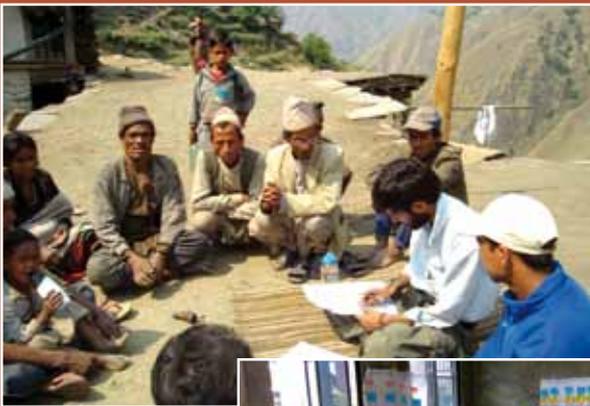# LOCAL FIRST IN PRACTICE

**Unlocking the power
to get things done**

**Rosie
Pinnington**

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Local First is a campaign to promote local leadership
in international aid and development. It hosts
a global community of practice on its website at
www.actlocalfirst.org.

Peace Direct is an international agency that finds,
funds and promotes the work of local peacebuilders
in conflict zones worldwide. It supports the Local
First approach. Full details of its programmes and
information resources are at www.peacedirect.org.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Local First is an approach to international development assistance that looks first for the capacity within countries, before bringing in external expertise and resources. It recognises that much of this capacity is found outside central government, and understands that local people need to be at the centre of defining and driving how change happens in their own countries. This year, under its Local First initiative, Peace Direct has been researching practical approaches and partnership models that can be used by international organisations to work in a way that allows local people to lead in their own development.

In doing so, this study addresses a fundamental problem with current aid practice, caused by its intrinsically delivery-driven character. Because the sector focuses on the provision of external resources, it is dominated by donor agendas and often ignores existing capacities in aid-receiving countries. This has a number of damaging and distorting consequences for local agency and ownership, and it can lead to inappropriate and misconceived interventions that end up exacerbating the very problems they aim to solve.

This study aims to contribute to the growing recognition and development of locally led aid modalities and partnership models. It does so on the 'practical' rather than 'ideas' front – in that it starts from a policy context in which the imperatives of ownership and agency have long been acknowledged, but in which there remains a significant and prevailing gap between rhetoric and implementation on the ground. By identifying good practice examples of partnership models in the peacebuilding, development and humanitarian fields, Peace Direct hopes to contribute towards a shift in practice within the aid industry, whereby locally led approaches are prioritised.

What does this study present?

This study provides examples of partnership models between international agencies and local entities that address four key challenges for achieving locally led practice:
1. Identifying and supporting local capacity.
2. Listening to local voices to develop responses and approaches.
3. Using funding mechanisms that enable rather than distort local entities.
4. Supporting local actors to work together to achieve greater impact.

These challenges form the thematic structure of the study. The models were chosen on the basis that they illustrate working relationships that meaningfully harness local capacity, resources or systems. 'Local' in these examples means not just an implementing partner or receiver of aid, but an entity whose ideas, capacity and resources drive the process and are integral to its success. Under each of the four themes, there are at least two primary models and two or three sub-models that illustrate a similar approach. At the end there are general principles, detailed guidance and concluding recommendations for achieving more locally led partnership models and aid modalities.

Who is local and who isn't?

Models have been taken from the development, peacebuilding and humanitarian sectors, and the international partners include both donors and non-governmental organisations. The Paung Ku case in Myanmar represents a slightly different dynamic, in that it has evolved from an international initiative into a local NGO. However, it still functions as

an external support structure to less formalised local civil society networks and actors in Myanmar. For the most part, the study focuses on the relationships between international organisations and local civil society actors from aid-receiving societies. The spectrum of actors included in this definition of civil society is broad enough to include informal civic associations and even individual actors influencing and involved in processes of change in their societies. As seen in ActionAid's model under Theme 1 ('Identifying and supporting local capacity'), aid-receiving communities can also be development actors in their own right. Other models present more traditional partnerships between INGOs and formally constituted local NGOs. It is recognised that government and private sector actors are equally important for the dynamics of locally led partnership models. However, this project has chosen, as an entry point, to focus on a model that Peace Direct has most direct practical experience with: partnerships between INGOs, donors and local civil society actors.

How were the models chosen?

Peace Direct relied on its network (including over 1,000 subscribers to the Local First newsletter and a Community of Practice established from the outset of the project) to share potential models of locally led approaches and partnership dynamics. These models were then reviewed and those that appeared to show a promising and innovative approach were explored through further interviews and review of background documentation. Every 'main' model is supported by either an external evaluation or internal review and reflection process that resulted in the development of a broader case study on which the model is based; most are supported by both internal and external evaluations. However, it should be noted that the models explored here are not intended to provide evidence that a Local First approach 'works' or is the 'correct' way to do things; rather, they illustrate promising practical approaches used by international or external actors to overcome the four challenges identified above. Similarly, they are models that show aspects of a locally led approach, rather than ideal organisations whose wider practice is unaffected by the four challenges.

These models represent the experiences of international actors and organisations as well as the perceptions of aid-receiving communities and civil society actors. In addition to desk reviews, primary research was conducted in Ethiopia and Uganda, where international agencies and their local partners were interviewed in order to develop the guidance presented here. In the later stages of the project, research was strengthened through validation meetings, interviews and observations involving international organisations and local civil society actors in three countries: Myanmar, Nigeria and Pakistan.

Achieving a locally led approach: from policy to practice

The aid effectiveness agenda

In partial response to a perception that donors sidelined recipient states during the 1980s and '90s, the aid effectiveness agenda has, in the last decade, increasingly called for better 'use of country systems'. In 2002, the Monetary Consensus explicitly acknowledged that there needed to be more effective collaboration between donors and recipients if the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were to be achieved. This acknowledgement became a commitment in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the broad aims of which – ownership, harmonisation and alignment – have since dominated definitions of aid effectiveness. However, progress made by governments in 'use of country systems' has been slow, and the Paris framework has been criticised as an overly rigid definition of 'ideal'

aid that does not adequately recognise the role of non-state actors or the importance of adapting to specific country contexts.

Since the 2005 Paris Declaration, governments of developed and developing countries have attempted to expand the definition of 'country systems' to include non-state actors, particularly civil society. At the High Level Fora on Aid Effectiveness in Accra (2008) and Busan (2011), governments made a commitment to recognise and support the roles of civil society organisations (CSOs) as independent development actors. During this period, the definition of civil society has broadened, partially in response to global events such as the Arab Spring. Civil society now commonly extends beyond formally constituted non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to encompass informal civic associations, including voluntary, traditional and faith-based groups.[1]

Participation and accountability

At a slight remove from the aid effectiveness agenda, though relevant to the models explored here, are processes that have sought to engage not just state, civil society or private sector actors, but 'ordinary people' on the receiving end of aid. Participatory development methods have been evolving since as far back as the 1970s, when tools such as Rapid Rural Appraisals (RRA) were used to ensure that development interventions were relevant and contextualised through learning from local people.

Methods used today have evolved to have a stronger focus on the connection between participation and empowerment. Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRA), for example, focus on facilitation, behaviour change, local knowledge and sustainable action; Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) methods embrace reflection, learning and an understanding of power and relationships. Similarly, the humanitarian sector has, in recent years, focused increasingly on developing effective methods and tools for ensuring 'downwards' accountability to crisis-affected communities. Recent research on 'closing the loop'[2] in feedback mechanisms from ALNAP and CDA is particularly notable. However, measuring the relationship between participation and empowerment remains a key challenge in the development sector, as does engagement in feedback mechanisms and genuine accountability in humanitarian contexts.

A 'locally led' model

More recently, practitioners and researchers have begun developing some concepts and approaches for achieving 'localised' and 'locally led' aid. USAID, for instance, has conceded that 'foreign assistance alone is not sufficient to help developing countries achieve long-term, sustainable economic growth. Development must be locally led and owned.'[3] This recognition has been put into action under a five-year US government pledge

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1 *For example, the European Commission works with a broad definition of CSOs that includes 'a wide range of formal and informal organisations organised voluntarily by citizens which can vary in governance, structure and scope…. CSOs include non-market and non-state organisations and structures in which people organise them to pursue shared objectives and ideals.' (European Commission (2012) Consultation on Civil Society Organisation in Development, quoted in INTRAC (2014)).*
2 *F. Bonino with I. Jean and P. Knox Clarke (2014) Closing the Loop: Practitioner Guidance on Effective Feedback Mechanisms in Humanitarian Contexts. ALNAP-CDA Guidance. London: ALNAP/ODI. Other online resources from this project that can be found here: www.alnap.org/feedback-loop.*
3 *The United States Commission on Helping to Enhance the Livelihood of People around the Globe (2007) 'Beyond Assistance: the Help Commission Report on Foreign Assistance Reform'. United States Commission on Helping to Enhance the Livelihood of People.*

to channel 30% of mission funds directly to local institutions by 2015.[4] Providing an analytical framework to support such endeavours, researchers at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) proposed a new formulation: 'localising aid'.[5] In order to test and broaden the systems-strengthening approach of the Paris agenda, the Localising Aid project[6] attempts to expand on the state-focus of Paris-style country systems by including state, civil society and private sector actors in its analysis. However, the parameters of what constitutes 'localising aid' are somewhat limited by its focus on the transfer of donor funds to recipient country entities. David Booth and Sue Unsworth, on the other hand, provide a more nuanced, and perhaps more useful, interpretation of what 'localised' aid might look like.

In recent case study analysis of seven different donor projects, Booth and Unsworth have presented evidence pointing towards the effectiveness of 'politically smart and locally led'[7] aid modalities. Here the concept of 'locally led' aligns with the practical approach developed by Peace Direct.[8] More than simply channelling money through local entities, locally led aid starts with 'a genuine effort to seek out existing capacities, perceptions of problems and ideas about solutions'.[9] It uses partnership models that recognise the importance of 'the tacit knowledge, relationships, capacities and motives that can be brought to bear on a problem by actors who are local in the sense of not being mere implementers of a donor agenda'.[10] 'Locally led', then, is a multifarious model that encompasses more than how funds are allocated, or even whether frontline staff are nationals or expats. It is a relationship that aims to drive change through identifying and deploying latent capabilities, in which aid money is not the defining driver of what is done and how it is achieved.

Local First themes

With the aim of helping international agencies to operate in a more locally led way, this study presents good practice models that overcome – in different ways and to varying extents – the following four challenges.

1. Identifying and supporting local capacity

Because the aid delivery system is intrinsically focused on the provision of external assets, models used by international aid organisations to assess local capacity are geared towards identifying gaps and need. However, if assistance is provided without connecting to existing capacity, it can undermine it. Moreover, meeting a need does not necessarily solve the problem that produced it.[11] Similarly, the sector's focus on funding allocations

4 For more information on progress towards this goal see USAID (2013) 'USAID Forward Progress Report 2013' at www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/2013-usaid-forward-report.pdf.

5 See J. Glennie, A. McKechnie, G. Rabinowitz, A. Ali (2013) Localising Aid: Sustaining Change in the Public, Private and Civil Society Sectors. London: Overseas Development Institute.

6 For more information on this project see online resources at www.odi.org/projects/2696-localising-aid-budget-support-southern-actors.

7 For elaboration of the 'politically smart' aspect of these approaches see SAVI Nigeria model under Theme 1 and Pyoe Pin Myanmar model under Theme 4.

8 See Kate McGuinness (2012) Local First: Development for the Twenty-First Century. London: Peace Direct.

9 D. Booth and S. Unsworth (2014) 'Politically Smart Locally Led Development: ODI Discussion Paper'. London: Overseas Development Institute, p. 18.

10 Ibid, p. 1.

11 M. Anderson, D. Brown, and I. Jean (2012) Time to listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid. Cambridge: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.

leads it to value certain forms of capacity over others. Organisational capacity to manage and implement projects is commonly prioritised over other important qualities (such as long-term vision, influence within and knowledge of local networks, or the ability to mobilise local resources). One of the most fundamental functions of international support should be to create an environment that enables local capacity to grow and sustain itself without external assistance. Needs-focused, project-delivery capacity assessments, however, perpetuate aid dependency and undermine efforts to self-sustain.

2. Listening to local voices to develop responses and approaches

As with its approach to capacity, the supply-driven nature of the aid industry often leads it to allocate resources without proper consideration of what is actually wanted or needed. CDA's Listening Project found that people on the recipient side of aid feel that donors and international agencies do not listen to them, and that their priorities and views are rarely taken into account in the design and monitoring of programmes. From this perspective, what the industry commonly terms 'local' or 'community' 'consultations' are viewed by the people that they engage as tokenistic. In a peacebuilding context, analysts have identified a fundamental tendency to value thematic expertise over local knowledge, resulting in an excessive reliance on external knowledge and actors.[12] For example, Severine Autesserre has shown how international actors in D R Congo dictate and are driven by 'dominant narratives', which inaccurately portray and oversimplify the region's conflicts.[13] Indeed, not only does insufficient listening lead to frustration on the part of local partners and communities because they feel their views are not respected or valued, but it can also result in international agencies delivering the wrong things at the wrong time or in the wrong way.[14]

3. Using funding mechanisms that enable rather than distort local entities

In order not to destroy the qualities that make local groups successful in the first place, care is required when using external funding to scale up their operations. For example, Masooda Bano has shown how external funding destroyed functioning civil society organisations in Pakistan.[15] Large project-based funds can damage the agility, local asset base, and horizontal accountability of community-based structures, often through processes that seek to formalise civic associations such as grassroots movements into NGOs. Grassroots movements (for example, self-help initiatives that rely on collective action through volunteers) are often weakly institutionalised and do not necessarily want to formalise themselves.[16] In this context, analysts such as Booth have noted that direct funding from international donors will inevitably impose institutional templates – at the very least for control and accountability purposes – that can have 'very negative effects on capacities for genuine self-help.'[17] If funding mechanisms are not designed carefully, local civil society and self-help structures can be reduced to mere receivers of aid and implementers of projects.

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12 *Severine Autesserre (2014) Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.*
13 *Ibid.*
14 *M. Anderson, D. Brown, and I. Jean (2012).*
15 *Masooda Bano (2012) Breakdown in Pakistan: How Aid is Eroding Institutions for Collective Action. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.*
16 *INTRAC (2014) Study on Support to Civil Society through Multi-Donor Funds. Brighton: INTRAC.*
17 *David Booth (2012) Development as a Collective Action Problem: Addressing the Real Challenges of African Governance. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).*

4. Supporting local actors to work together to achieve greater impact

Foreign aid is often criticised for encouraging competition rather than collaboration. When competition for funding pits organisations against each other, the potential for collective action can be destroyed. Competition between international agencies can also have negative impacts on the quality of aid. International assistance efforts are criticised for duplication and redundancy, especially in crises where there are multiple agencies responding to emergency needs. With the aim of achieving broad social change, international agencies often attempt to promote collaboration and reduce competition through facilitating networks of local actors. However, supporting networks does not come without its own set of problems and challenges. They are notoriously unstable and marked by complex power dynamics. Fluidity and adaptability are part of their strength, but the role of external support in this context must be equally flexible and responsive to changing contexts and power relations.

