



Institute for Security Studies

PAPER

Debates in post-conflict development in Africa

Lessons for development agencies

INTRODUCTION

In 2012, South Sudan had the worst maternal mortality rate in the world: a woman in this country has a one in seven chance of dying in childbirth¹. Seven years since the nominal end of the conflict between parties in the south and the government of Sudan, life expectancy was just 42 years and almost 50 per cent of the country's population was in poverty. In fact, the South emerged from that conflict so underdeveloped that 2012's dire maternal mortality record actually represented an improvement of 300 per cent since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The enormous need for development in South Sudan, both at the dawn of peace and several years later, is not atypical of the huge challenges that face populations in post-conflict states in Africa. Such states struggle to create an environment in which their citizens' basic needs are met, and meaningful recovery seems impossible without substantial external stimulus and assistance.

Luckily, many post-conflict settings benefit from high levels of international attention and domestic optimism in the immediate aftermath of transition, with no lack of external actors drawn from the diaspora, private sector investors and a plethora of international aid organisations. Yet, channelling this attention towards improved development outcomes is difficult. Institutions are often compromised by years of instability, and post-conflict societies are often inherently volatile.

There is rarely a neat differentiation between different phases of conflict, with many post-conflict states continuing to exhibit high levels of violence. This violence may be confined to smaller territories or take on a different

nature; a rise in violent crime frequently follows periods of transition. The possibility of a relapse into large-scale violence may also remain high for many years. There will be pressure on the state for quick results in extending its authority and providing a peace dividend, and an uncritical focus on economic growth often masks serious obstacles to its distribution across society.

International development agencies can play a valuable role in improving the lives of the poor and strengthening the economic and governance institutions that serve them. Operating effectively, however, requires a politically astute understanding of the context that is informed by a historical perspective on how power and economic benefits have been distributed.

Through a review of the ways in which conflict affects development and its lasting effects, this brief provides guidance to those seeking to better understand the environment for development in post-conflict states in Africa. It argues that development agencies should focus on how inequality is created and sustained in the post-conflict period, and think critically about the role of aid agencies in these settings. It concludes with recommendations on how development agencies should approach post-conflict situations.

HOW DOES CONFLICT AFFECT DEVELOPMENT?

Most conflicts endure for long periods of time; the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been beset by violence for over 20 years, Sudan's civil war lasted for 40 and northern Uganda suffered internal violence for 17 years. Over time, conflict shapes people's livelihoods

options at a local level, and in turn people respond and adapt to their changing environment. At a national level, war economies change economic growth outcomes as investment declines, production falls and governments reorient spending to finance military operations. The effects of even brief periods of violence can be extreme; in Rwanda perhaps as much as 20% of the population moved into poverty following the genocide².

It is easy to understand war economies purely in terms of devastation, but these economies far from come to a standstill during periods of violence and people continue to be entrepreneurial. The Somali economy, for example, has benefitted from substantial if unquantified private commercial investment – largely funded by its diaspora – despite the lack of government regulation³. Conflict leads to the reorganisation of economic relationships, through processes driven by threats or violence, in which there are both winners and losers.

The effects of this last long into the future, and it is helpful to think of the conflict period not as an aberration in a country's development but rather a period of transformation. Development actors wishing to engage in post-conflict settings would benefit from familiarity with the range of phenomena that shape this transformation.

Livelihoods during conflict

The impact of conflict on civilians and their livelihoods is severe, especially as military strategies increasingly target civilians and their assets. The destruction of assets, loss of life and disability caused by war can destroy livelihoods, and military operations can result in the destruction of vital infrastructure, displacement and immense psychological trauma.

Economic resources can be a driver of violence, and even when not an original cause, control over resources can become a part of the strategy of combatants and perpetuate the violence. Sometimes, military tactics will directly – whether intentionally or not – obstruct the ability of the local population to pursue livelihoods. This was the case, for example, following the laying of land mines in fields and roads connecting people with markets in Mozambique during that country's conflict.

