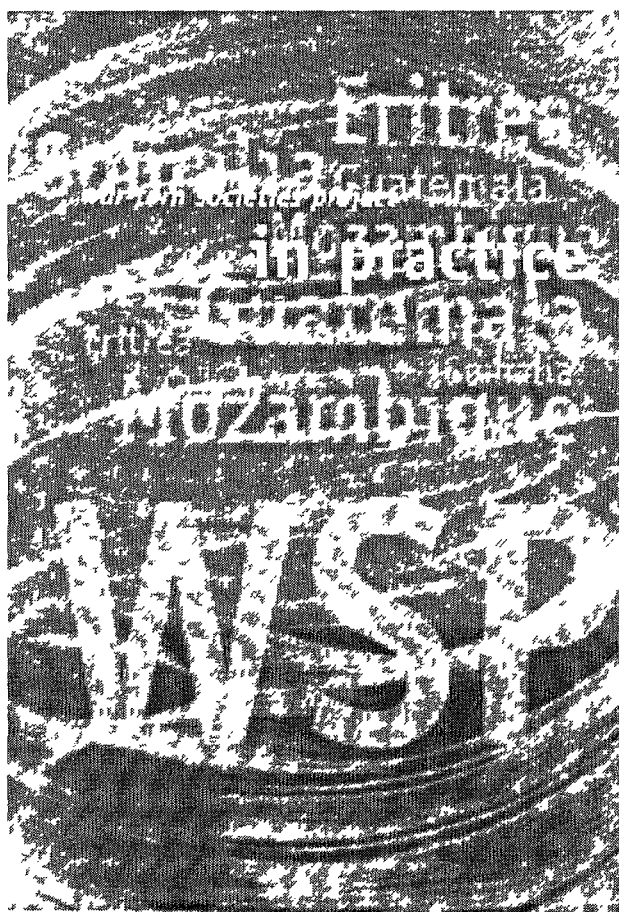
Assistance actors should

- i) review WSP's and other relevant experiences in war-torn societies with a view to learning how assistance actors can interact better with local actors, involve them in information gathering and analysis, hire them and empower them, both within assistance organizations and beyond, to take responsibility for programmes and activities
- ii) review WSP and other experiences in war-torn societies with a view to defining practical suggestions and realistic options for donors and assistance agencies to relate to/engage in local policy processes, whether directly or through 'neutral' entities such as WSP
- iii) communicate convincingly to policy makers in donor countries and assistance agencies the importance, need and practical value of nationalized and localized processes so as to muster the political and organizational support necessary to encourage and implement such processes in war-torn and crisis countries

To complete this pack:



War torn Societies Project the first four years gives an overview of the WSP experience from 1994 to 1998 and a comparative analysis of the experience in the four countries in which the project was piloted Eritrea, Mozambique, Guatemala and northeast Somalia It looks at the lessons learned and how they might be useful, and includes a reflection on the dissemination phase up to the end of 1998



War torn Societies Project in practice explains how WSP s projects in the four pilot countries were chosen, how they were established, what worked and what didn't. Avoiding the prescriptive 'handbook' approach, it nevertheless attempts to draw lessons from the WSP country projects and to suggest some prerequisites to successfully replicating the WSP experience

Please send me:

*War-torn Societies Project
the first four years*

☐

WSP in practice

☐

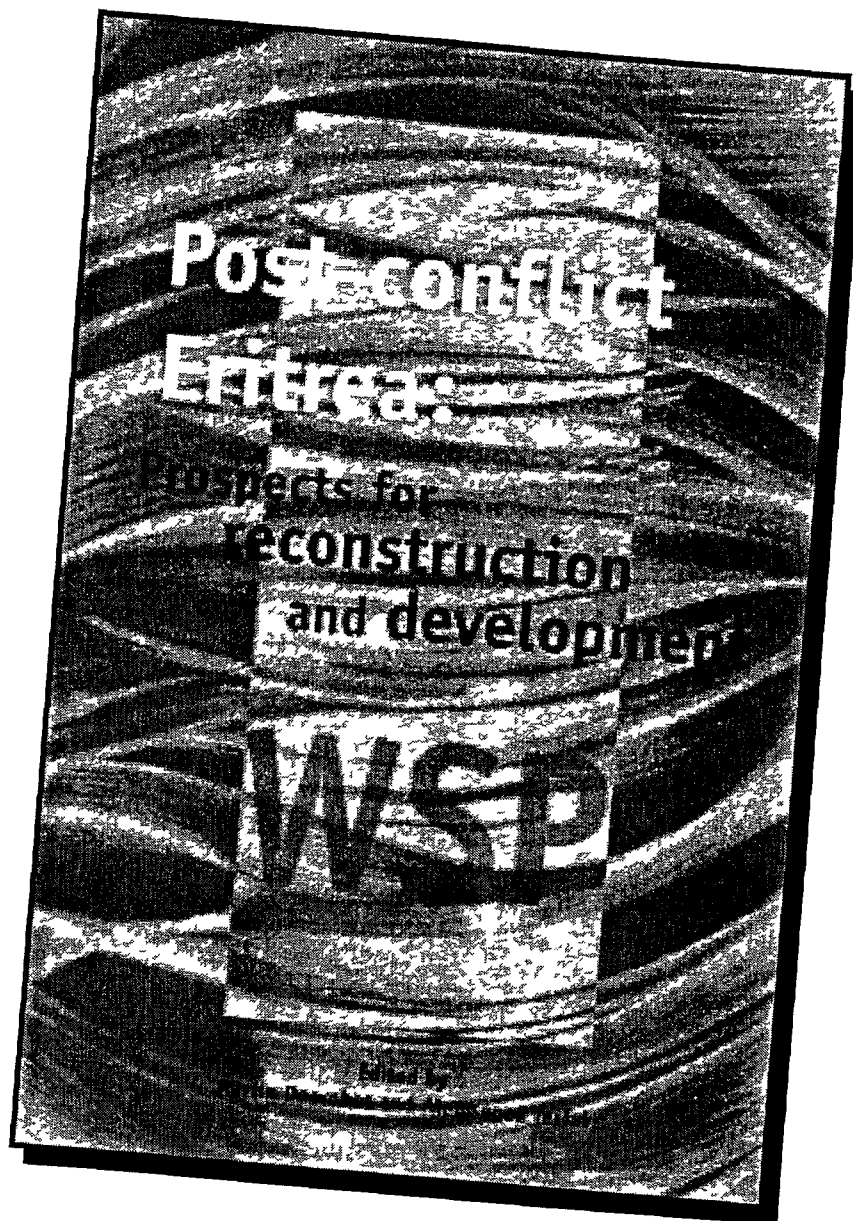
Please indicate number of copies
required and send this form to
WSP
c/o UNRISD
Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

Name _____

Address _____

64

Also available



The War-torn Societies Project

The War torn Societies Project (WSP) was set up in 1994 to help clarify policy options in countries emerging from conflict. WSP is a joint venture between the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and the Programme for International Security Studies of the Graduate Institute of International Security Studies in Geneva, Switzerland.

In Eritrea, Guatemala and Mozambique, WSP introduced methods of participatory action research, bringing together international and local actors in the rebuilding process to better know and understand each others' objectives and priorities, and then to produce recommendations for action and policy formulation. WSP's work is ongoing in Northeast Somalia, where the methodology is being tested in a different, challenging post conflict situation.

About the Editors

Alemseged Tesfai, until 1997 Acting Head of the Eritrean Land Commission, researches and writes on the history of Eritrea (1941-1962) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Army. He was Head of the Cultural Division of the EPLF and the Cultural Centre of the Department of National Guidance in the Provisional Government of Eritrea. A writer and playwright, Alemseged has produced a collection of short stories, several plays, essays and a novel about the Eritrean liberation war. One of his plays, *The Other War* ('eti kal'e quinat' in Tigrigna), had its successful debut performance in the West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds, UK, in September 1997.