Key recommendations for achieving a locally led approach

Arising from this study, the Local First project makes the following key recommendations for international agencies and actors wishing to work in a more locally led way. These are expanded in more detail at the end of the book.

1. Move away from big aid to small, targeted and strategic funding. An approach of this kind could range from core funding (to help an organisation develop on its own terms) to activity-based allocations (to help local actors respond to specific opportunities or changes in their environment).
2. Nurture more beneficent and flexible bureaucratic environments. This could be as simple as ensuring that grant managers are available to talk to grantees over the phone as an informal feedback and monitoring approach.
3. Create space for ideas and new approaches to be tested and developed. This is connected to: having faith in the ideas of local partners; creating space for local actors to shape the design of programmes; and conceding that change is a cumulative process where learning through mistakes is as important as achieving successes.
4. Place more value on non-material, less tangible resources and outcomes, such as social and political capital or relationships based on trust.
5. Develop shared approaches for measuring 'intangible' aims and outcomes.
6. Develop staff performance metrics that encourage locally led practice.
7. Remove pressure to spend and stringent 'value-for-money' cultures in aid bureaucracies.

THEME 1: IDENTIFYING AND SUPPORTING LOCAL CAPACITY

Because the aid delivery system is intrinsically focused on the provision of external assets, models used by international organisations to assess local capacity are geared towards identifying gaps and needs. However, if assistance is provided without connecting to existing capacity, it can undermine it. Moreover, meeting a need does not necessarily solve the underlying problem that produced it. In no context will international agencies be engaging with a blank slate of resource and capacity when they develop their interventions and partnership models. One of the most fundamental functions of international support should be to create an environment that enables local capacity to grow and sustain itself without external assistance. Needs-focused capacity assessments, however, have been shown to perpetuate aid dependency and undermine self-determination.[18]

Similarly, without full and thorough analysis of the context, international agencies may not have the information they need to choose the 'right' local partner. Indeed, donors are not always successful at supporting civil society organisations that are themselves locally led, in the sense that they are accountable to and effectively engage the constituents they intend to support. International agencies have struggled to ensure that the local partners they support are not captured by elites, do function through representative structures, are effective at mobilising collective action, and build on existing community structures rather than undermining or ignoring them.[19] One of the reasons for this may be that the value donors ascribe to capacity is firmly rooted in the bureaucratic and organisational ability of a local CSO to implement projects.

As one respondent from a large INGO commented, 'Rather than looking at the bigger picture… our usual approach is to look for a single local NGO that we can sub-grant to carry out programmes on the ground.'[20] This process is usually defined by a tick-box exercise that aims to evaluate how well an organisation can manage and account for the expenditure of donor funds. Finding a partner with local legitimacy, however, involves expanding the scope of capacity assessments to include analysis of the broader context: how civil society works and is connected to a range of actors in a given socioeconomic and political environment. It involves reinterpreting capacity to prioritise principles of commitment, long-term vision and values that are identified by the local communities themselves. The process of gathering local views, and understanding better how the potential partner fits into a bigger picture, should be facilitated by the listening mechanisms that are identified in Theme 2. It also means moving beyond deficit models of capacity assessment to value-based approaches that identify existing capacity and resources, at both the community and local-partner level.

This section, then, will focus on two interrelated models of identifying and assessing local capacity:
1. Using value-based rather than deficit frameworks and approaches.
2. Putting the time and resources into 'getting to know' a potential partner and its wider context.

18 M. Anderson, D. Brown, and I. Jean (2012) Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid. Cambridge: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.
19 J. Glennie, A. McKechnie, G. Rabinowitz, A. Ali (2013) Localising Aid: Sustaining Change in the Public, Private and Civil Society Sectors. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).
20 Key Informant Interview, Anonymous INGO respondent, July 2014.

Model 1: ActionAid Fellowship Programme in Myanmar

The ActionAid fellowship programme in Myanmar shows how, over time, communities can be supported to find and use their own potential capacity for change. ActionAid began working in Myanmar in 2001, focusing primarily on ethnic minority communities affected by conflict and disaster. Since 2006, ActionAid Myanmar (AAM) has been developing and implementing the fellowship programme as its central approach to working with local communities. The programme trains young people as 'change makers' in social development theory, leadership and participatory methodologies. Whilst living and working alongside local communities for several years at a time, the fellows support the poor and marginalised to analyse the causes of their poverty and identify strategies to overcome it.

Rather than capacity building in the more traditional sense, this approach fits within a wider empowerment model that aims to shift attitudes so that communities and fellows view themselves as having the skills and resources to drive their own development. To enable this shift, the fellows act as 'catalysts for change' in their communities by facilitating participatory development processes. Indeed, this approach is strongly geared towards fostering collective action and the cooperation of various actors. This takes place between communities, fellows and those with the power and resources to help them drive change, including state and non-state actors. The model is based on the belief that tangible change in the lives of the poor and marginalised in Myanmar can only be achieved through relationship-building and strong collective action.

Why this is a different and more locally led approach to capacity

Although the programme provides technical and thematic training to its fellows, its approach has been more accurately described as 'capacity empowerment'[21] rather than capacity building. Rather than focusing on the organisational capacity of local partner CSOs involved,[22] the programme's interpretation of capacity is orientated towards developing the kinds of skills and attitudes that will empower communities to drive their own development processes. The fellows carry out training modules that provide them with analytical concepts and concrete participatory tools to help them harness existing resources and capacity. In fact, capacity building in the more common sense of organisational development is not even an explicit goal of the programme. Because fellows are not there to control or manage change, facilitation skills and understanding local power dynamics take priority over hierarchical management models. The fellows work directly with communities to analyse their problems and the causes of their poverty, and to design strategies to overcome their challenges. This process, named the 'Village Book' exercise,[23] strengthens ownership as priorities for change are set by the communities and carried out by them.

In external reviews, the participatory process-orientated approach used by the

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21 S. Kempel (2011) 'Overview Analysis of ActionAid Myanmar Fellowship Programme (Draft)'. Oxford: INTRAC.
22 The local partner organisations that AAM works with for most of its fellowship programme are generally among the relatively more established local NGOs. They include those with an ethnic background and reach, as well as an interest in social and broad political change. Several of them are well connected to local faith networks, including churches and monasteries. Some of them work closely with smaller localised community-based organisations that form part of the fellowship programme locally. Their networks often provide access in politically sensitive and conflict-affected areas that are difficult for INGOs to access. (Kempel, 2011).
23 For more information on the Village Book, see ActionAid Myanmar's short film on the process: www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUEV6K-3Bxw.

programme has been praised for having empowered communities in Myanmar to gradually take responsibility for initiatives, mobilise groups, influence local power structures, engage with duty-bearers and create both tangible and intangible positive results in their lives.

For example, an independent evaluation of the Change Maker project (which is embedded in the fellowship programme and designed to strengthen knowledge and skills in human rights) found that it had been 'very effective' at establishing more inclusive community structures. Substantive engagement of village members in participatory community planning and action had resulted in more women becoming involved in public forums.[24]

Although the fellowship programme includes targeted training in specific areas, it is this broader process of change in the structures and attitudes of communities that defines the programme. Other analysis has noted that it has achieved 'results beyond expectations'[25] in the capacity empowerment of fellows/youth change agents and communities, concluding that 'Overall, ActionAid Myanmar's fellowship programme provides an innovative and effective approach to community development and rights-based empowerment, even in a challenging political context such as that of Myanmar.'[26]

External evaluations were supported by interviews carried out with fellows for this study during validation meetings in Myanmar. For instance, the fellows, especially those who had been involved for several years, frequently highlighted increased confidence to engage with duty-bearers (including local government) as a result of engagement with the programme. Indeed, one of the primary roles of the fellows is to help connect communities with external state and non-state actors in the implementation of community development strategies.

Due to its success, AAM now conducts its community work in Myanmar almost exclusively through the fellowship programme. This creates a cohesive approach to its engagement with communities in the country, and it means that national-level policy and advocacy work is firmly anchored in the local context, right down to the community level.

How 'capacity empowerment' works

Identifying fellows

In most projects, local communities and networks are informed that AAM or their partners are looking for youth development workers in the area. AAM and its partner organisations, rather than the communities, are generally responsible for selecting the fellows. However, in some cases communities have nominated potential fellows and drawn names out of a hat to decide who will take on the role. Generally speaking, fellows apply individually, often encouraged by family members, friends or members of local community-based organisations (CBOs). They are then invited for interviews conducted by AAM and partner organisations. Although the programme initially prioritised academic attainment, it now chooses fellows on the basis of values, such as an open-mindedness or interest in helping their communities. Similarly, the programme has shifted from placing fellows in external communities to placing them in their own. This decision has been made for logistical reasons relating to housing and travelling, but also the longevity of their involvement, as well as their ability to more effectively address problems and mobilise people in their own communities. Fellows are also identified on the basis of their interest in and ability to learn. Indications of commitment, such as previous volunteer work, are considered, though professional and/or volunteer experience is not essential.

24 B. Gowthaman and A. Naing (2012) 'Changing Attitude: Evaluation of Change Maker Project'. Yangon: ActionAid Myanmar.
25 Kempel (2011).
26 Ibid.

How locally led is this identification process?

External evaluations have noted that the process used to identify fellows is limited because it is not demand-driven, at least initially. Specific villages and geographical areas of intervention are chosen on the basis of AAM's own assessment, which include vulnerability assessments and relevance for AAM strategic priority areas. However, during implementation the programme has been designed to be inherently flexible, in order to address priorities, problems and solutions that are self-identified by the village communities.

Training of fellows

The programme prioritises equipping the fellows with skills that can drive the empowerment of their communities, including their ability to mobilise key actors (state and non-state) in supporting community change processes. This capacity empowerment approach aims to develop the following core skills:
- Facilitate.
- Understand and analyse.
- Mobilise, mediate, organise.
- Inform and raise awareness.
- Plan, reflect, learn and share.

The training process is designed to be iterative, taking place over three main rounds, each lasting about four weeks. The first round of training provides fellows with the foundation skills and theory needed. It focuses on:
- Development and social theory concepts (including poverty, vulnerability, sustainability and governance, as well as development interventions such as livelihoods and education).
- Facilitation skills, participatory learning, REFLECT tools, community mobilisation and organisation.

Given the politically sensitive environment of Myanmar as it transitions from decades of military rule, and is affected by ongoing internal conflict, care has to be taken in order to make these concepts useable and appropriate. AAM and partners have made considerable efforts to adapt the language to the local context when addressing issues that could be controversial, for example when discussing rights and governance themes. In some cases, fellows develop their understanding of these concepts through practice and practical examples, rather than concept-based training sessions. This approach has the added value of helping fellows to gain a deeper understanding of the issues, as opposed to mastering NGO jargon.[27]

After a few months of placement in their communities, fellows embark on a second round of training. The second iteration is generally geared towards sharing experiences and learning. Knowledge is consolidated in the area of rights and entitlements, as well as conceptual understanding of livelihood, education and other development interventions. It also focuses on consolidating practical skills in the areas of self-help group formation, disaster risk reduction, reporting, and strengthening their knowledge of participatory tools and approaches.

The third iteration, which lasts between 20 and 30 days, focuses again on fellows sharing experiences and learning. At this stage, advanced sectoral knowledge is developed to address needs arising from the specific context in which the fellows operate. For example, in conflict-affected regions, conflict resolution, mediation and peacebuilding skills are

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27 S. Ferreti (2010) *'Fellows and Civil Society'*. London: ActionAid.

honed. At all stages, the training is typically conducted through small-group work, sharing experiences, reflection and critical analysis.

Surrounding the training scheme, local AAM and partner organisation staff provide on-going support in their function as mentors and programme coordinators. Yearly participatory reflect and review processes (PRRP), which were observed as part of the validation for this study, create additional opportunities for peer learning, review of lessons learned and encouragement to deepen the empowerment process. The fellows are also able to support each other, as they form networks that regularly come together in smaller clusters.[28]

Whenever possible, training is organised in the areas where fellows operate. Sometimes this requires negotiation with the government in order to gain the necessary permission. However, this is considered to have positive outcomes for increasing mutual understanding and trust between the communities and local authorities. Indeed, AAM and partners are generally open to inviting government officers to training sessions. In particularly sensitive areas, such as those affected by conflict, training is organised in other rural locations, which has become an opportunity for peer learning across different geographical contexts.[29]

Overcoming challenges in the field is key to the capacity development of the fellows, and ultimately to the success of the programme. Fellows must overcome inertia and fear when engaging with local authorities, and they must contribute towards shifting attitudes in communities by convincing fellow villagers that change is possible and that they are key to making it happen. This involves building trust, establishing networks and identifying capacities and resources both within and outside of the village communities.[30]

Transfer of knowledge and skills onto communities

For the fellows, much of the learning takes place in tandem with communities. Indeed, the transfer of knowledge and skills to local communities is a core element of the programme. Through engaging in participatory learning, action and analysis processes (facilitated by tools such as participatory vulnerability analysis [PVA], participatory rural appraisals [PRA] and various REFLECT models), the confidence and skills of community members grow, as they are encouraged to self-initiate development efforts. The fellow is key to facilitating – but is not expected to lead – these processes, whilst sharing some of their own experiences and learning along the way. Community members learn participatory tools and model the more inclusive and process-oriented approach to decision-making promoted by the fellows. Community cohesion is enhanced when collective action proves successful.

Key factors that contribute to the success of the 'capacity empowerment' model

A process-orientated and participatory approach

A key driver for change in this process is the fellows' commitment to working for community development in a participatory manner. The process is iterative, reflective, process-oriented and focuses on inclusion and participation. The method of focusing on community participation allows communities to identify priority issues, rather than having them predefined by others. This creates ownership and fosters longer-term impacts, by making the development process and strategies more strongly connected to local realities, resources and capacities.

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28 *Kempel (2011)*.
29 *Ferreti (2010)*.
30 *Kempel (2011)*.

Proximity to communities

The fact that the fellows work with their own communities creates stronger relations than if it was a field staff member of an external NGO. This also allows for greater responsiveness to local needs and greater equality between the communities and the facilitator of their development strategies. Importantly, the fellows who produce the most effective results are those who do not take the lead in the communities but create space for others to do so.