Movement restrictions, due to threat of violence or extortion, also constrain people's usual livelihoods strategies. Farmers cannot access fields nor fishermen their waters, labourers cannot migrate in search of work or seasonal opportunities and it may be dangerous to herd livestock in the open. Livelihoods may be restricted to the place of residence and shift, for example, to home industries, subsistence agriculture or foraging.

In Bahr el Ghazal in South Sudan, people changed their livelihoods strategies to reduce the chance of attack. Before the war, the Dinka economy was based on

transhumant animal husbandry, agriculture, fishing, trade and some gathering of wild foods; during the war households reduced farming and livestock-rearing activities and increased their gathering of wild foods⁴.

At a local level, armed groups or others who are able to exploit the situation often tax local traders and prey on the local population. Other powerful actors, who are not necessarily a party to the conflict, may also exploit the limited rule of law by extorting protection money and stealing from the civilian population. Jaspars and Maxwell report how in the DRC combatants have looted harvests and set up roadblocks to facilitate extortion – and due to the threat of attack women fear going to fields⁵. This has had an impact on the strategies of farmers, including changing the crops that they plant and decreasing how much they invest in their land.

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This leads to substantial destruction and deterioration of both human and physical capital. For example, Annan et al., in a study on war-affected youth in northern Uganda, reported that many households suffered substantial asset loss during the war, leading in many cases to the loss of all cattle and of their homes⁶. Bruck estimates that Mozambicans lost 80 per cent of cattle stock during that civil war, and during the civil war in Burundi there was plundering, destruction and theft of assets both by government and rebel forces⁷. Koyo describes how 'the looting of livestock disrupted the mixed farming system: a national survey in 1997 revealed losses of 32 and 46 per cent for large and small stock, respectively. In addition, the asset base has been depleted further by distress sales'⁸.

In response to conflict, local populations adapt, mitigate and find coping mechanisms. Remittances from relatives abroad can provide an economic lifeline to families, and relief aid can also be a vital resource. Often people take up illicit, illegal or degrading activities, such as prostitution or child labour. Men may join armed groups. While these strategies may alleviate the burden of generating an income, they typically generate a new set of risks⁹.

Development actors should not expect livelihoods to return to 'normal' once movement restrictions are lifted or violence subsides. Trade patterns may be permanently altered, and conflict may also have a long-lasting effect

on human capital, primarily through its impact on educational attainment.

In a review of empirical research on how violent conflict affects civilian and combatant populations' levels and access to education, Justino found that 'relatively minor shocks to educational access can lead to significant and long-lasting detrimental effects on individual human capital formation in terms of educational attainment, health outcomes and labour market opportunities'¹⁰. Survival strategies can also have negative ramifications long after they have been abandoned – such as the stigmatisation of people who entered sex work or joined armed groups.

Institutions, governance and post-conflict economies

Central to the process of transformation are the formal and informal institutions that would have shaped the environment for economic activity during conflict. These institutions include political parties; the policies of states and armed groups; customary laws, such as those governing land tenure, fishing and grazing rights; and other customs, rules or common law prevalent in the society. These institutions come under additional pressure during conflict. Government services may become weak or cease to function and the regulation of economic activity may be repeatedly altered as regions change hands between armed groups or the state. In areas controlled by non-state actors, services do not necessarily cease but may suffer even higher rates of neglect. Often reliance on informal institutions increases as state control wanes.

In regions where the state loses formal control, illicit industries, black markets and smuggling trades grow¹¹. Conflict creates strong incentives to engage in illicit activities: populations face desperate conditions and non-state actors need to finance their military operations. In weak states, this may happen even where the state does retain nominal control and an interest in regulation, as distinctions become blurred between the formal and informal economy, official and unofficial activities. Governments have been known to allow illicit companies to operate and to 'unofficially' export commodities¹². Non-state actors, other strongmen and the formal government can all exploit weak institutions to enrich themselves and their connections, while bolstering the power they command.