Martin Doornbos is Professor of Political Science at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands, and has been associated with the War-torn Societies Project since 1995. He has researched and written on political transitions in the Horn and East Africa generally and, among other recent books, co edited *Beyond Conflict in the Horn: The Prospects for Peace, Recovery and Development in Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan* (1992). Doornbos was a member of the International Advisory Board for the Constitutional Commission of Eritrea and has frequently visited Eritrea on behalf of the War torn Societies Project.

Post-conflict Eritrea:

Prospects for reconstruction and development

Edited by Martin Doornbos and Alemseged Tesfai

Contents

- Foreword *Matthias Stiefel, Director of the War torn Societies Project*
- Chapter 1 The War-torn Societies Project in Eritrea: an introduction
Martin Doornbos
- Chapter 2 Reconstruction and development in Eritrea: an overview
Berhane Woldemichael, Ruth Iyob, Patricia Weiss Fagan
- Chapter 3 The challenge of reintegrating returnees and ex-combatants
Teclemichael W/Giorgis (Rosso)
- Chapter 4 The state of Eritrea's infrastructure
Berhane Woldemichael
- Chapter 5 Food security: problems, policies and programmes
Haile Awalom
- Chapter 6 Human resource development: priorities for policy
Araia Tseggai
- Chapter 7 Issues of governance in the Eritrean context
Alemseged Tesfai
- Chapter 8 The challenges of post-war development: a review of the WSP research findings
Alemseged Tesfai

WSP in print

Post conflict Eritrea Prospects for reconstruction and development is one component of a wider exercise of not only evaluating the first four years of the War torn Societies Project, but also of sharing this evaluation and the lessons learned during the project with a wide variety of interested audiences. The lessons have been compiled into a set of core reports that analyse the WSP experience in the four countries in which it was piloted, document WSP's operational experience at field and headquarters levels, and draw conclusions on the project overall.

In addition to the reports, three companion volumes are being published in collaboration with WSP successor bodies and/or regional publishers in the countries in which WSP has completed its pilot work. They are:

Post conflict Eritrea Prospects for reconstruction and development
published in association with The Red Sea Press

From conflict to dialogue the WSP Guatemala way (English) and
Del conflicto al dialogo el WSP en Guatemala (Spanish)
published in association with FLACSO
(Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales Sede Guatemala)

Rebuilding through dialogue the Mozambican way (English) and
Reconstruindo pelo dialogo o caminho de Moçambique (Portuguese)
published in association with CEDE
(Mozambican Centre for the Study of Democracy and Development)

Post-Conflict Eritrea Prospects for reconstruction and development
is available at specialised bookstores and can be ordered from

The Red Sea Press

11-D Princess Road

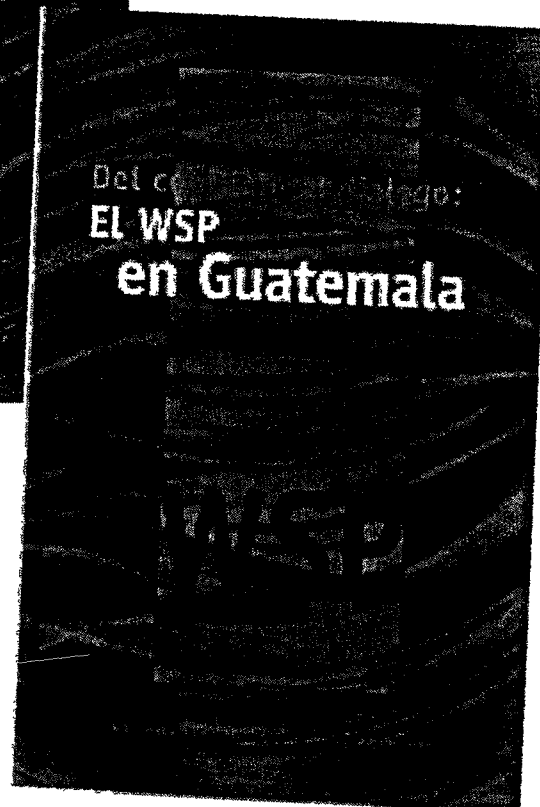
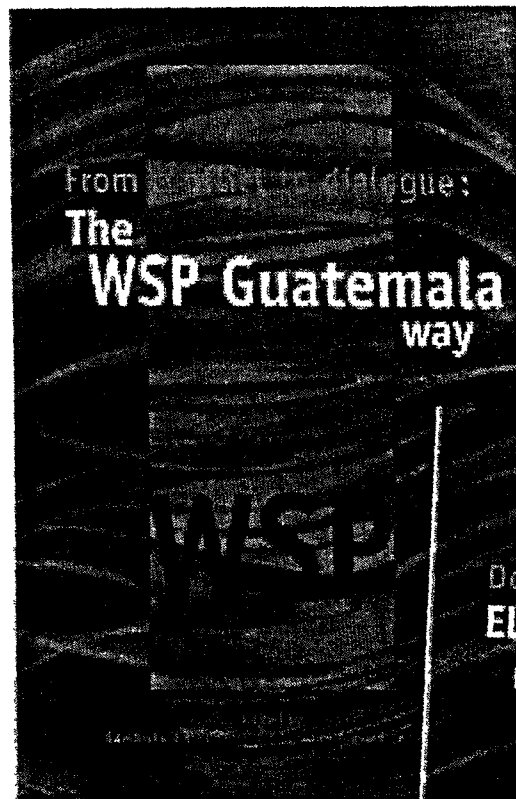
Lawrenceville