Resourcing

The core principle of the fellowship programme is to promote self-reliance by shifting how the fellows and the communities view themselves, their capacity and their resources. While AAM and partner organisations provide a small honorarium to the fellows, and limited amounts of seed funding for small-scale village projects, the focus is on building local capacities for 'resourcing themselves'.[31] Communities are encouraged to identify own, in-kind and financial resources from both internal and external actors as a part of the empowerment process. Where necessary, AAM and its partners can facilitate this process by linking communities to other organisations or small-scale donor funding.

Decision-making and management

In terms of management, a great deal of responsibility and flexibility is given to mid-level programme staff members who are close to implementation, rather than based in headquarters. Moreover, fellows are entrusted with making many local decisions.

Contextual relevance and appropriateness

The fellowship programme has been found to be highly relevant and well adapted to the challenging contexts of Myanmar, including those characterised by ongoing conflict and political instability. Fellows are required to negotiate space for community action without being seen to affiliate with specific groups. In some areas, authorities are particularly sensitive to any activity that could be construed as political, and 'cultures of silence' have arisen in reaction to the potential dangers involved in voicing opinions on sensitive issues. To mobilise communities and foster participation in these contexts involves convincing local leaders and authorities of the value of the work, in a way that is sensitive to local histories and underlying tensions. Both responding to, and in spite of, these challenges, the programme has proved that participatory models of engagement, leading to improved local decision-making and action, are viable in the Myanmar context.[32] Commenting on the human rights-focused Change Maker project, evaluators went so far as to conclude that it was 'a bold move' and 'ahead of its times', yet 'highly relevant and timely given the context'.[33]

Sub-model A: Centre for Social Change, Fiji

A similar model of community empowerment has been developed by the Centre for Social Change, which it describes as a value-based, 'glass half-full' approach to capacity. In Fiji,

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31 Ferreti (2010).
32 Ibid.
33 Gowthaman and Naing (2012).

communities are facilitated to do detailed asset-mapping in order to identify their existing strengths and resources before developing strategies and approaches to harness them. As with the AAM approach, changing the attitudes of communities, from considering themselves needing help to having the abilities and skills to drive their own development, is key to the value-based capacity model. As with the fellowship programme, such a shift needs to be process-orientated and participatory. Programme Manager Carly Stephan comments:

> 'Once there was an understanding that we weren't there to examine their weaknesses or any list of shortcomings and instead wanted to hear about how great they are, there were raised eyebrows, quizzical looks, shifty sideways glances, a bit of silence. And then smiles. Eyes lighting up. There was a palpable change of energy when people began speaking about what they can do, and what is working, in their community.… We heard stories of how the community bands together regularly to clean the village, on a weekly basis, and indeed draw regularly on the strengths of their communal ties. There were myriad talents and trades in each place we visited: animal husbandry expertise, agricultural production for subsistence and market sale, very creative artisanal and crafting techniques, highly lucrative eco-tourism ventures and opportunities, incredibly bio-diverse land uses – the lists went on and on.'[34]

Sub-model B: The Accountability Lab, Nepal and Liberia

The Accountability Lab partners with individuals and civil society organisations in the developing world to build sustainable tools for new and innovative approaches that bolster accountability. They use an entrepreneurial model called 'accountapreneurship'. In a similar approach to ActionAid's fellowship scheme in Myanmar, the Accountability Lab seeks out individuals with an appetite for taking action on accountability, so-called 'accountapreneurs', who want to turn their energy and innovation towards governance and transparency in their own communities. Of central importance to this approach is the ability of the accountapreneurs to drive collective solutions to shared issues of accountability, rather than driving change through individual leadership. In this process, the Lab views its role as an incubator of cost-effective and high-impact ideas. Accountrapreneurs, then, whether civil society organisations or individuals, are valued or assessed first and foremost on the basis of their ideas, rather than organisational capacity to implement projects. The Accountability Lab describes its role as promoting relationships based on trust and co-operation, rather than co-optation and dependency, in order to move beyond traditional aid models.

Why this is locally led

In an impact assessment carried out in 2013, partners of the Accountability Lab described the support they had received:

> 'The belief of the Accountability Lab regarding this project is the biggest support that the Lab has provided. Believing in an idea which people think is waste [sic] and very difficult to execute is one of the biggest support [sic] that Lab has provided, not only in terms of sponsoring the project but sharing of the minutest resources that are available to them.'

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34 *Carly Stephan, Programme Manager, Centre for Social Change, Local First Blog, June 13, 2014.*

> 'The Lab doesn't just encourage people to take their complaints to the government, but asks them what they can do to help themselves and take responsibility for their own lives and communities.'

> 'Recognition that people in Liberia/Nepal are the experts on governance in Liberia/Nepal.'[35]

These quotations capture two key aspects of the Lab's approach to capacity:
1. It is value-based. The Lab relies on local ideas and expertise, rather than seeing itself as a capacity-builder for solving accountability issues.
2. It does not require large amounts of funding to support this type of capacity, just faith in local ideas and the creation of a space to test and develop them.

How it identifies partners and assesses their capacity

- The Lab plays a very active networking role in order to become familiar with the civil society contexts in which it works. It brings civil society actors together at events called 'friendraisers', which function as a network-building tool and as a way to identify potential partners.
- As an extension to this networking role, the Lab invests a great deal of time in face-to-face interaction. It takes time to get to know potential partners as people and to understand their ideas and vision (which must be long-term).
- The Lab uses a solid value-based structure to evaluate their ideas and capacity as a potential partner:
    1. Simplicity.
    2. Scalability.
    3. Sustainability.
    4. Feasibility.
    5. Creativity.

This approach to capacity is the basis for how the Lab builds its partnerships, and the accountrapreneurship model it has developed. Its role as an incubator of existing capacity and ideas, and the partnership dynamics, are also relevant to other themes in this study. The Accountability Lab's approach will be picked up again in Theme 2 ('Listening to local voices') and Theme 4 ('Supporting local actors to work together'), in the context of the Lab's two pilot programmes in Liberia and Nepal.

Model 2: Peace Direct

The approach used by Peace Direct in its support for grassroots peacebuilding holds a number of important lessons for international agencies trying to ensure the local legitimacy of their partners. It stands out from the standard approach taken by international agencies in two distinct ways:
1. It broadens its understanding of capacity beyond organisational ability to implement projects and manage funds; its priority is to identify committed individuals or groups that have strong local legitimacy and it has developed a set of value-based selection criteria in order to do this.

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35 Quoted in *Accountability Lab (2013)*, 'Accountability Lab Impact Report 2013'. *Washington DC: Accountability Lab.*

2. From the earliest stage, Peace Direct enables its prospective partners to deliver their own programmes, by supplying small unrestricted core grants as part of a year-long selection process for long-term partnerships.

Selection criteria

As part of Peace Direct's aim of increasing the accessibility of local peacebuilders, it has mapped local peacebuilders in 26 conflict regions through its Insight on Conflict (IoC) programme. This provides Peace Direct with a broad oversight of peacebuilding organisations from which to better inform its selection processes. Using national staff as IoC 'Local Correspondents' provides a local perspective on which organisations are most effective, and this is complemented further along the selection process by assessing the reputation of potential partners at the community level.

IOC is Peace Direct's prime resource for finding information on a wide range of peacebuilding organisations. IoC is an online resource that uses knowledge dissemination to overcome practical and attitudinal obstacles that prevent more support going to local peacebuilders. Through organisational profiles, blog posts and newsletters, IoC presents information on local peacebuilders and their practical realities to policy-makers, peacebuilding practitioners and academia. In doing so, it aims to increase awareness of these local actors and their potential as partners. Indeed, as well as seeking to change people's attitudes towards local peacebuilding, the site is an important resource for identifying partners, both for Peace Direct and other practitioners. Peace Direct employs Local Correspondents in each region, who maintain accurate information on conflict contexts and each profiled group. At present the site features over 820 profiles of peacebuilding organisations in 26 conflict regions. Local Correspondents play a central role in identifying leading peacebuilding organisations. Their search, however, is not limited to groups on the IoC website. The relevant Local Correspondent can provide further advice on the context and civil society more broadly, as well as offering connections for other experts.

When it comes to assessing the reputation at the community level of the potential partners, the ideal approach for Peace Direct is to use the Local Correspondents or other local consultants to meet with communities where the potential partner has worked, visiting more remote areas to assess their reach, and deliberately looking at their ability to cross conflict divides. At this stage it is important to ask not only the community leaders but also ordinary community members, and to assess the satisfaction of previous beneficiaries. Unfortunately, funding is not always available for such an approach, in which case Peace Direct will rely more on what the Local Correspondent can find out from other reliable sources and by looking at indicators such as the organisation's ability to mobilise volunteers, the demographic of staff and how that relates to conflict dynamics, evidence of commitment to peacebuilding, and the history of the organisation and its motivations.

Using IoC as a key starting point, Peace Direct uses the following value-based framework for assessing a potential partner:

- Track record: what is the potential partner's history of peacebuilding activities and how has it been recorded? How long has the partner been engaging in these activities and what kind of reputation has it gained over time?
- Local leadership: is the partner a long-term resident in its community of operation? How extensive are its networks?
- Motivation: are the staff motivated by conviction? Can they demonstrate that they have made sacrifices of some kind to establish their organisation? Have they led and carried out peacebuilding activities without remuneration? What kinds of investments have they made to grow and sustain their activities?

- • Collaboration: who has the partner worked with in the past? Is it open to working with others? Do collaborations and partnerships form part of the change process it has envisaged?
- • Objectivity: is it affiliated with specific (religious, ethnic or political) groups? If so, how does this affect its ability to support local communities in a way that does not incite tension or contribute towards divisions?
- • Value addition: is it clear where a partnership with Peace Direct will add value to the work of the organisation?
- • Ability to mobilise communities: what kind of relationship does the potential partner have with the communities it intends to benefit? Do its projects win community support, and are they valued by those affected by the work? Is it able to mobilise volunteers?

In addition, Peace Direct looks for the following qualities as desirable, but not essential:

- • Potential to work in strategic partnerships with government and/or other duty-bearers who are able to influence change.
- • The potential to act as spokesperson for Peace Direct (ability to network and communicate in a compelling and persuasive way).
- • Evidence of cost-effectiveness.
- • Evidence of capacity to gather evidence and/or M&E systems in place.

Providing small unrestricted grants

The best way to understand a potential partner is to actually work with them. Peace Direct allocates small unrestricted core grants to potential partners and then works with them for one year to assess the potential for a constructive long-term partnership and what value, if any, Peace Direct can add. These core grants are up to US$10,000 per year and recognise that what small organisations often need most are core costs to give some stability to their desired activities. Peace Direct also wants to give the potential partner the opportunity to do what they want to do, as a way of understanding them and assessing their potential to deliver effective, context-specific peacebuilding.

During this seed-funding period, Peace Direct and the potential partner are able to establish trusted relationships and identify their respective strengths and weaknesses and how they can complement each other. During this time, personal relationships are important for both sides of the partnership to feel comfortable with raising concerns, openly discussing weaknesses and asking for help. To help assess this potential for an equal partnership, Peace Direct has worked with local peacebuilders to identify the core characteristics of what makes a good local-international partnership:

1. Effective communication.
2. Common values.
3. Long-term commitment.
4. Transparency.
5. Shared learning.
6. Contextual awareness.
7. Organisational growth.
8. Participatory processes.
9. Moral support.

These nine characteristics form discussion points between Peace Direct and the partner, to better understand the potential for a genuine partnership. Such discussion identifies areas for improvement, and gives the local partner an opportunity to identify areas of improvement of Peace Direct.

ACTION FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT, BURUNDI

In 2008 Peace Direct appointed an IoC Local Correspondent to map local peacebuilding activity in Burundi and provided a core grant of £8,000 to a local organisation, APD – a collection of young peace activists of which the Local Correspondent was a member. The APD members had demonstrated years of dedication to peacebuilding with little or no funding, and were able to mobilise volunteers to implement initiatives such as peaceful election campaigns and peace clubs in universities. The core grant enabled them to deliver projects that they wanted to do and maintain essential core costs like part-time staff and a small office. It also allowed Peace Direct to better understand them and provide the support they needed, developing equal partnerships and shared understandings.

As the IoC mapping grew, so did concern for the forthcoming 2015 Burundian elections, and local civil society began to raise concerns over signs of increasing tension. Peace Direct and Friends Committee for National Legislation (FCNL) held a workshop in September 2013 with 20 local peacebuilding groups that had been mapped on IoC. The workshop used 'open source technology' (which essentially means no pre-defined agenda is set and instead the participants are facilitated to set their own agenda on Day 1). Over the course of the three-day workshop, it was clear that collectively the local organisations had a wide coverage both thematically and geographically, and that with their existing peace infrastructures they effectively had an early warning and response system that could respond to the upcoming elections.

The group decided to form a network that would seek to develop a nationwide early warning and early response system (EWER). It appointed three organisations to help facilitate this – one of which was APD. Over the following year, the informal network that emerged from the three-day workshop became a formal EWER with over 30 local organisations as members. It developed a central co-ordination centre supported by ICT software and local provincial correspondents. The latter are appointed by member organisations and supported by citizen reporters, who have been trained to gather and submit information to the co-ordination centre for analysis. The system is now established in five key provinces, which were prioritised through collective decision-making by a general assembly of EWER members.

The initiative has so far been entirely locally led, using local capacities for design, training and implementation, and capitalising on existing peace infrastructures and trusted networks. External support has provided funding from the United Sates Institute for Peace (USIP), which enabled Peace Direct to convene the initial workshop (US$10,000) and provided US$2,000 for follow-up activities. FCNL also contributed to the workshop costs and has supported the EWER with experts from Liberia, Kenya and Nigeria. Peace Direct Germany has provided an unrestricted grant of £21,000 to enable the network to establish the system in five provinces. Each month a conference call is convened with the EWER network and an informal group of international supporters from the UK and US, which provides advice and feedback as well as fundraising assistance outside of Burundi.

(Source: Peace Direct)

From this point of trust and understanding, Peace Direct can work with the potential partner to better articulate and evidence the work that they are doing. This is the first part of Peace Direct's 'tier model' of support, which is designed to gradually bridge the difference between the capacities of small organisations and the expectations of the international community. By understanding what limits the peacebuilding sector, and what obstacles are faced by local peacebuilders, Peace Direct is able to provide tailored support to its partners to help them grow in a managed way and become increasingly independent of Peace Direct. This period of seed funding enables Peace Direct to help the local partner to identify their theories of change and their relevance to the local context, and to better articulate their impact for the international community.

This is important, as often good local partners are rejected by the international community because they cannot speak the right technical language, cannot describe their work succinctly, or struggle to complete proposal forms. By using local correspondents in the first instance, these external requirements are less important to Peace Direct, and allow it to give potential partners more time to convey information during the seed funding period.