The post-conflict transition will be structured by the institutions that are already in place and how they evolve. The informal governance structures that were important during the conflict in the absence of functioning government services will adapt to the new order and continue to be important. Illicit industries are also extremely flexible and resilient, and often continue to operate after the official end of conflict¹³. The size and character of the

private sector will be key in determining opportunities for growth and employment.

The extant private sector may have employed innovative ways of coping with the obstacles that conflict posed to doing business, but businesses often survive because of political connections to armed actors, which can affect their role in the post-conflict period. Lister and Pain provide an example of this in Afghanistan¹⁴. The dominant traders in Afghanistan today are those who traded through the *mujahideen* and the Taliban period. This small group of businessmen dominate trading activities and exclude competitors through various mechanisms, including existing political connections. They had positioned themselves to be major beneficiaries of reconstruction and growth in the post-Taliban era, which gave them a further advantage over would-be new entrants to trade. Many of these traders have backgrounds in the illicit economy – which is necessary as illicit industry controls many transport routes.

Development actors need to be wary of supporting these processes uncritically in their desire to help create a strong state, quickly

While a peace deal may symbolically herald an era when central state control is re-established or implemented, in practice, areas that were held by rebels or contested during the conflict may continue to be semi-autonomous. The eastern DRC city of Goma, for example, is already increasingly separate from the capital of Kinshasa and more integrated with adjacent countries¹⁵. The central state is often therefore highly concerned with the project of state building, and this will affect how it pursues development – for instance by allocating finances based on lines of patronage which bolster its influence, rather than on identified need.

Development actors need to be wary of supporting these processes uncritically in their desire to help create a strong state, quickly. On the other hand, they need to be careful not to downplay or unhelpfully categorise illicit industries as aberrational, but instead seek to understand their importance in the distribution of power and access to livelihoods.

Displacement and return

Displacement and migration – both inside the country or across an international border – is also a way in which

civilians seek to improve their security. Class dynamics may affect who becomes a refugee or an internally displaced person (IDP): in many parts of the world the wealthier segments of the population are more likely to have a choice about where to migrate to and often opt for locations across the border, while poorer people often become internally displaced. Refugees typically receive greater international attention than IDPs, as well as international protection and (albeit highly limited) opportunities for third-country resettlement¹⁶.

The people who flee during conflict may end up in refugee camps in adjacent countries, IDPs in camps within their own country or they settle, usually without registration, in urban areas (and sometimes in rural areas too).

In the past decade there has been increasing recognition that many refugees are dispersed in urban areas, and that internal displacement has been a major contributor to the urbanisation in many conflict-affected states. This urbanisation, as in much of sub-Saharan Africa, has been largely unplanned and has not been met with the growth of formal employment opportunities or government schemes to extend service delivery to informal settlements^{17 18}.

Despite the dire conditions that arise from this situation, many IDPs and refugees prefer settlement in urban areas to camps, as there are greater opportunities for employment, education, access to aid or protection – even if these are inadequate.

Over time people from rural areas urbanise, and are often unwilling to return, even after violence has subsided. When such refugees do return to their countries of origin, they often move directly to cities there rather than their original villages. On the other hand, many who do return to their village find they cannot access land or that conditions are poorer and more insecure than in the city, prompting yet another move. These movements of displaced people join broader migration trends including economic migration. Conflict-affected states often see a rapid expansion of urban areas, with little attention paid to the urban poor and their needs by central or municipal government – either during the war or afterwards.

Luanda presents an interesting example of this. Power describes how during the war the Angolan capital expanded from a surface area of 5 km² in 1980 to about 270 km² in 2000, with a population of 5.8 million¹⁹. This growth was partially caused by conflict-induced displacement. While the cost of living is incredibly high in Luanda – among the highest in the world – living conditions for the majority of the population are deplorable and many people lack access to basic housing and water. The government plans not to provide them with services in Luanda or to facilitate their lives, but rather to create

entirely new cities, based around industrial zones, at locations outside the city limits.

This approach is characteristic of the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) government, a highly centralised regime that 'wields power through personalised networks in which money and favours are allocated by patrons to clients, in exchange for political support'²⁰. It favours top-down, modernist planning and its vision for poverty alleviation rests heavily on the 'trickle-down effect' from economic growth.