NJ 08648

USA

Fax +1 (609) 844 0198

Also available



The War-torn Societies Project

The War torn Societies Project (WSP) was set up in 1994 to help clarify policy options in countries emerging from conflict. WSP is a joint venture between the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and the Programme for International Security Studies of the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland.

In Eritrea, Guatemala and Mozambique, WSP introduced methods of participatory action-research, bringing together international and local actors in the rebuilding process to better know and understand each others' objectives and priorities, and then to produce recommendations for action and policy formulation. WSP's work is ongoing in Northeast Somalia, where the methodology is being tested in a different, challenging post conflict situation.

About the Editors

Edelberto Torres Rivas is a sociologist who has written extensively on political and sociological issues of Central and Latin America. He was Director General of the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), an academic institution devoted to the promotion of social and economic research in Latin America and the Caribbean, and has taught in several European and Latin American universities. He is currently an advisor to UNDP Guatemala on human development issues, and to the Guatemalan Truth Commission. He has been National Coordinator of the Mission of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance to Guatemala and co edited its report *Democracy in Guatemala the mission for an entire people*. Among many other publications, he has recently co authored *Del autoritarismo a la paz* (1998), and published *Guatemala izquierdas en transición* (1997).

Bernardo Arévalo de León is a sociologist who held several diplomatic posts including Deputy Foreign Minister and Ambassador to Spain before becoming Special Advisor to the Director of WSP Guatemala. He now works as Director of the Research Programme on Identity and Interethnic Relations at the Center for Regional Research for Mesoamerica and as Researcher on Civil/ Military Relations for FLACSO. He has recently published *Sobre arenas movedizas: sociedad, estado y ejército en Guatemala* (1998) and co-edited *La nueva agenda de seguridad en Centroamérica* (1998).

From conflict to dialogue: the WSP Guatemala way

Edited by Edelberto Torres Rivas and Bernardo Arevalo de León

Contents

Part One

Foreword

Matthias Stiefel, Edelberto Torres Rivas, Bernardo Arevalo de León

Evaluation

Ruben Zamora with Christophe Bouvier

Part Two project documents

Guatemala at the crossroads

Building peace

Edelberto Torres Rivas

Part Three Working Groups' consolidated reports

On decentralization

Working Group on modernization and strengthening of the state

On fiscal policy

Working Group on economic and social development

On rural development

Working Group on economic and social development

On public security

Working Group on administration of justice and public security

On constitutional reforms on multiculturalism

Working Group on the multicultural nature of society

Part Four

Report on international cooperation

Luis Alberto Padilla and Tanya Palencia

Part Five

Report of the evaluation committee

Report of the follow-up committee

WSP in print

From conflict to dialogue the WSP Guatemala way (available in English and Spanish) is one component of a wider exercise of not only evaluating the first four years of the War-torn Societies Project, but also of sharing this evaluation and the lessons learned during the project with a wide variety of interested audiences. The lessons have been compiled into a set of core reports that analyse the WSP experience in the four countries in which it was piloted, document WSP's operational experience at field and headquarters levels, and draw conclusions on the project overall.