This combination of core grant to ensure the activities are locally led, combined with the skills to articulate that work better to the international community, means that by the end of the seed funding period, Peace Direct can make an informed decision on the following:

- How good are the community connections of the potential partner and what is its ability to mobilise others for peace?
- Is the partner's theory of change and vision for peacebuilding realistic and appropriate to the context? How does this complement the activities of others?
- Does it have the potential to grow and meet the increasing demands of donors?

Based on the experience of the seed-funding period, Peace Direct will decide whether to select the local organisation as a partner. If it does, it will make a commitment for three years, which is often extended as Peace Direct accompanies the partner through the tiers.

During this partnership, Peace Direct sees itself as an extension of its local partners, rather than the other way round, and helps the local partner to reach to the international community. Its ultimate objective is for the partner to reach Tier 4 and become independent of Peace Direct, with its own international connections and direct funding.

Sub-model C: DFID State Accountability and Voice Initiative (SAVI), Nigeria

The State Accountability and Voice Initiative (SAVI) has been conceived by DFID as a demonstration programme to test particular models for promoting voice and accountability, and to encourage replication of these models. It is a demand-side governance programme that seeks to harness latent resources and capacities for improved citizen engagement and more accountable government in Nigeria. By limiting the amount of money it allocates to civil society partners, the programme recognises that it is not funding gaps but institutional blockages that prevent effective citizen engagement and accountability in Nigeria's governance processes.

In order to address these blockages, SAVI uses political economy analysis to identify pressure points – salient issues around which coalitions for change can be built. It supports civil society groups, media houses and government to collaborate on these issues, including health, education reform and budgeting processes. The programme has a budget of £29m and works in ten Nigerian states with a total population of 62.5 million people. The current phase, which started in 2008, will come to an end in 2016, though a second phase is being planned. It has five core areas of activity:

1. Supporting civil society partnerships to develop replicable and sustainable

       approaches for engaging citizens in effective issue-based policy advocacy
and monitoring.

2. Supporting civil society partnerships to develop replicable and sustainable
   approaches to engaging citizens in government budget and planning processes.
3. Promoting more open and inclusive communication and understanding between
   citizens, civil society groups, media houses, State Houses of Assembly and state
   governments.
4. Strengthening systems for transparency, public engagement and financial oversight
   in State Houses of Assembly.
5. Encouraging other development partners to take more sustainable and replicable
   approaches to strengthening citizen voice and accountability.[36]

So far, the project has made significant progress towards strengthening state apparatus
and institutional frameworks through engaging in governance reform processes around
fairly tractable health, education and budgeting issues. In this sense, one of its primary
achievements has been to lay the groundwork for addressing more challenging change,
in areas such as economic policy, as it moves towards its end date in 2016.[37]

Why this is a locally led approach to capacity

The SAVI programme has an interesting approach to supporting its partners, because the
process is designed to start with something that matches existing capacity and resources.
It purposefully does not allocate much funding, in order to avoid aid dependency and
encourage civil society partners to look inward at the resources that they already have
(knowledge, networks, skills, political intelligence, as well as financial assets). This is an
empowerment model that aims to build the confidence of citizens and civil society to en-
gage with governance processes and actors. SAVI's central role in this process involves the
brokering of relationships in order to form coalitions of state, media and civil society actors
who are in position to drive change. It views itself as a facilitator, 'consortium partner' and
knowledge builder in this process, rather than the more traditional role of external provider
of funds and predefined capacity-building. SAVI supports staff and partners to conduct po-
litical economy analysis to identify the themes it is going to work on. However, this analysis
is strongly geared towards participatory learning and action. Analytical components are
more than externally driven exercises to identify the thematic and strategic focus of the
programme; rather, they form part of a learning process that seeks to empower staff and
partners to 'think and act politically'.[38]

How it works

Rather than contracting external training providers, SAVI builds in-house capacity
by training its staff to support and mentor partners. This training is provided through
a mentoring process that replicates how staff will work with partners. SAVI staff are
supported by political scientists to conduct state-level political economy analysis. They
map the overall political landscape and actors in order to identify issues and opportunities
that have potential traction with the state government. The mapping process is followed by
deeper analysis of specific sectors and issues, which are then discussed in local meetings

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36 *SAVI Programme Overview, available at http://savi-nigeria.org/about-savi.*
37 *For more detailed case study analysis of its results, see H. Derbyshire and W. Mwamba (2013) 'Thinking and Acting Politically – Supporting Citizen Engagement in Governance: the Experience of the State, Accountability and Voice Initiative in Nigeria'. London: DFID.*
38 *Ibid.*

with CSOs and other stakeholders. Once the priority issues have been set they are opened up for discussion in public forums. Talk shows and radio phone-ins allow the team to test how strongly a broader audience of Nigerian citizens feels about the identified issues. The next step is to choose partners to work with, which could include individuals or organisations, as long as they are passionate about the issue and willing to work collaboratively to drive change. To support them in this endeavour, SAVI facilitates a mentoring and learning process that includes:

- Analysing the nature of the problem they seek to influence, including the constraints to change, their own capacity, and possible entry points for their involvement.
- Identifying how to address the issue, using their own skills and resources and through building links with other influential actors, including citizens.
- Developing a plan of action focused on a realistic and achievable short-term goal.
- Reflecting on what went well, what didn't, and what could be done differently after the plan has been put into action.
- Building on the learning they have gained to plan the next stage.[39]

Because SAVI does not require its partners to have results frameworks binding them to specific activities and targets, partners can plan and develop in an iterative, adaptive and reflective way. By employing this flexibility, limiting itself to the role of mentor/ facilitator, and building off existing capacities and knowledge in this way, the SAVI model illustrates great potential for a locally led approach to demand-side governance programming.

Relevance to peacebuilding

A common obstacle to the ability of the international community to engage meaningfully in peacebuilding at a local level is an inability to identify who the right local partners are, and an understandable nervousness about empowering the 'wrong' people. When partners are chosen, they are often the more obvious ones based in urban centres that have weaker community links and criteria that prioritise the organisational competency of partners (such as financial reports, ability to write proposals, and governance structures).

However, the case studies presented above have important relevance for the peacebuilding sector, as they focus not on technical capacity but on the social capital of individuals and organisations. As Cedric de Coning has persuasively argued,[40] the course that conflict takes is so unpredictable that strengthening the resilience of local populations is one of the most useful things the international community can do. In peacebuilding, this often means creating durable mechanisms for responding to conflict non-violently – and key to that infrastructure is choosing the right local people. It is, therefore, essential that any support from the international community should first correctly identify where support can be focused most productively. Often peacebuilders can mobilise communities because of trusted networks and contacts that they have developed personally and professionally over many years, and these form a peacebuilding infrastructure that international aid cannot create. This needs to play a much greater role in partner selection. The case studies also recognise the role of the international community as an equal part of the partnership. It is clearly important that the internationals are accepted by local partners as genuine members of the peacebuilding process. So selection of international partners is also critical. These partnerships require long-term commitments by internationals, similar to the long-

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39 INTRAC (2014) 'Study on Support to Civil Society through Multi-Donor Funds'. Brighton: INTRAC.
40 C. de Coning (2013) 'Understanding Peacebuilding as Essentially Local'. *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2(1): 6.

term commitments expected of the local partners to peacebuilding processes.

There are a number of other characteristics of peacebuilding which make these models particularly relevant:

- It is essential that any local partners have sufficient trust and relationships at the local level for effective peacebuilding. Involving the communities in the selection of those local partners gives assurances that the partners have those peacebuilding qualities.
- Identifying partners who are motivated by a genuine commitment to peace means that interventions will be more durable if funding gaps or episodes of insecurity weaken the support that the international community can provide.
- The local partners in the case studies have a level of local autonomy that allows context-specific and rapid responses that are advantageous to peacebuilding. Outsiders are more willing to provide such decentralised-decision making if they have confidence that they have chosen the right partner.
- In a conflict context, local people are forced to increasingly look to their own survival, and modern tactics of warfare can actively seek to erode the social fabric of communities. Local partners need to have the ability to rebuild this fabric and mobilise communities to help themselves.
- This is particularly important in sensitive contexts, where empowering the 'wrong' people could easily lead to far more harm than doing nothing at all.

THEME 2: LISTENING TO LOCAL VOICES TO DEVELOP RESPONSES AND APPROACHES

As with its approach to capacity, the supply-driven nature of the aid industry can lead it to allocate resources without proper consideration of what is actually wanted or needed. CDA's Listening Project found that people on the recipient side of aid feel that donors and international agencies do not listen to them, and that their priorities and views are rarely taken into account in the design and monitoring of programmes. Not only does this lead to frustration on the part of local partners and communities (because they feel their views are not respected or valued), it can also result in international agencies 'delivering the wrong things at the wrong time or in the wrong way'.[41] For example, in peacebuilding contexts, Severine Autesserre has shown how international actors dictate and are driven by 'dominant narratives', which inaccurately portray and oversimplify the reality of conflict dynamics on the ground.[42] These narratives can shape inappropriate responses that have the potential to aggravate the very problems they intend to solve.

In the listening that does take place, research has indicated that the degree of engagement is fairly low and does not necessarily lead to action or change in the practice.[43] Sometimes this is because the questions asked are inappropriate or not geared towards the kinds of issues that respondents would like to discuss. Flexibility in the design and development of listening mechanisms, by creating open spaces for listening through less formalised or structured models, is important for ensuring that they capture the full extent of participant views and feedback.[44] Another challenge is posed by 'closing the loop' in feedback mechanisms, so that information is not only recorded but acted upon. Recent research by CDA and ALNAP on feedback mechanisms in humanitarian programmes shows that crisis-affected people are generally engaged in providing input and feedback on project-level details, but not often on broader programme, agency, or humanitarian strategies and principles.[45] Indeed, elsewhere, research has observed a tendency among international aid organisations to deal with accountability in an increasingly technocratic, depoliticised manner, focusing on micro- rather macro-accountability.[46]

Despite these challenges, international agencies commonly recognise that listening to the views and priorities of people in aid-recipient societies is fundamental to improving the effectiveness of their interventions. Discussions around the effectiveness of feedback and listening processes have been closely connected to questions of accountability. Compared to the meticulous accountability mechanisms that many organisations put in place to meet the requirements of their donors, 'downward accountability' to local partners and recipients has been weak.

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41 M. Anderson, D. Brown and I. Jean (2012) Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid. Cambridge: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.

42 Severine Autesserre (2014) Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

43 Anderson et al. (2012); P. Knox Clarke and J. Darcy (2013) Evidence and Knowledge in Humanitarian Action. London: ALNAP/ODI.

44 The informal approach to listening taken by the Civil Society Support Programme in Ethiopia, shown in Theme 3, is notable for its bureaucratic flexibility and openness: staff members right up to the most senior level are available to discuss issues with grantees over the phone on a demand basis. This intermediary model was praised by grantees for being markedly different from standard donor and/or grant manager inaccessibility.

45 F. Bonino with I. Jean and P. Knox Clarke (2014) Closing the Loop: Practitioner Guidance on Effective Feedback Mechanisms in Humanitarian Contexts. ALNAP-CDA Guidance. London: ALNAP/ODI.

46 Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (2013) Humanitarian Accountability Report. Geneva: HAP International.

The increased focus on downward accountability in recent years has been notable in the humanitarian sector where it has been accompanied by the development of new standards, frameworks and practical tools. A similar trend has taken place in the development field, where participatory approaches are being increasingly used as empowerment tools to improve how international agencies engage with aid-receiving communities.[47]

However, participatory processes alone do not necessarily lead to locally led partnerships and aid modalities, and there is limited evidence to show a connection between participation and actual empowerment, as well as its impact on broader change in policy and practice. This section will highlight approaches to listening that have managed to meaningfully engage and/or act on local views and ideas in two different contexts:

1. Involving local partners and communities in the design and/or planning of programmes and strategies for addressing the problems they face.
2. Monitoring the effectiveness of international assistance through the application of closed-loop feedback mechanisms.

Model 1: DANIDA Peace Security and Development programme, Kenya[48]

The Peace Security and Development programme (PSD) was initiated by the Danish Embassy in Nairobi in 2005, as part of a wider strategy to combat terrorism following the crisis that ensued after a Danish newspaper printed a cartoon featuring the prophet Mohammed. Its stated objective is 'stabilisation in Kenya and the region by the promotion of human security through "soft" interventions aimed at countering radicalism and violence'.[49] The decision was made to focus on Coast Province, due to its history of political instability and the presence of various socio-economic factors that could drive radicalisation. The programme supports five local civil society organisations to address the root causes of ethnic, religious and resource conflicts, which are often politicised and have resulted in escalations of violence in the region during elections in 1992, 1997, 2002 and 2007.

The PSD programme falls within wider Danish support in the area of governance – the Kenya Governance Support Programme (KGSP) – and comes under KGSP's immediate objective III: peace and security promoted as the basis for democratic development in the coastal areas of Kenya. The programme focuses on network strengthening, joint activities and mechanisms for enhanced dialogue with the Government of Kenya and key stakeholders. In its current five-year period, it is running from 2010-15, and has a budget of DKK 30.6 million (GBP 3.2 million).[50]

The strategic focus of the programme is to support local civil society partners to:
• Promote inter-community tolerance and inter-religious understanding.
• Provide conflict mitigation activities and conflict resolution in potential hotspots.
• Engage proactively with government-established provincial and district peace structures, to mutually plan for and respond to emerging crises.

47 Collaborative Learning Projects (CDA) (2011) Feedback Mechanisms in International Assistance Organisations. Cambridge MA: CDA.
48 The information provided here – though supplemented with additional documentation and interviews with PSD staff and partners – relies to a large extent on original case study analysis in J. Allouche and J. Lind (2013) A new deal? Development and Security in the Changing World. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies (IDS).
49 Quoted in J. Allouche and J. Lind (2013).
50 Government of Kenya and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (2010) 'Kenya Governance Support Programme – Component 3: Peace and Security for Development'. Available at http://kenya.um.dk/en/danida-en/governance/kenya-governance-support-programme-kgsp-2010-2015/psd.

FIVE LOCAL CSOS SUPPORTED BY DANIDA UNDER PSD

1. The Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC) is a faith-based organisation that consists of Catholic, Muslim, Hindu and African traditionalist organisations. On the basis of their interfaith principles, it is the aim of CICC to solve conflicts and disputes by using existing constituencies, networks and structures and to engage youth who are often used and manipulated into violence.