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Urbanisation has been accompanied by the informalisation of labour. In unplanned, rapidly expanded African cities, formal employment options are often few and a vast number of residents generate income through informal trade in goods and services. In South Sudan, the informal sector is a significant source of employment, including small-scale construction, retail, transportation and services such as credit, marketing and distribution²¹. Large-scale growth of the informal sector has also been seen in the DRC²². While the informal sector is dynamic and provides incomes where formal employment would not exist, there are clear disadvantages: informal labour markets are rife with exploitation, informal industries lack regulation and business tax revenue is not captured.

The international development industry does not have much expertise in dealing with urban poverty or other issues related to rapid urban development, having historically focused on livelihood and service delivery programming in rural areas. There is not a mainstream set of tools and programming approaches that are appropriate to urban slums. Development agencies also struggle to find an entry point into this area as their partners – and particularly organs of the host state – are often vehemently opposed to measures that might encourage urban growth or alleviate the challenges facing poor urban residents, particularly when they are not citizens (such as refugees) or come from marginalised groups. Promoting equitable urban development therefore requires both technical expertise and strategies for securing political buy-in.

Land issues in rural areas

Post-conflict settings are often riven with land disputes in rural areas²³. Land is also important in both urban and rural environments, but in rural settings it is more closely related to people's ability to pursue a livelihood. Tensions arise from illegal land occupation during and after conflict. In many countries a sustained presence is vital in maintaining ownership of land, as legal titles are not used or cannot be enforced by weak courts. Displacement therefore often results in large-scale appropriation of displaced people's land. Households without male heads – such as those of war widows – also become vulnerable to land occupation. Powerful figures often use periods of transition to grab the land of poor and marginalised members of the community.

Programmes that encouraged the return of displaced families to rural rather than urban areas may have empowered traditional values over more cosmopolitan ones

This is all made easier by the absence of functioning legal and administrative frameworks and limited rule of law. In the post-conflict period, the return of internally displaced people and refugees can then lead to high levels of dispute. For instance in Burundi, the high level of displacement during the civil war led to the large-scale illegal appropriation, occupation and sale of displaced residents' land. The return of displaced people therefore led to a significant increase in land disputes. This problem may be rooted in the conflict, but structurally it is also about population growth in these areas, the inheritance system practised by residents, and deregulated land markets²⁴ that have transformed Burundian hills into 'a patchwork of continuously diminishing familial land holdings'²⁵.

There is also an important international influence on land issues. In post-conflict Liberia, disagreements over land ownership and use has also been exacerbated by external factors²⁶. In the last five years, land for cultivation for a variety of crops, frequently those used for biofuels, has been a major focus of investment in Africa^{27 28}. Like the complications with the return of displaced people, land grabs have entailed fraught conflicts over ownership and right to use, often stemming from a legacy of weak government regulation and opportunism during conflict. Between 2009 and 2012, over 2 500 000 ha of land in Liberia had been signed to foreign business interests in

concessionary deals. However, while the government of Liberia deems this land to have been public, thousands of rural communities understood that the land was held under customary law. In many cases poor Liberians have lost access to the land that was vital to their livelihood. The issue becomes more complicated when one considers that this is not universally lamented: Gilfroy documents how young people in one region of Liberia welcomed the arrival of agro-corporations as an opportunity for modernity and wage employment²⁹. This put them in direct conflict with their elders and traditional values.

Such conflicts are not uncommon, and development agencies should be aware of playing an unwitting role in them. For instance, as seen in post-Comprehensive Peace Agreement Sudan, programmes that encouraged the return of displaced families to rural rather than urban areas may have empowered traditional values (favoured by male household heads) over more cosmopolitan ones (favoured by youth and women).

Land issues require specific attention from development actors. They require an understanding of ownership *and* access rights, systems of tenure, possible mechanisms for redress or dispute resolution and an awareness of how development activities can inadvertently exacerbate ethnic or gender discrimination.