In addition to the reports, three companion volumes are being published in collaboration with WSP successor bodies and/or regional publishers in the countries in which WSP has completed its pilot work. They are:

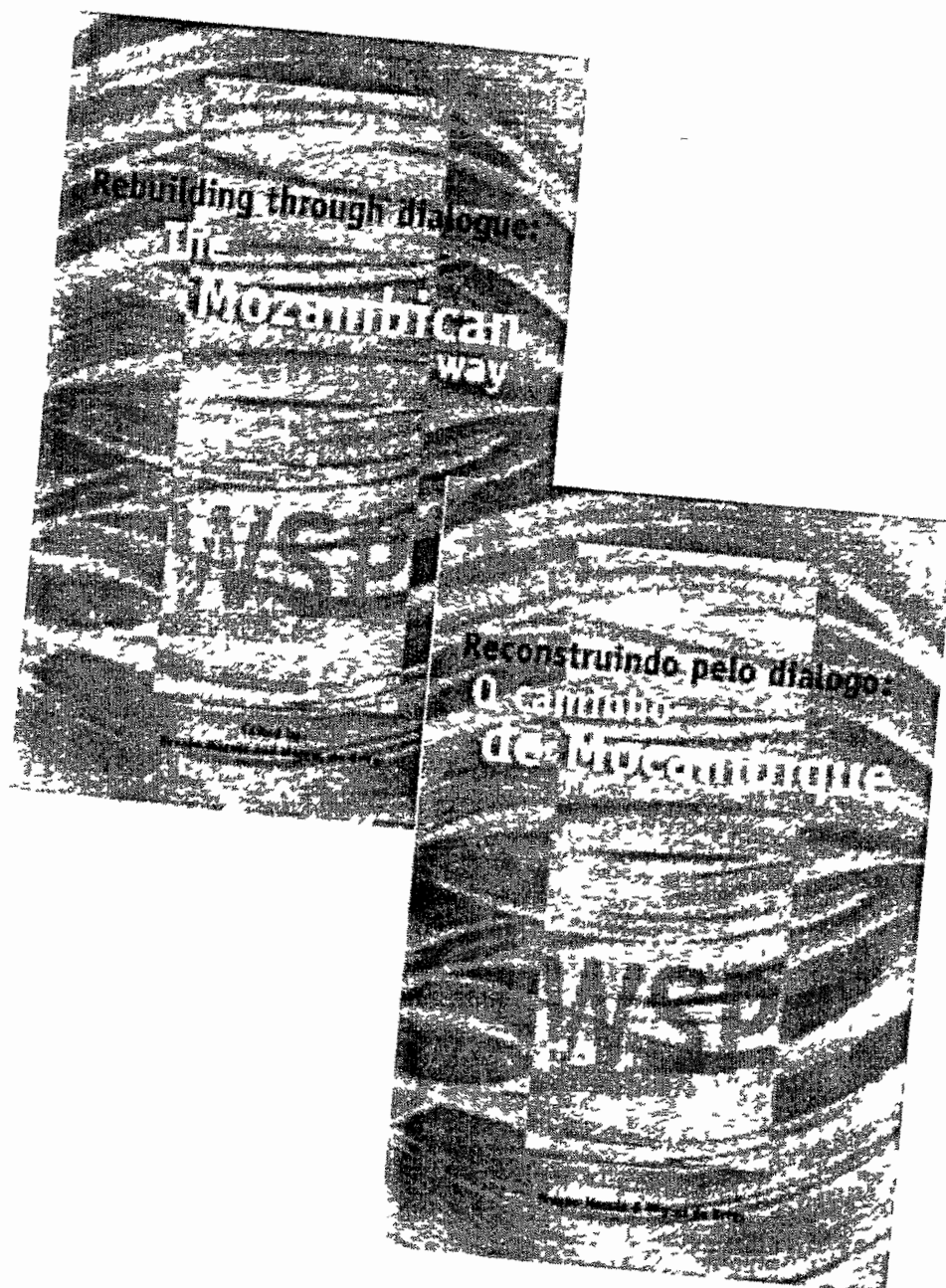
Post conflict Eritrea: prospects for reconstruction and development
published in association with The Red Sea Press