2. The Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK) is a faith-based, non-profit and charitable organisation bringing together respected Islamic scholars, imams and Muslim preachers from all over Kenya. CIPK was conceptualised and registered as an NGO in 1997 and a trust in 1998, as Muslim leaders realised that there was urgent need to come together and find avenues to provide a voice of relief and reason for marginalised communities and a unified voice for Muslims in particular. Since then, CIPK has grown and developed into a national umbrella body, encouraging respect for the diversity of religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds in Kenya and beyond. CIPK is actively involved in peace initiatives and promotion in the coastal region. It is also involved in expanding and strengthening religious networks, promoting dialogue, building bridges and developing capacity among its membership.

3. The Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance (KMYA) is an independent national youth network established in November 2003 to address the unique issues confronting young Muslims – such as leadership, weak organisation, low levels of civic awareness and participation, self-exclusion and marginalisation, and issues around identity and citizenship. As part of the Peace Security and Development programme, KMYA's goal is to promote a pervasive culture of peace, security and development in the coastal region. KMYA encourages young people to work with the Kenyan government and participate in democratic and nation-building processes. KMYA has introduced learning circles, in which youth congregate to discuss issues affecting them while guided by progressive Muslim scholars, government representatives and KMYA-supported Change Agents. Other strategies applied in the implementation of the programme include leadership boot camps, open dialogue forums, public barazas ('town hall' meetings) and security-sector stakeholders' forums. The programme also raises awareness of how the new Kenyan constitution provides opportunities to address historical injustices on the coast. Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance is a fairly new grantee and has only been funded by DANIDA since January 2011.

4. The Likoni Community Development Programme (LICODEP) is a registered NGO operating in Likoni division of Mombasa district. LICODEP was formed in 1999 and its main aim is to champion the development agenda of the youth and community at large. The formation of LICODEP was inspired by an understanding of common problems facing the community, especially youth, and by a recognition of the absence of grassroots youth structures that would involve the youth in dialogue on issues affecting them. As part of the PSD programme, it is the goal of LICODEP to collaborate and work with the LIKONI community, with a view to addressing issues such as peace, security and development. This is done through organising training

(continues)

The support allocates 15% of the funds for capacity building, in order to strengthen participating civil society organisations institutionally as well as helping them to build their networks. Support is provided through dedicated accounts, with prospects for future core funding.[51] The organisations work with various actors including local clergy, youth and village elders. Some of the activities of the groups include peace sermons (khutbas), community security forums, inter-faith forums, football matches and poetry competitions in schools and madrassas. (For more information on PSD civil society partners and their activities, see box text.)

Why it is it locally led

The programme represents an experimental approach for the Danish, by attempting to address its global security interests through aligning them with local concerns and priorities. This constitutes a common challenge for development-security initiatives, as local communities often view with suspicion international donors who pursue their own political, economic and security interests through development interventions. This is especially the case in geopolitically sensitive contexts, where the alignment of donor countries with neighbouring states can negatively affect how local populations view their programmes. However, the PSD programme has been able to overcome many of these challenges. It has done this by employing a locally led approach in its programme design, whereby PSD-supported groups have been able to shape the project according to their own interests,

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51 Ibid.

(continued)

in active non-violence, community policing committees and a successful neighbourhood watch programme. Additionally, LICODEP runs youth drama festivals, youth peace football tournaments and a Likoni youth parliament: the latter is a platform for youth to share the issues affecting them and devise solutions to them. LICODEP is a longstanding partner, with its first funding in 2005. In the latest programme period (2011-2014) LICODEP received five million Danish Kroner (GBP 524,000).

5. Muslim for Human Rights (MUHURI) was founded in 1997 after violence (known as the 'Likoni clashes') killed hundreds of people and violated the human rights of many more. Thus MUHURI emerged on the premise of promoting human rights among marginalised social groups, especially Muslim communities. The goal of MUHURI is to promote community safety and security, through enhanced partnership between the community, the police and all stakeholders and to incorporate security issues in development agendas. MUHURI contributes to the PSD programme through facilitating training of trainers in conflict transformation, and by working with national institutions and community-based groups to entrench gender and human rights in people's everyday lives.

(Source: PSD Programme Outline at DANIDA website: http://kenya.um.dk/en/danida-en/ governance/kenya-governance-support-programme-kgsp-2010-2015/psd.)

contacts and resources. As a result, the PSD programme has been able to address issues that have a strong resonance with local communities.

In an external evaluation,[52] PSD partners were found to be highly motivated, competent and successful at cultivating the local legitimacy needed for the programme's success. The evaluation observed a high degree of local ownership and wide discretion given to PSD-supported groups to determine their activities and partnerships. This impression was supported by interviews carried out with programme staff for this study. A partner involved since its inception praised the programme for its broad acceptance at the community level, resulting from the space and support allowed by DANIDA to let the programme evolve according to context.[53] While PSD is rooted in an anti-terrorism framework and Danish security interests, in practice local partners have encountered little interference from Danish officials in setting their agendas and cultivating ties with local actors, which have included groups that many donors would resist engaging with (such as armed youth, mosque preachers and terror suspects).[54] This is important in a global context in which international donors generally shy away from supporting any form of partisan or religious group. DANIDA, on the other hand, has recognised the value of being led by local realities. Indeed, evaluators have praised the quality of DANIDA partnerships – resulting from a flexible and not overly bureaucratic approach – as one of the key strengths of its work in the wider region.[55]

How it is locally led

To explain how the groups were able to make space for addressing locally defined security interests, a Kenyan analyst who has studied the PSD programme argued:

> 'The first person who kicks the ball [the Danish government] is not what matters but rather it is the interactions and decisions between actors that make all the difference to what happens.'[56]

DANIDA began this process by asking a local civil society organisation, Ujamaa Centre, which had significant experience working with youth in the region, to bring together a number of different civil society groups to help shape the programme. These groups included the Coast Interfaith Clerics' Council (CICC), Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI), Likoni Community Development Programme (LICODEP) and the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK). When DANIDA began working with the groups, not all of them were legally registered and some relied on volunteer time and contributions. They were chosen on the basis of being rooted in grassroots networks and having relevant thematic focus across a range of local security issues. It is worth noting that when it began designing the programme, the Danish government's influence in Coast Province was negligible and it found populations that held unfavourable perceptions of its power. Entrusting local partners to define the security issues that PSD addressed was a way for the Danish government to sensitively pursue its security interests whilst gaining local acceptance.

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52 *Adili Consulting (2009) Report on Study on Peace, Security and Development Programme of the Royal Danish Embassy for the Period 2005–2008. Nairobi: Royal Danish Embassy, quoted in J. Allouche and J. Lind (2013).*
53 *Telephone interview, PSD-supported partner, 03/09/14.*
54 *J. Allouche and J. Lind (2013).*
55 *DANIDA (2011) Evaluation of the Danish Engagement in and around Somalia 2006-10. Danida. May 2011. Available at www.alnap.org/resource/6342.*
56 *Quoted in J. Allouche and J. Lind (2013).*

Following an initial meeting, the groups went away for one year, during which they re-structured the programme to focus on locally felt security concerns. These included facilitating inter-faith dialogue, monitoring human rights infringements by the police and other actors, and preventing and resolving conflict. From the very beginning, groups insisted that any reference to 'terrorism' be removed from official documentation, and they actually rewrote the title of the programme in line with this. The groups felt that using such language did not reflect the interests and concerns of Coast populations; to be relevant, the programme needed to contextualise its language by being sensitive to how activities carried out in the name of 'anti-terrorism' had historically exacerbated negative perceptions of authorities, community tensions and frustration amongst the youth. Even during programme implementation, local partners commented that there was enough flexibility to make adjustments without coming up against too many bureaucratic obstacles. For instance, noticing the importance of ethnic-based tension in destabilising the coastal region, religious groups adjusted the focus of their activities to address the overlap between ethnic and religious conflict.[57]

Challenge ahead for remaining locally led

Due to its success, the PSD programme is now a central pillar of DANIDA's governance work in Kenya. However, this raises new challenges for the local groups involved. As the programme develops in its current phase, DANIDA is seeking to professionalise the PSD groups through training in financial and programme management.[58] This greater emphasis on organisational development could damage the agility and responsiveness of PSD groups to local communities. Their growth and increased funding risks making them more accountable to external donors than local actors in Coast Province. However, despite this challenge, organisational capacity development still appears to be managed in a way that allows local partners a certain amount of agency in determining the process. One partner noted that the groups have come together to form an informal network, where they meet regularly to discuss their activities and the progress they are making. In the meetings, the groups will try to identify common capacity development needs and organise group training sessions, asking DANIDA to bring in external actors where necessary.[59]

Sub-model A: Accountability Lab – 'idea incubator'

As part of its 'accountrapreneurship' model, the Accountability Lab sees its role as creating a space for local problem-solving by acting as an 'idea incubator'. The first and most important step in this process is listening. According to the Accountability Lab's CEO: 'It is amazing how much you can learn about how people feel, what their challenges are and where the possible solutions might lie, when you ask a pertinent question and then listen.'[60]

In Liberia, this approach has been taken in universities, where the Accountability Lab learnt that students and professors wanted a confidential, anonymous system to report problems on campus. Together with the university administration and student government, they worked to develop an SMS-based tool to gather information, connected to an operator who calls back users to verify the issues. This has resulted in a flexible system in which

57 *Telephone interview, PSD-supported partner, 03/09/14.*
58 *J. Allouche and J. Lind (2013).*
59 *Telephone interview, PSD-supported partner, 03/09/14.*
60 *B. Glencorse (2013) 'Nepal and Liberia: Diverse Lessons, Shared Context'. Accountability Lab.*
Available at www.accountabilitylab.org/pdfs/Nepal_Liberia-DiverseContextsSharedLessons-20sep2013.pdf.

the Lab can work with relevant decision-makers to fix reported problems as they arise. In Nepal, the Lab has also taken a listening approach to its work with universities. Over a year, it conducted hundreds of formal and informal meetings with student leaders, professors, administrators and political parties at Tribhuvan University. They heard that what was needed was a trusted forum for dialogue to resolve problems on campus, beginning with the issue of the academic calendar. They have been working with these groups to form a dialogue center through which issues can be discussed peacefully and constructively.[61]

Model 2: Life and Peace Institute – participatory action research in D R Congo

In peacebuilding contexts, analysts have identified a fundamental tendency among international actors to value thematic expertise over local knowledge.[62] According to Autesserre, this bias underlies many problems that frequently inhibit the success of peace interventions on the ground, including excessive reliance on external knowledge and actors and the use of models and templates unsuited to local conditions. Connected to this bias is a common preference for short-term and top-down solutions that can be measured through quantifiable results, rather than those that address more complex social, political and economic problems. One method that seeks to overcome this bias is participatory research, which can be viewed as both a practical approach and an ideological perspective.

Participatory research methodologies are based on an underlying principle that the subjects of the research become involved as partners in the process of enquiry; their knowledge and skills drive the process and are central to its success.[63] In conflict settings, participatory action research can be used as a multifaceted peacebuilding tool. It can be applied to better understand and analyse complex conflict dynamics, especially at the community level. But it can also contribute to conflict transformation and community cohesion by bringing various actors together to analyse their situation cooperatively. For the participatory researcher, this involves facilitating actors within a conflict context to listen to each other and design common solutions and approaches to the problems they face. This approach should allow international agencies to better understand local realities, whilst simultaneously empowering them to drive their own processes of change. As such, it has great potential as a tool within a locally led partnership model.

The Life and Peace Institute (LPI) is an international non-governmental organisation that supports local civil society organisations in Somalia, Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In these countries, it aims to promote non-violent approaches to conflict transformation through harnessing and strengthening existing capacities. In DRC, its approach to conflict transformation is strongly underpinned by participatory action research (PAR). LPI describes PAR as a conflict transformation strategy where all parties involved in a conflict are 'engaged in analysing the multiplicity of interpretations of conflict causes and consequences, and the identification of constructive actions for the future'.[64] The process therefore involves local actors in both analysis of the conflict and design of solutions for transforming it.

61 Ibid.

62 For an overview of this and other barriers to the inclusion of local perspectives in peacebuilding operations, see A. Does (2013) 'Inclusivity and Local Perspectives in Peacebuilding: Issues, Lessons, Challenges'. Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and Geneva Peacebuilding Platform.

63 Institute of Development Studies (IDS) 'Participatory Methods' online resource at www. participatorymethods.org.

64 Life and Peace Institute mission statement available online at www.life-peace.org/what-we-do/ implementation/participatory-action-research-par.

Such approaches are particularly meaningful in contexts of long-standing and seemingly intractable conflicts like DRC's, where access to objective information on the realities of what is happening on the ground can be particularly challenging. As International Alert has pointed out in its analysis of local peace practices in the DRC, 'partisan positions, fears, prejudices and rumours dominate analysis of the country's conflicts'.[65] By putting the often marginalised and under-represented people directly involved and affected by DRC's conflicts at the centre of its analysis, PAR models offer an opportunity to overcome power imbalances that distort objective analysis, whilst gaining a picture of the conflict that is based on local realities and experiences. LPI's main role in this process is to build the capacities of its local partners in DRC to become PAR facilitators, so that they can skilfully guide communities through the research process.

Why it is locally led

LPI's approach is an empowerment model that turns affected communities into producers of knowledge and analytical actors in their own right. It is process-orientated and participatory, enabling local communities to better understand the problems that affect them, whilst giving them the agency to design their own responses and approaches. In doing so, it is a listening mechanism that is action-orientated. In 2010, International Alert conducted an evaluation of grassroots peacebuilding in DRC, part of which looked at the participatory action research experiences of three of LPI's partners: Action pour la Paix et la Concorde (APC), Union Paysanne pour le Développement Intégral (UPDI), and a joint initiative (known as TRIO) by Action pour le Développement et la Paix Endogènes (ADEPAE), Arche d'Alliance and Réseau d'Innovation Organisationnelle (RIO). The mapping exercise concluded that PAR's focus on local actors and dynamics 'gave the communities a unique chance to speak about their experiences of the conflict, thereby making it possible to trace the local histories of those involved and help them come up with possible solutions.'[66] In case study analysis of peacebuilding operations in DRC, Autesserre notes that, by basing their actions on in-depth local knowledge, LPI employees 'reject universal approaches to peacebuilding'.[67] However, Autesserre concedes that this alternative approach remains marginal among other interveners in DRC because highly demanding working conditions leave them with little time to consider reforming their standard mode of operation.[68]

A SIDA mid-term review of the programme carried out in 2012[69] found that an important element of LPI's approach is its intended flexibility and potential to evolve and develop over time. As conflicts are analysed and awareness is raised on how to deal with and solve conflicts, communities are expected to identify more diverse conflict roots or react to a changing conflict environment. Through bringing previously antagonistic communities together – whilst finding some evidence of the empowerment of vulnerable groups – the review identified PAR as an important conflict transformation tool. It also noted that the PAR process is time-consuming and, although it does provide for flexibility, may not be able to react with sufficient swiftness to new evolving dynamics. However, whilst intended to be agile and flexible, PAR has long-term aims. It encourages

65 *H. Morvan and J. K. Nzweve (2010) Small Steps Towards Peace: Inventory and Analysis of Local Peace Practices in North and South Kivu. London: International Alert.*
66 *Ibid.*
67 *S. Autesserre (2014), p. 78.*
68 *Ibid.*
69 *F. Skadkaer Pedersen, A. Kahlmeyer and P. Modéer (2012) Evaluation of Life and Peace Institute – LPI. Stockholm: SIDA.*

communities to look for solutions to conflicts with deep-rooted causes, with the goal of ending the cycles of violence seen in intractable conflicts.