Inequality

In the post-conflict period, power will be at the heart of how risk and cost are distributed. A host of factors will determine who is most vulnerable and marginalised in a conflict situation, such as existing economic inequality, location, gender and ethnicity. Particular ethnic groups may be targeted as conflict over livelihood strategies or resources emerges, such as access to fertile land, forests or mineral resources. Women often bear a greater burden of responsibility for caring for dependents, while being discriminated against in their socio-economic rights by local customs.

These disadvantages will last longer than the conflict; for instance, the poorest households may have coped with livelihoods difficulties by taking children out of school, meaning they will be disadvantaged in later life. This type of effect does not only have implications for individuals, but also tends to be concentrated in population groups that are already marginalised.

At the same time, some people do derive benefit and are able to entrench their power in these environments. The strongmen who captured resources during times of conflict are often able to leverage that power to legitimise their wealth and business concerns in the post-conflict period. Market disruption has unequal effects on traders – some, usually those who have a privileged position in society, will have the political connections to continue operating, but

will do so in an environment where there is decreased competition and be able to reap even higher profits.

Those who have not suffered the same consequences during the conflict are therefore in an even better position to take advantage of post-conflict opportunities. The post-conflict period can be accompanied by high levels of growth, but some groups will be indefinitely disadvantaged and suffer worse and longer lasting effects from the period of conflict³⁰. This social and economic inequality then becomes – or remains – a major fault-line and a potential source of grievance that can lead to renewed violence.

It is vital for development agencies to try to understand who really stands to gain from an intervention, and that the benefits of reconstruction funding and growth stimulus address inequality

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WHAT CONTEMPORARY TRENDS AFFECT POST-CONFLICT DEVELOPMENT?

The trajectory of post-conflict development is not just a matter of the internal dynamics of a country. It is also shaped by external factors such as the state of the global economy and of regional economies; the state and characteristics of cross-border trade and population movements and the attention that the transition garners among international investors and, to a lesser extent, aid actors.

Two phenomena mark assessments of the global economy of the last decade: the huge economic growth of several middle-income countries' economies, most notably China, India and Brazil; and the effects of the financial crisis of 2008, including its negative effect on the economies of countries such as the United States, Canada and the European Union (EU). These phenomena have had several effects which this brief will not explore, bar to note that they have significantly altered the landscape of potential economic engagement in African states.

It is also notable that many African states have seen a period of stronger than expected economic growth over the past few years, accompanied by much estimation and speculation about the growth of an African middle class.

Since a large-scale push into African markets in the 1990s and 2000s, China is now Africa's biggest trading partner. In 2012 almost \$200 billion worth of goods were traded, with Africa primarily exporting raw materials³¹.

China's engagement in Africa is concerted, state driven and large scale. It is made up, however, by numerous bilateral relationships that have different qualities. Significantly, China has made large investments in several post-conflict states: Angola, the DRC, South Sudan and Sudan. China is Sudan's largest trading partner, with a 40% share in Sudanese oil – and China imported nearly 40% of Angolan oil in 2012³².

In 2011, the Chinese Eximbank loaned the DRC \$367.5 million for a 150-MW hydropower project. In many cases China has offered large loans to African countries for the construction of infrastructure in exchange for resources such as oil. The loans are offered at market rates and do not qualify as development aid. They also come with few of the conditions that are typically attached to World Bank credit, such as provisions on transparency, anti-corruption and human rights.

In some instances, Chinese loans have been preferred over World Bank loans due to this lack of conditionality, but the Chinese have also absorbed risk that multilateral institutions and other bilateral donors were not willing to.

In the last decade or so, the development of post-conflict states has become a key priority for many Western states and other international actors. Major aid donors now prioritise their development assistance to conflict-affected states. A mix of motives drive efforts to intervene in these states, from the belief that development in post-conflict states can strengthen state institutions and legitimacy, to perceived links between state 'fragility', terrorism and other forms of transnational violence^{33 34}.

While development assistance has a very mixed record of success in any situation, approaches that have closely combined development activities with security strategies have had notable failures – for instance, in 'stabilising' violent areas of Afghanistan³⁵.