From conflict to dialogue the WSP Guatemala way (English) and
Del conflicto al dialogo el WSP en Guatemala (Spanish)
published in association with FLACSO
(Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales Sede Guatemala)

Rebuilding through dialogue the Mozambican way (English) and
Reconstruindo pelo dialogo o caminho de Moçambique (Portuguese)
published in association with CEDE
(Mozambican Centre for the Study of Democracy and Development)

From conflict to dialogue the WSP Guatemala way can be ordered from
specialised bookstores
ISBN 84-89876-10-X

Also available



The War-torn Societies Project

The War-torn Societies Project (WSP) was set up in 1994 to help clarify policy options in countries emerging from conflict. WSP is a joint venture between the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and the Programme for International Security Studies of the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland.

In Eritrea, Guatemala and Mozambique, WSP introduced methods of participatory action-research, bringing together international and local actors in the rebuilding process to better know and understand each others' objectives and priorities, and then to produce recommendations for action and policy formulation. WSP's work is ongoing in Northeast Somalia, where the methodology is being tested in a different, challenging post conflict situation.

About the Editors

Dr Brazão Mazula was President of the Mozambican National Electoral Commission in 1994 and early 1995. He was a Professor at Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo, before becoming Project Director of WSP Mozambique and subsequently was named Rector of the University. He is the author of several books on democracy and development and is a graduate in philosophy and theology.

Miguel de Brito was a researcher with WSP Mozambique and now works with WSP Mozambique's successor body, the Mozambican Centre for the Study of Democracy and Development. He was a researcher with the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Maputo.

Rebuilding through dialogue: the Mozambican way

Edited by Brazão Mazula and Miguel de Brito

Contents

Part One

Preface

Matthias Stiefel and Brazão Mazula

Introduction

Part Two Research and Results

Decentralization and participation in local self government

Carlos Serra and Guilherme Mbilara

Reintegration of demobilized soldiers

Miguel de Brito and Eduardo Mussanhane

The impact of structural adjustment on agriculture

Elisa dos Santos and Maria Nita Dengo

The role of mass media in democracy and development

Leite Vasconcelos and Salomão Moyana

Part Three Evaluation and Lessons

WSP as seen by local actors

A consideration of WSP by external actors

A view from the researchers

WSP and research: relevance and continuation

Bernhard Weimer

Final thoughts from the Project Director

WSP in print

Rebuilding through dialogue the Mozambican way (available in English and Portuguese) is one component of a wider exercise of not only evaluating the first four years of the War torn Societies Project, but also of sharing this evaluation and the lessons learned during the project with a wide variety of interested audiences. The lessons have been compiled into a set of core reports that analyse the WSP experience in the four countries in which it was piloted, document WSP's operational experience at field and headquarters levels, and draw conclusions on the project overall.

In addition to the reports, three companion volumes are being published in collaboration with WSP successor bodies and/or regional publishers in the countries in which WSP has completed its pilot work. They are

Post conflict Eritrea: Prospects for reconstruction and development
published in association with The Red Sea Press

From conflict to dialogue the WSP Guatemala way (English) and
Del conflicto al dialogo el WSP en Guatemala (Spanish)
published in association with FLACSO
(Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales Sede Guatemala)

Rebuilding through dialogue the Mozambican way (English) and
Reconstruindo pelo dialogo o caminho de Moçambique (Portuguese)
published in association with CEDE
(Mozambican Centre for the Study of Democracy and Development)

Rebuilding through dialogue the Mozambican way is available at specialised bookstores