How participatory research works

Generally, levels of participation can vary depending on how much power the researcher or organisation hands over to the local partner or community. However, in all participatory research approaches, the relationships between the researched and the researcher are of central importance. Because of the bias for thematic expertise over local knowledge, conflict-affected people are often subordinate in the peacebuilding context, while outside researchers are perceived as experts whose views hold more value. A core function of the participatory research process is to transform these and other contextual power dynamics, by enabling local people to articulate their views and express their knowledge. As well as collecting data, participants analyse and reflect on the information generated, and participatory researchers act as 'facilitators' in this process. As in LPI's model, many participatory research processes are iterative, involving the participants in successive cycles of analysis, reflection and action.[70]

In DRC, LPI rely on local employees supervised by a few expatriates, who have extensive pre-existing country knowledge. The staff members put forward ideas or begin to design projects only after having learned about local dynamics in their target areas.[71] LPI's PAR model involves four main stages:

1. Identifying the theme through context analysis involving listening to local actors and desk research carried out by LPI staff.
2. In-depth research on the identified theme, which involves information gathering and sharing by the trained PAR facilitators and mapping conflict actors and dynamics in detail. This process is supported by a strong feedback loop between LPI staff and researchers, where information is relayed and discussed at each stage. This feedback loop is about building trust and supporting the research facilitators as they come across challenges or simply require a space in which to discuss their ideas and experiences in the PAR process. The second stage also involves training the facilitators in PAR methodologies.
3. Community dialogues involving various groups of people who have been involved in or affected by the conflict in different ways. This is where the findings from the second stage (information gathering) are shared and discussed. These dialogues can be repeated over a period of up to two years, in a process that leads to a communally agreed interpretation of the conflict.
4. Design and implementation of projects to address the problems that have been identified through the PAR process. This stage can take up to ten years to effectively solve the challenges and problems that people have identified.

Model 3: Closing the loop in feedback mechanisms

Research carried out on the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms for crisis-affected, aid-receiving populations has found evidence of a compelling link between exposure to, and participation in, project-level accountability mechanisms and aspects of empowerment. In

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70 For more information on participatory tools and methodologies, see online IDS resource www.participatorymethods.org.
71 S. Autesserre (2014).

a report conducted jointly by Christian Aid, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership and Save the Children, accountability mechanisms were found to have 'strengthened trust between agencies and project participants and highlighted the link between community participation and ownership'.[72] Instances were documented of those who had participated in such mechanisms gaining the confidence to demand accountability from other duty bearers – including schools, local authorities and even private companies.

In the recent ALNAP/CDA research on effective feedback mechanisms in humanitarian contexts, the following formal definition is used:

> 'A feedback mechanism is a set of procedures and tools formally established and used to allow humanitarian aid recipients (and in some cases other crisis-affected populations) to provide information on their experience of a humanitarian agency or of the wider humanitarian system. Feedback mechanisms can function as part of broader monitoring practices and can generate information for decision-making purposes. Feedback mechanisms collect information for a variety of purposes, including taking corrective action in improving some elements of the humanitarian response, and strengthening accountability towards affected populations.'[73]

An effective feedback mechanism, at minimum, must support the collection, acknowledgement, analysis and response to the feedback received.[74] A major challenge for international agencies is how they can use information received through feedback mechanisms to influence and adjust operational planning or programming. In 2009, development economist Owen Barder identified the broken 'feedback loop' as one of the critical challenges to the aid system. In using the term 'beneficiary feedback mechanism', the industry has failed to capture the importance of responding to comments, suggestions or complaints from beneficiaries.[75] Communication with beneficiaries alone, then, even if two-way, does not imply an operational action or response. Until this happens, the feedback loop is left unclosed, and where the feedback loop is left open it is not fully effective. As one civil society respondent noted during the Pakistan validation meeting for this study, 'The important question relates to closing the loop because designating accountability to beneficiaries is one thing but the implementation with revisions in project design is another.'[76]

One approach to ensuring that information received leads to an operational action or response is integrating feedback mechanisms into existing monitoring and evaluation systems and frameworks.[77] ALNAP and CDA's research into effective feedback mechanisms

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72 *Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (2013).*
73 *F. Bonino with I. Jean and P. Knox Clarke (2014).*
74 *ALNAP (2014) Engagement of Crisis-affected People in Humanitarian Action – Background Paper, ALNAP 29th Annual Meeting 11-12 March 2014, Addis Ababa. London: ALNAP.*
75 *L. Jump (2013) Beneficiary Feedback Mechanisms, a Literature Review. Bristol: Development Initiatives.*
76 *Civil Society Participant, Local First Validation Meeting, Islamabad, Pakistan (11/09/14).*
77 *It should be noted that opinion varies on where complaints and feedback mechanisms should sit in an organisation. Some have highlighted the importance of keeping these mechanisms separate from regular monitoring and evaluation. Such arguments appear to centre around a distinction between feedback and complaints, the latter needing to be dealt with in a different and potentially more sensitive manner, which could have no bearing on the kinds of adjustments and actions that an M&E system would deal with. Those responsible for responding to complaints could be separated institutionally so that they have the independence of something like an ombudsman. For an overview of these arguments, see F. Bonino and A. Warner (2014) What Makes Humanitarian Feedback Mechanisms Work? Literature Review to Support an ALNAP-CDA Action Research into Humanitarian Feedback Mechanisms. ALNAP Working Paper. London: ALNAP/ODI.*

SAVE THE CHILDREN PAKISTAN COMPLAINT AND RESPONSE MECHANISM*

Save the Children Pakistan (SC) has designated accountability to beneficiaries and communities as one of its core values. In 2009, it established a complaint and response mechanism (CRM) to put this organisational value into practice and 'to affirm that beneficiaries and communities have a right to provide feedback or complain if we are not abiding by commitments we made to them'.** The CRM provides several channels for communities to voice their complaints and provide feedback on SC's programme interventions. The data arriving through the CRM are considered an integral part of SC Pakistan's accountability practice and programme improvement. It is used for learning and for adjustments in programme design and methodologies.

SC staff based in the field regularly share information about the organisation's values, commitments and code of conduct with community members in areas of operation. In addition, SC staff inform people about the feedback channels available to them and what they can expect from the process. Typically, this information is shared in community meetings, during monitoring visits and through banners. Posters and wall charts are also used to visually explain the purpose and function of the complaint/feedback mechanism. They are made available in local languages and posted in prominent places in intervention villages, health centres, education facilities, child-friendly spaces and community meeting points. Both verbal announcements and posters invite people's honest feedback and guarantee confidentiality.

To meet its commitment to accountability, the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) team at SC Pakistan has instituted two parallel feedback channels – a dedicated hotline and real-time feedback collection:

1. Dedicated hotline: this is accessible in each district where SC operates. It is toll-free and allows staff to return missed calls. People are able to call or text their suggestions and complaints related to SC assistance provided in health clinics, food distributions and other interventions. People call with concerns about ongoing project implementation, SC staff conduct or cases of fraud during beneficiary selection and aid distribution. The hotline is operated by both male and female staff to ensure that it is culturally appropriate for callers of both genders.

The hotline functions in both development and humanitarian intervention areas in Pakistan. Over the years, it has become evident that the rate of hotline use in conflict-affected areas such as Peshawar is affected by fears and concerns about sharing personal information. Callers have been found to withhold information about the district from which they were calling. In these contexts, deliberate attention is

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* Adapted from the original in F. Bonino and A. Warner (2014) What Makes Humanitarian Feedback Mechanisms Work? Literature Review to Support an ALNAP–CDA Action Research into Humanitarian Feedback Mechanisms. ALNAP Working Paper. London: ALNAP/ODI.
** A. Sameera, M. Hassan, S. Akram (2010) Monitoring and Accountability Manual: Emergency Response and Recovery Program. Pakistan: Save the Children, in F. Bonino and A. Warner (2014).

identifies Save the Children as being particularly successful at closing the feedback loop in this way. Others have also noted its effectiveness in this regard. For instance, in Myanmar, Save the Children's approach has been judged as good practice by incorporating beneficiary feedback questions into standard monitoring, review, and evaluation surveys and templates.[78] ALNAP and CDA's 'Closing the Loop: Effective Feedback Mechanisms' research shows how Save the Children[79] have done something similar in Pakistan by integrating

78 B. Norman (2012) *Monitoring and Accountability Practices for Remotely Managed Projects Implemented in Volatile Operating Environments*. London: HIF and Tearfund.

79 For how SCP's feedback mechanisms fit into its wider structures and practice, see the Pakistan case in the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) Certification Review Project: Philip Tamminga and Mansoor Raza (2014) *Reviewing the Draft Certification Model: Pakistan Case Study*. Geneva: SCHR.

(continued)

given to regular feedback collection during face-to-face visits with field staff, who are known and trusted in the communities.

2. Real-time feedback collection: monitoring and field visits are also an important opportunity for soliciting and collecting feedback. There is a MEAL officer at each field office and, together with other field-based staff, they routinely collect community feedback on the implementation process and the progress of SC's programmes. A form is used to collect both solicited and non-solicited feedback; it allows for on-the-spot categorisation pertaining to livelihood, education, nutrition, non-food items, health, protection, food aid or other services. Feedback collected this way undergoes a verification process and then a response is given to the person who provided it. Staff members complete the process with comments on 'satisfaction/dissatisfaction of petitioner with the feedback handling mechanism'.

Since 2009, the MEAL team has systematised its complaints and feedback collection, verification and response practices and procedures. In the space of three years, SC recorded and processed 8,000 feedback and complaints messages. The MEAL team manages a database for logging all feedback and complaints received, which allows it to both document and track the progress of how reported issues are processed and dealt with. The database has a required field for tracking how the complaint was resolved, including the name of the staff member who communicated the resolution to the feedback provider. SC ensures that the feedback loop is closed by leaving open any entry that has not been resolved.

The database is updated on a daily basis and analysed by the MEAL team in an 'Accountability to Beneficiaries Analysis Report' each month. Summaries of feedback and complaints are also shared internally with relevant programme teams at district level and with programme leads in Islamabad. The monthly report provides a detailed analysis of all feedback data received, including numerical and visual breakdowns by demographics, district, sector and project donors. It also includes a narrative comparing the data with the previous month, and a listing of serious complaints by beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Finally this information is collated and aggregated into quarterly and annual reports that are presented to senior management as part of the organisational reporting process.

a complaint and response mechanism into their monitoring and evaluation system. This means that feedback received has a direct influence on programme design and implementation. Save the Children is hoping to have complaints and feedback mechanisms in place in all of their country offices by the end of 2015. They are not likely to be as comprehensive as the Pakistan model by that time, but the plan is to roll them out gradually in all country offices by then. Save the Children Nepal has a similar system in place across all of its programmes, though it is a smaller country office and implements its programmes with local partners. The boxed case study study shows how Save the Children developed its feedback mechanism in Pakistan.

Sub-model B: Closing the feedback loop with technology-aided accountability – Integrity Action

Another approach to closing the loop in feedback mechanisms is used by Integrity Action, an international NGO that has developed an innovative accountability tool called 'DevelopmentCheck'. This enables civil society to monitor the transparency, level of participation and effectiveness of development projects in fragile and conflict-affected settings, where vital services are frequently compromised by corruption, mismanagement or lack of accountability. DevelopmentCheck is currently used by civil society organisations working in Afghanistan, Cote d'Ivoire, D R Congo, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Palestine, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Timor Leste. It aims to build integrity in international development projects by empowering citizens to monitor development effectiveness through an online community feedback and collective action platform. Integrity Action describes DevelopmentCheck as a 'user-driven', 'solutions-orientated' tool that provides 'bottom-up' assessments in three main areas: access to information, community engagement and project effectiveness.

Why it is locally led

Through an approach it has developed called 'Community Integrity Building' (CIB), Integrity Action assists citizens and local government to work together to build their skills, monitor, and formulate and implement practical solutions to improve service delivery. Through this approach, Integrity Action and country partners train community members to monitor development projects, such as clinics, roads and schools. According to its own figures, since 2010 Integrity Action and country partners have used this approach in ten countries where they have trained more than 2,500 community members who have monitored more than 850 projects.[80] CIB involves training local citizens to make information requests and collect data on development projects through site visits, where they take photos, assess the project against the contract and/or plans, and conduct beneficiary surveys. These projects are under construction or in early implementation, so the monitoring can influence their delivery and outcomes. The communities identify the projects themselves.

Integrity Action's feedback mechanism is locally led because it not only directly engages citizens in monitoring development projects, but also strives to 'close the loop' so that their feedback is acted on. If CIB manages to implement a solution to the satisfaction of the main stakeholders, including the communities affected by the project, a 'fix' has been achieved.

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80 Integrity Action (2014) *'A Practical Guide to Community Integrity Building'. London: Integrity Action.*

How it works

Once data is collected, the findings are shared with and verified by Integrity Action country partners. For each project, community monitors enter data into 'DevelopmentCheck', either through the website or mobile app. They can also upload project documents (such as the bill of quantity or contracts if they are available), as well as photos or videos. Data is then reviewed and projects published by Integrity Action staff. Once projects are published, a snapshot of the findings is visible on the DevelopmentCheck website: traffic light symbols (red, amber and green) indicate the level of transparency, participation and effectiveness. But more than simply publishing data, an integral part of the process is resolving the identified problems. The findings are used as an evidence base on which to solve accountability gaps. Community monitors and local partners share the data with stakeholders involved in the projects and form Joint Working Groups (JWG) to come up with solutions together; Integrity Action calls this a 'fix' and states that they have resolved problems in more than 50% of projects. The fix-rate is the incidence with which transparency- and accountability-related problems are resolved to the satisfaction of key stakeholders – in short, the percentage of resolved problems. According to Integrity Action, what constitutes a fix 'needs to be defined and identified by people who have a stake in its outcome, even when it is a policy or system-level fix'.[81]

Projects are monitored over a long period of time so data may be entered from more than one site visit, and so identified problems can be resolved. But closing the loop and achieving a fix are not synonymous. Community monitoring and data sharing can lead to an 'intelligent response', whereby, for example, a wider pool of stakeholders are brought into address the identified issue (such as the provincial government, a paralegal advisor from the capital city, or Integrity Action). According to Integrity Action's methodology, activities that can support closing of the feedback loop include:
- Putting forward smart, locally sensitive policy recommendations.
- Engaging potential spoilers, or pre-empting the actions they can take, where possible.
- Making it clear that fixes are a joint achievement and not the credit of civil society, or an NGO, but a genuine collaboration between public officials and local citizens.
- Creating close working ties to key public institutions and senior government officials.
- Sharing and disseminating best practices, for example through local media, public hearings and social media.
- Public hearings inviting all stakeholders, peer organisations, civil society and the media to present the main successes, challenges and lessons learnt.