At the level of individual programme activities, the international development industry also does not really know what works and what does not. Mallet and Slater lament that although the evidence base about interventions to support livelihoods in conflict-affected states is large, it 'tends to be low quality, with outputs often privileged over impacts and questions of internal design frequently taking precedence over the experiences of beneficiaries'³⁶. The take-away point here is that new donors, whether taking inspiration from the approaches of traditional donors or

joining existing multilateral initiatives, should be critical about the theories underlying these approaches and invest early in understanding if their own programmes are working.

Many post-conflict states also experience significant regional migration. There is not usually an evidence base to compare immigration rates with those during conflict, but it is nonetheless a factor affecting trade, the labour market and popular perceptions thereof in the post-conflict period.

For instance, in South Sudan there is growing resentment and even violence towards migrants from Uganda, DRC, Kenya, Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia who have come to Juba in particular in search of economic opportunities^{37 38}. In general, these immigrants are believed to be more highly skilled and educated than the South Sudanese, which gives them a competitive edge in labour markets. The World Bank estimates that there are as many as 40 000 Ugandans and 15 000 Kenyans working in Juba alone³⁹.

The engagement of Chinese and other non-Western powers is seen to threaten liberal, Western influence. This shifting balance of power means there are more options for states in their selection of development aid donors

Goma provides an example of a city that has become a crucial node for regional trade and the point of access to the eastern DRC's mineral trade and other aspects of a (current) war economy⁴⁰. It is a hub for cargo companies, traders and a vast number of ordinary East Africans searching for economic opportunity, not to mention organised criminals. It will likely retain this character even after conflict subsides in the eastern DRC, and migration will continue to be a crucial element shaping post-conflict development.

Angola provides an interesting case of a state that has attracted significant migration from further afield. Estimates from 2008 are of 80 000 Portuguese, as much as 75 000 Chinese and smaller but significant numbers of Malians, Lebanese, Indians and Spaniards present, primarily in Luanda⁴¹. With the exception of Chinese workers brought over for labour-intensive construction projects, many of these migrants are seeking to fulfil skilled labour needs for which there were insufficient domestic skills, and to benefit from state and private contracts. Where such capacity

limitations exist, the ability to not only attract skilled labourers but to utilise them in ways that build, rather than limit, the development of domestic competencies and skills will be crucial to creating sustainable development.

These external factors will play a large role in structuring how and at what speed post-conflict states will develop. Development agencies and governments tend to focus only on citizens and to use countries as a unit of analysis, without taking into account how immigrants and regional dynamics affect development. This approach will inevitably produce a limited or distorted strategy.

At a strategic level, the engagement of Chinese and other non-Western powers in Africa is seen to threaten liberal, Western influence. This shifting balance of power at a geopolitical level means that there are more options for states in their selection of development aid donors, foreign investors and even (given the growing importance of regional organisations) in their choice of political support from multilateral governance organisations. This calls for development agencies to think about carefully about their leverage in each setting and design strategies that bolster their chances of influencing development in ways that benefit the poor.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Many of the experiences of post-conflict development from the last decade demonstrate that the benefits of the post-conflict order are not distributed widely or fairly. During conflict, the power structures that develop or become entrenched serve to keep economic resources and opportunities in the hands of the already privileged few. This can undermine prospects for governance in the interest of the people and can lead to future instability. International aid in such situations can unwittingly make things worse for people as easily as it can make things better.

- Development support in post-conflict settings needs more investment in political understanding. This requires bringing in specialists with in-depth and long-standing expertise on the country at a very early stage in developing a political or aid strategy, and also in developing any individual interventions or projects.
- The needs of the poorest or most vulnerable must be placed at the center of this analysis. Any policy or intervention must be able to justify itself by the way it helps these people specifically, rather than by general support for growth, agricultural production or job creation.
- Where possible, political capital should be spent not only on economic growth, but also on advocating national policies that draw attention to the prospects of those who have lost out during the conflict.

Interlinked issues of access to land and the return of displaced people, rapid urbanisation and pro-poor governance are often crucial. Both formal and informal institutions will structure people's ability to regain or acquire land and property, be given access to basic services, and to find or sustain viable livelihoods. Often people's desires, challenges and opportunities will differ vastly, even within culturally homogenous groups, due to generational differences and gender dynamics. Generic support for livelihoods is often subject to the very forces that generated inequalities in the first place; in other words, the greater part of the benefit from aid intervention accrues to those who are already best off and have the most power.

- Interventions – especially those in rural areas – should be assessed for their potential impact on land issues.
- Attention should be paid to both the technical and political challenges of rapid urbanisation in post-conflict states.
- Support for justice, law and order should be targeted at improving justice for the marginalised poor in rural and urban areas.
- Country-specific understanding of customary rules and institutions will be needed and should be invested in.
- Livelihoods support should be prioritised, but must be targeted at addressing specific problems facing those who have lost out from conflict, or who are suffering due to inequality.
- Consideration should be given both to economic inequality as well as inequalities between geographical areas and ethnic or religious groups. This should be explicitly addressed in designing policies or interventions and in their evaluation.

The prominence of cross-border trade and population movement, the power and influence of informal institutions, the role of illicit industries and the vast differences between sub-national regions are all of great importance to post-conflict development. This underlines the fact that looking only at national-level processes, formal and legitimate actors and within the confines of a state's borders will generate a distorted and incomplete picture.

- Context analysis has to take into consideration cross-border phenomena, such as migration and the role of diaspora communities in development.
- Development actors should seek to understand illicit industries and informal powerbrokers rather than simply avoiding or condemning them.

It is unclear what unconditional credit and investment from the rising powers means for the long-term prospects of African states. It has undoubtedly given post-conflict states greater autonomy from the agendas of Western liberal states, but the evidence does not suggest that this has or

will contribute to pro-poor development choices on the part of ruling elites. This should be factored into the strategies of new donors.

- Analysts should be explicit about the trade-offs that different approaches to external intervention in post-conflict states involve.
- Development agencies should generate country-specific strategies to achieve influence in states that have substantial financial support for pursuing anti-poor development strategies. Such strategies are likely to secure greater leverage when they involve coordination between like-minded development partners.

Lastly, it will be important to understand the external influences on prospects for post-conflict development, particularly the role that is and can be played by foreign investors and aid actors, and the intended and unintended consequences of their actions. The aid sector tends to have a weak commitment to evaluating outcomes and impact; focusing on technical issues rather than capturing the experiences of those who were supposed to benefit from their aid. Emerging donors have an opportunity to entrench a culture of learning and critical reflection on performance and strategy from the beginning of their operations.

- Donors should insist that all interventions are based on sound, politically informed analyses of the context and that they include a learning component. This should be properly funded.
- Agencies should ensure there is a plan for sharing their learning, and for learning from other organisations' interventions.
- Where projects could conceivably become pilot projects for broader policy intervention, the host government should lead in monitoring and evaluation.
- Communication with beneficiaries about programme quality should occur at all stages of the project, but particularly when assessing how effective the project was.

Post-conflict societies face enormous challenges and international development agencies work in complex and volatile contexts. This brief has argued that in order to do justice to the role that international assistance *could* play in supporting development, their strategies will need to be based on a politically informed approach. This takes into account the legacy of conflict and the ways in which vulnerability and inequality are perpetuated, and is also reflective about the role of aid itself. To this end, the recommendations above will be a valuable starting point for designing such a strategy. This will not guarantee success, but it will at least be a precondition for it, and will lay the foundation for engagement that is continually evolving and improving.

NOTES

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While international development agencies can play an important role in improving the lives of the poor and strengthening the economic and governance institutions that serve them, their operations require a deep understanding of context that is informed by a historical perspective on how power and economic benefits have been distributed. This paper examines the effects of conflict on development, and argues that aid agencies should focus on how inequality is created and sustained. It further provides recommendations for aid agencies working in post-conflict situations.

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