The timeframe required to close the loop varies significantly. While some problems can be fixed in a matter of weeks, other problems persist, and working groups continue to test solutions to problems a number of years after the problem was identified. CIB is therefore an iterative approach where solutions can be tested and redefined over a period of time. According to Integrity Action, solutions tend to be low-cost and can be very innovative.

Whilst the rate at which projects are fixed is around 50% for most of Integrity Action's partners (IA), Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) achieves a consistently high fix-rate of more than 80%. In 2010-12, they addressed problems in 281 projects across five provinces. Integrity Action's partners in Nepal, Palestine and Timor Leste have addressed 8, 13, and 26 projects respectively. So IWA has been particularly successful, in both the high fix-rate and the number of projects it has worked on.

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81 Fredrick Galtung, 'The Fix Rate: a key metric for accountability and transparency'. London: Accountability Lab, p.9.

In the box below, IA describes how IWA used the Community Integrity Building approach to monitor and fix corruption in a UNICEF-implemented school construction project.

IWA SUCCESS IN AFGHANISTAN

Integrity Action worked with IWA from its inception in 2006 and the organisation has had a few years head start over the others. The multitude of new infrastructure projects being built in Afghanistan through foreign aid in the last few years also made this country particularly well suited to monitoring at scale, despite the challenges posed by corruption in the country and the ongoing threat of violence.

Construction work on the Bahram Shahdid high school in Mazar e Sharif, which was implemented by UNICEF, began in March 2011. It was supposed to be finished after one year. However, under pressure from the community monitors, work was halted in October 2011 after the monitors discovered serious issues with the quality of the work. The constructor was using sub-standard bricks for the school building, as well as more than 100 bags of poor quality cement. This would have serious implications for the long-term stability and safety of the structure. Floors inside the school building were far from the required contractual standard. In addition, there were gaps in the ceiling boards, and no doors or windows in the classrooms.

In December 2012 the local monitors, acting on the advice of IWA staff, wrote a letter with details of their complaints about the construction process, to the local government educational department. After the educational department received the letter, the provincial council agreed to investigate the issue. In January 2013, a meeting was convened by the IWA Provincial Monitoring Board, which was attended by representatives from the local government Economic Department, the Educational Directorate, local Shura council members, UNICEF and the construction company. At the meeting, the construction company signed a guarantee, which was witnessed and signed by all those who also attended the meeting. The constructor committed to comply with its obligations to finish its work on the school to a satisfactory level.*

As a result of this agreement, IWA and local monitors have been able to closely follow the construction work since January 2013. They have obliged the company to use better quality bricks and cement, and ceiling problems have been solved. However, the building is not yet complete and problems with the flooring have not yet been solved. Nonetheless, the signing of the agreement has enabled monitors to have real influence over the construction and they are hopeful that it will be completed satisfactorily.**

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* Fredrick Galtung (2013) 'The Fix Rate: a Key Metric for Accountability and Transparency – Integrity Action Working Paper 2'. Integrity Action. London.
** Update from IWA as of September 2014.

Sub-model C: CDA Collaborative Learning Listening Methodology

The Collaborative Learning Projects (CDA) organises teams of 'listeners' to gather the voices, insights and lessons of people both inside and outside of the aid system. It uses an open-ended, unscripted conversation method to gather and analyse evidence that is offered by local people in aid-receiving countries. Its 'Time to Listen' research represents lessons that have arisen from conversations with nearly 6,000 people. By collecting evidence from across 20 countries over a five-year period, CDA's cumulative approach distinguishes itself from other evaluations of aid effectiveness, which commonly focus on specific programmes or contexts. This cumulative learning process found that people on the receiving end of aid know and appreciate when their voices are heard and taken into account. However, the findings also indicate that not all face-to-face interactions with assistance providers amount to a respectful or constructive dialogue. Responding to the challenge that aid receivers often feel they are not asked the questions that would allow them to share the issues that matter most, CDA's listening methodology is designed to be purposefully open.

How it works

Strong listening skills and flexibility are required on the part of the interviewer to ensure that conversations are steered in a direction that captures the full extent of local realities and priorities. The Listening Teams are made up of staff from international and local aid agencies, with facilitators from CDA. The teams do not use pre-established questionnaires or a rigid interview protocol. Rather, they explain that, as individuals engaged in international assistance work, they are interested in hearing interviewees' views on these efforts. They ask if they would be willing to spend some time with them, and to share their opinions and ideas. Many conversations are held with one or two individuals, but in some cases larger groups can form, transitioning from small-group dialogues to fluid discussions where people can move in and out of the group. Except in the case of appointments with government officials and other key stakeholders, conversations are not pre-arranged. A Listening Team simply travels to a community and strikes up a conversation with whoever is available and willing to talk. This could include both people who have and have not been on the receiving end of aid projects and programmes.[82]

Relevance to peacebuilding

Listening and analysis is key to successful peacebuilding, but there needs to be confidence that the processes undertaken for it are sound. The examples presented show that when there is confidence in the process, then the support for locally led initiatives will be greater. It is important, therefore, not just to find the right partner but to adopt participatory methods of listening and analysis which give all stakeholders the confidence that what is proposed is widely supported and will have an impact on the root causes of the conflict.

In the DANIDA example, they had this confidence in the process and were willing to be led by the local partners as a result. Similarly, LPI goes to great lengths to ensure that analyses and solutions are agreed widely at the local level. These cases also recognise that a long inception period is required and that identifying the problem is as much part of the project as implementing the solutions. This is significant for the peacebuilding sector, as

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82 For an example of a CDA Listening Exercise in Afghanistan, see *www.cdacollaborative.org/media/53328/ Afghanistan-Listening-Exercise-English-.pdf.*

most funding mechanisms do not allow for the time required to build trust with conflicting parties, which then needs to be followed by a long period of understanding and analysis (and indeed experimentation) before any 'projects' in the traditional sense can be defined.

Other key aspects of relevance in the models explored here for the peacebuilding sector include:

- Information finding and problem analysis can form important parts of a peacebuilding process.
- Whilst there needs to be a focus on building trust between parties within the conflict for effective peacebuilding, there also needs to be trust between the donors, INGOs and local partners, which can be facilitated by the approaches to listening explored here.
- If external supporters can recognise that they share the same end goal as local partners (such as living in peace), and have confidence in the choice of partners, then they will be much more willing to genuinely listen and be led by those local partners.
- Providing civil society with analytical and problem-solving skills will make for a much more enduring and self-sufficient local peacebuilding capacity.

THEME 3: USING FUNDING MECHANISMS THAT ENABLE RATHER THAN DISTORT LOCAL ENTITIES

The dominant funding mechanism used in international development assistance is based on a hierarchical structure that focuses on resource transfers from aid providers to aid recipients. This dynamic means that the existing capacities and resources of recipient communities, as well as options for strengthening them, are often ignored by international agencies. In a collaborative approach,[83] provision of external resources would be just one, and not necessarily the primary, mechanism for solving development challenges, responding to humanitarian disasters or building peaceful communities.

Based on evidence provided by people in aid recipient societies, the Time to Listen project conducted by Collaborative Learning Projects (CDA) identified three significant counterproductive effects of current funding processes:

1. They are administratively complex and time-consuming, which leads to the disproportionate allocation of time and resources on bureaucratic processes, rather than substantive problem-solving ones. They also place more weight on fulfilling responsibilities to external donors than on being responsive and accountable to the constituencies that aid is intended to benefit.

2. The large size of aid allocations and time given to spend it in are often inappropriate. Aid allocations can feed into and sometimes drive systems of corruption, especially when large sums are combined with a pressure to spend within a very limited timeframe.

3. As noted, current mechanisms rarely consider how funding can work in a collaborative way to complement and build on existing capacities and resources; international development assistance is dominated by the hierarchical relationship between aid provider and aid recipient.

In order not to destroy the qualities that made local groups successful in the first place, care is required when using external funding to scale up their operations. For example, Masooda Bano has shown how external funding destroyed functioning civil society organisations in Pakistan.[84] Large project-based funds can damage the agility, local asset base, and horizontal accountability of community-based structures, often through processes that seek to formalise civic associations such as grassroots movements into NGOs. In extreme cases, the term 'briefcase NGOs' has been used to describe a type of organisation that has been created in response to international donor priorities and opportunities rather than developing in an organic manner and in response to a locally identified need. By pursuing external funding opportunities in this way, such organisations shift their focus away from their areas of expertise and strategic visions, to where they can find the money needed to sustain themselves. In some cases, this causes them to make commitments they cannot deliver on.[85]

Support for an independent and diverse civil society is, however, not synonymous with funding formally constituted CSOs. Grassroots movements, for example self-help initiatives that rely on collective action through volunteers, are often weakly institutionalised and

83 M. Anderson, D. Brown, and I. Jean (2012) Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid. Cambridge: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.
84 Masooda Bano (2012) Breakdown in Pakistan: How Aid is Eroding Institutions for Collective Action. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.
85 Eugenia Lee, 'Donor Funding and Briefcase NGOs'. Insight on Conflict, January 19 2014.

do not necessarily want to formalise themselves.[86] In this context, analysts such as Booth have noted that direct funding from international donors will inevitably impose institutional templates – at the very least for control and accountability purposes – that can have 'very negative effects on capacities for genuine self-help'.[87] If funding mechanisms are not designed carefully, nor underpinned by the principle of being locally led, civil society and self-help structures can be distorted into little more than the receptacles of aid and project implementers. This section will address some of these challenges, by presenting funding mechanism models that allow – to varying degrees and in different ways – international agencies to support the development of local capacity.

> 'We have people who come in to assist without being sure about what dreams, what values people have…. I really believe in partnerships where people come alongside [each other]. There's nothing wrong with people giving money. But I think a crucial component is that that money goes in not to fund a Western dream, but a local dream.'[88]

Model 1: Community philanthropy

Disillusionment with official development assistance, and recognition of its damaging and counterproductive impacts, has led to a rise in the number of local funds and foundations in aid-receiving countries. These organisations are taking grant-making into their own hands. They can take a number of different forms, including women's funds, rural funds, environmental funds and other types of indigenous foundations – as well as national and regional foundations originally established with international support and now seeking to strengthen their community roots and legitimacy by cultivating a local donor base. In this respect, some foundations have been seeded with money from international investors, whilst others are entirely 'home grown'. In many low and middle-income countries, community foundations offer an avenue through which to renegotiate the relationship between the state, private sector and civil society, in order to establish more efficient models for the distribution of resources and delivery of services.

Globally, there are some 1,500 community foundations in around 50 countries.[89] They are established across much of central and eastern Europe, in Mexico, Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa. More recently, community foundations have emerged for the first time in Azerbaijan, Brazil, Thailand, and exploration activities have been undertaken in Kyrgyzstan, Chile and Colombia.[90] These institutions are rooted in established cultures of mutual support and systems for sharing resources at the grassroots. What sets them apart most distinctly from the traditional aid paradigm is that they all seek to tap into existing capacities and resources, sometimes in the form of material wealth but also in less tangible forms of social capital, such as trust-based relationships. In this sense, community foundations form part of a broader movement to drive local development processes through local institutions supported by local resources.

86 INTRAC (2014) *Study on Support to Civil Society through Multi-Donor Funds.* Brighton: INTRAC.
87 David Booth (2012) *Development as a Collective Action Problem: Addressing the Real Challenges of African Governance.* London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).
88 As quoted in Eugenia Lee, January 19 2014.
89 According to figures published by the Global Fund for Community Foundations on their website: *www.globalfundcommunityfoundations.org.*
90 Ibid.

Global Fund for Community Foundations

The last two decades have seen considerable investment in strengthening the capacities of emerging community foundations in different parts of the world. In addition to providing external funding, efforts on the part of global philanthropic institutions have emphasised fostering the collective identity of community foundations. There have also been concerted attempts to conceptualise community philanthropy as a distinct model that can be harnessed by the mainstream development sector. A more recent but key player in these efforts has been the Global Fund for Community Foundations (GFCF). Central to the vision of the GFCF is the powerful and catalytic role that small grants can play in stimulating efforts to develop and support local philanthropic institutions. Under the guiding principle of strengthening organisations and institutions that demonstrate a commitment to social change, the GFCF provides small grants to emerging and more-established community foundations, philanthropy support organisations and community foundation networks and associations. The grants provided by the GFCF normally cover a one-year period for up to US$20,000, although most grants are in the range of US$5,000–15,000. Since it started in 2006, it has awarded US$3 million in grants to 153 organisations in 51 countries.

After a pilot period of three years, in which the GFCF was funded under a joint-donor initiative that included the World Bank and the Ford Foundation, it became an independent entity in 2009. Although it has received funding from official donors such as USAID in the past, it relies primarily on the support of other private foundations such as the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

Why it is locally led

> 'When local people act as donors, the hierarchical structure at the heart of development aid breaks down.'[91]

- Rather than supporting programmes, grants are targeted at strengthening the capacities of community foundations and institutions to increase their overall effectiveness.
- Small amounts of money are invested in a way that is consistent with the pace of community change and scaled so that they do not undermine community ownership and absorptive capacity.
- Their approach to grant making is flexible, funding different types of activity depending on the stage of an organisation's development and the local context.
- They aim to facilitate the growth of a grantee's local revenue base by strengthening their capacity to mobilise resources locally. This revenue base is the defining feature of a community foundation; it confers legitimacy and builds horizontal accountability between the philanthropic organisation and its community.

Kenya Community Development Foundation (KCDF)[92]

In Africa, a new generation of local philanthropic institutions has been emerging since the mid-1990s. The Kenya Community Development Foundation is the first and oldest

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91 Barry Knight (2012) 'The Value of Community Philanthropy: the Results of a Consultation'. Aga Kahn Foundation USA and Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.
92 This is adapted from the original, more expansive, case study by Halima Mahomed and Brianne Peters (2011) 'The Story Behind the Well: a Case of Successful Community Development in Mukutano, Kenya'. Johannesburg Global Fund for Community Foundations.

national foundation of its kind in east Africa. Established on principles of local horizontal philanthropy and capacity-building, it seeks to build on the contributions of Kenyans to support Kenyan communities. In addition to building its own endowment pool, which reached nearly US$7 million in 2013, the KCDF attracts significant local and international resources to enable it to support its priority programme areas. Between 1998 and 2008, it disbursed approximately US$4 million to local communities for capacity-building and programme support.

KCDF has received around US$30,000 in grants from GFCF. The majority of this (approximately US$20,000) has been for specific aspects of institutional development, such as strategic planning. The rest has been for participation in various grantee partner convenings. In terms of budget, KCDF is actually much larger than its grantor, GFCF. However, as GFCF director Jenny Hodgson states, 'We see them as a key institution and have worked with them not just as a grantee but also as a thought partner and co-convenor.'[93] GFCF has even made grants to other organisations for study visits to KCDF, such as the Haiti Community Foundation Initiative.

KCDF is a striking example of an organisation engaged in development activities that has been able to balance a firm local asset base with significant international resources. Approximately 25% of KCDF's total funding comes from local contributors (such as the Kenyan company Safaricom, the Chandaria Foundation and individuals). A further 25% of funding comes from community members themselves and is invested together with KCDF's endowment funds. The remaining 50% comes from outside sources such as the Bernard van Leer Foundation, the Aga Khan Foundation and the Ford Foundation. The KCDF core programme areas include food security, youth development, arts and culture, educational scholarships, gender, early childhood development and asset development, among other core issues at the centre of community life. These are the lenses through which the KCDF reacts to and invests in community-defined processes and initiatives. Where requests fall outside KCDF's scope of work, it attempts to link communities with other external agencies.

The defining characteristic of the KCDF is, however, its core principle of placing significant emphasis, effort and resources on capacity-building and technical support to communities, in a way that enables and empowers them to interrogate, define and plan their own development paths.

KCDF and community funds

More than 20 community-based organisations (CBOs) have established community funds with KCDF, always with some element of local co-investment and usually through a process whereby KCDF match-funds local contributions. These funds constitute 30% of KCDF's overall endowment. The minimum investment required to start a fund is 500,000 Kenyan shillings (Kshs), which is invested by the KCDF Trust as part of its overall endowment pool. When a new fund is established, an agreement is drawn up between KCDF and the fund builder, normally a CBO.

The growth of one KCDF grantee: the Makutano Community Development Association (MCDA)

The story of the Makutano Community Development Association shows how a community can become the driver of its own social and economic development. MCDA is a community-based organisation based in Yatta District, Machakos County. It works

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93 *Jenny Hodgson, Director, Global Fund for Community Foundations, telephone interview (01/07/2014).*

with the local community to address various issues that affect them, such as food security, water, forestation, education and wealth-creation initiatives, among others. Central to almost every activity that the MCDA has engaged in is its commitment to harnessing the contributions of locally owned assets – labour, time, money, and local physical resources such as land or raw materials.

Since 1997, the MCDA has built up an impressive membership structure. From a modest group of ten informal associations and 21 villages, the MCDA today represents 84 independent CBOs and 210 villages, which means that 70,000–85,000 people benefit from and participate in its efforts. A further individual membership base now stands at 7,000 community members, each of whom contributes a registration fee of 100 Kshs and an annual fee of 50 Kshs; these sums cover the basic running expenses of the MCDA. Back in 1996, there were only ten informal associations, primarily burial societies and savings groups; today the MCDA has a membership base that includes 84 registered CBOs working across activities ranging from construction and water provision to home-based care and micro-credit. Today, even the government has come to recognise and value the example provided by MCDA. In fact, local Members of Parliament and others have begun organising study tours and exchange visits for its new CBO partners, so that they too may learn from the MCDA's successes.

In 1998, KCDF provided its first grant to the MCDA: a three-year investment designed to look at the organisational and infrastructural needs of the CBO (the establishment of an office, some funds to hire a staff member, basic organisational training), and to provide support for the community members to investigate and define their own contextual challenges and then collectively devise a development plan. This intervention saw the development of village-level structures, open and consultative processes for decision-making, in-depth data collection and the completion of a comprehensive baseline survey. In the final month, the community members collectively put together a list of priorities and action plans around the issues of water, food security, health, roads, livelihoods, employment and education. This process and the resultant priorities and plans proved to be an important first step; they have served as the bedrock of the organisation, guiding the actions of the MCDA over the past 14 years.

Through a combination of ownership and agency, strong local leadership, and the mixture of a local asset-building approach with external support structures, the MCDA has contributed to the socio-economic development of its community in a number of concrete and significant ways. These include:

- Building 26 water points. The MCDA has facilitated the construction of 9 dams and 17 sub-service wells through a combination of community and external resources. In addition, many villagers have constructed small water pans and are engaged in rainwater-harvesting techniques to supplement household water consumption.
- Building a road that has connected geographically remote communities to better public services and economic opportunities in nearby towns and markets. Individual households in a total of 21 villages took responsibility for clearing and constructing the portion of the road in front of their respective homesteads, which eventually led to a 23-kilometre road that linked them to each other and to the outside world. What might easily have been a half-day trip (or more) to Nairobi can now take about two and a half hours.
- Establishing the first secondary school in the area. In collaboration with village development committees, the MCDA secured a pledge from the KCDF to provide bursary support for a fixed number of students, should a school be constructed. Using this as leverage, it then secured a further pledge of 600,000 Kshs from the nearby Catholic Church's Machakos Diocese. As with all other initiatives, the

community also made its own personal contributions. As well as raising financial resources, the community members contributed their labour and locally available materials to build the school, which left enough money for the community to employ its own teacher.

• Contributing to food security and livelihood diversification. Over the years, the MCDA has carried out its strategy of promoting food security by actively seeking out information and good practice models on innovative and alternative strategies, leveraging partnerships and maximizing the value of collaborative efforts. It has seen each investment as an opportunity to build on and contribute to its larger strategy, with the result that what had once been a dry, semi-arid area, reliant on external sources for food, is slowly but steadily being transformed. Today 10,000 acres of bare land has been put into productive use.

The role of external support structures: a locally led funding mechanism

External agencies have played a significant role in the development of the MCDA. Despite being a small and relatively isolated CBO, the MCDA has developed successful relationships with a diverse range of institutions upon which it can call directly for assistance, financial and otherwise: both AusAid and the Irish Government (the latter through Concern Universal), for example, have been core supporters of the MCDA, willing to invest in MCDA's priorities rather than to impose their own priorities on the community. The MCDA has also, more recently, been successful in attracting government support and partnerships in activities ranging from bursaries to health-related and agricultural issues.

In terms of the partnership between the MCDA and the KCDF, the current director of the KCDF, Janet Mawiyoo, describes the distinctive features of the relationship thus:

'We continue to be a friend and a listening partner. We like to connect, even if we don't have a current fund, to exchange notes and see what they are working on. We give ideas and hear their challenges and, where possible, we give financial and other support. Their leadership has made this possible. It's receptive and open to new ideas. They take challenges positively and try to learn from their past experiences. They keep a big view of their community in mind and try to see how to support different segments. They retain an independent mind, which means we are not a 'Big Brother' to them. They have learnt to scan their environment and see any other opportunities that speak to them. Whenever we see anything that can be of help, we too pass it on to them…. It's a mutual relationship.'[94]

The support provided by the KCDF to the MCDA has several key elements:

• The basis of the relationship was built on a shared vision and common approach that underscored the community as owners and agents of its own development processes.

• Central recognition of local assets and a commitment to harnessing local contributions. The KCDF is a national community foundation, dedicated to mobilising local Kenyan resources for Kenyan development, and it looks internally for solutions before seeking outside assistance. Its support to the MCDA has been based on the development and strengthening of local assets – physical, social, organisational, financial and educational.

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94 As quoted in Halima Mahomed and Brianne Peters (2011).

- Initial support was provided that concentrated as much on the 'software' of development (contextual and structural analysis, community mobilisation, capacity building, planning and institution building) as on the 'hardware' (infrastructural and organisational development and financial management, etc). This dual approach led to the development not just of concrete action plans but also, and more importantly, of organisational capacity, social capital and long-term vision.
- Investments in MCDA were consistent with the pace of community change and were of a scale that did not undermine community ownership or overwhelm absorptive capacity. Indeed, it was the small amounts of money that made a difference. Over the years, the KCDF has invested an average of US$5,000–10,000 a year in the MCDA, which, relatively, is not an exorbitant amount – but the strategic, consistent and appropriate use of KCDF funds has complemented and consolidated the effects of the MCDA's efforts.
- Recognition that change takes time and requires multiple role-players. KCDF's support to the MCDA has been characterised by a patient and steady long-term approach, providing access to funds and other resources over a period of 14 years. When the MCDA's activities fell outside the mandate of the KCDF, it acted as a gateway to other organisations that could offer support.
- Recognition of the importance of long-term sustainability. Just as the KCDF seeks to build itself on the basis of mobilising local resources as a means of decreasing dependence on foreign donor funds, so too it sought to encourage MCDA to do the same. To this end, it balanced its project-based support to the MCDA with matching funds to incentivise the MCDA to build its own endowment. Interestingly, this long-term giving did not appear to displace or replace more traditional or spontaneous forms of giving, and the *harambee*[95] has remained an ongoing source of support for MCDA activities.

Sub-model A: The Global Greengrants Fund

The Global Greengrants Fund is similar to the Global Fund for Community Foundations, though with specific focus on channelling donations into small grants (averaging US$4,000) for grassroots groups seeking environmental justice. They focus grants in the communities that are most affected by environmental degradation and injustice – those in Africa, Asia, Latin America and island nations. Responding to a sense that current funding procedures in the mainstream aid system are too slow and formalistic to be responsive to political or advocacy opportunities as they arise, it partners with local activists and experts to identify the most pressing problems and promising campaigns.

Its funds almost always go to provide access to resources for groups that would otherwise have none. It presents a locally led funding mechanism because its small grant funding mechanism allows it to reach out to support informal, traditional or emerging actors that have the potential to drive change but lack formal status. Most importantly, by relying on the local activists and experts who make up its regional and global advisory boards, to identify, mentor, and monitor its grantees, it puts decision-making in the hands of local actors and harnesses traditions of community philanthropy to support local capacity.

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95 *Harambee is a traditional community-level fundraising event that was adopted as a development strategy by President Jomo Kenyatta in 1963. It means 'all pull together' in Swahili. Many Kenyans have abandoned these events because they became fraught with corruption and were used as an instrument of political patronage. However, the MCDA continues to see the harambee as an important model for mobilising local resources. (Halima Mahomed and Brianne Peters (2011)).*

Model 2: Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP), Ethiopia

A funding mechanism that mirrors some of the values and principles of community philanthropy, though perhaps presents a less radical and fundamental shift in practice for traditional donors, is the multi-donor basket fund. There has been an increase in the last decade in the use of multi-donor funds to support civil society. By administering funds from several donors under a single governance structure, these funds reflect an alignment with the dominant aid-effectiveness agenda. Most obviously, they express a commitment to the principles of the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness – ownership, harmonisation and alignment. Significantly for a locally led approach, donors commonly use pooled intermediary funding mechanisms for more effective and coordinated support to local organisations and their agendas. On a practical level, by centralising administration of funds in this way, they enable donors to increase their impact (for example through reaching a more diverse range of CSOs or attaining greater scale of response to a specific issue), whilst reducing the transaction costs involved. Indeed, pressure to reduce transaction costs whilst increasing overall development spending has meant that donors like DFID have been less able to play direct bilateral roles in brokering relations between citizens and the state,[96] and it is now common for civil society to be supported through an intermediary funding mechanism.

However, a number of practical challenges have been identified in the pooled funding approach. For instance, continuity difficulties can be caused by lack of consolidation between different donor reporting and financial requirements as well as different funding cycles.[97] This has raised concerns that multidonor facilities may multiply donor demands on local organisations (who may already find it difficult to meet technical funding requirements), thereby weakening downward accountability to their constituents.[98] Other concerns include the possibility that convergence of donor priorities in a limited number of joint funds reduces the number of funding sources, which can affect smaller CSOs in particular. The potential homogeneity in funding opportunities could result in local organisations deflecting from their primary mission in line with external priorities. It has also been noted that the intermediary structure of pooled funds may reduce the access of individual CSOs to donors, and vice versa, which negatively affects the mediating role that donors can play between civil society and governments.[99] Indeed, setting up a multi-donor fund does not in itself create a mechanism that allows for effective support of local organisations. How funds are allocated, what criteria need to be met by fund recipients, how the fund staff relate to the recipients and how the fund publicises its activities, all make the difference between supporting or undermining local capacity.

A model that has successfully addressed some of these issues is the Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP) in Ethiopia. In the process of researching this study, field visits were carried out and interviews conducted with both CSSP managerial staff and grantees. The interviews evidenced a number of interesting findings for developing locally led partnership models – including those relating to Theme 2 ('Listening to local voices to develop responses and approaches'). In relation to funding mechanisms, the CSSP is significant in

96 F. Tembo et al (2007) *Multi-Donor Support to Civil Society and Engaging with 'Non-Traditional' Civil Society: A Light-Touch Review of DFID's Portfolio. London: ODI.*
97 INTRAC (2014) *Study on Support to Civil Society through Multi-Donor Funds* http://um.dk/da/~/media/UM/Danish-site/Documents/Danida/Samarbejde/Civil-org/ Nyheder/Final%20report%20multi%20donor.pdf.
98 Tembo (2007).
99 INTRAC (2014).

its ability to disburse funding at the local level through decentralised mechanisms that are designed to develop rather than distort the identity of grassroots civil society in Ethiopia.

Background

CSSP is a €35 million, five-year civil society development programme, which will end in 2016. It is joint-funded by lead donor Irish Aid and five others: Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK. It is managed by a consortium led by the British Council. CSSP has a mandate to build the capacity of hard-to-reach civil society, enabling them to respond to the needs of hard-to-reach people. Through regionally led programming, it focuses on people affected by social marginalisation, geographic remoteness and under-resourcing.

From the outset, CSSP developed a set of guiding principles for the operation of the fund. Beyond the centrality of hard-to-reach civil society, these principles include building trust between stakeholders; incentivising innovation and creativity in civil society; and promoting decision-making at the most local level possible. They were originally intended as an internal guiding framework, but have developed into an explicit set of principles that have provided a common language for CSOs and government, in a context where relations between the two have suffered from years of polarisation and low levels of trust. Moreover, these principles seem to have had strong cultural resonance in Ethiopia, particularly the focus on hard-to-reach people, which has prompted some CSOs to reflect more deeply and sharpen the focus and purpose of their work.[100]

Operating environment: limited space for civil society

Considering government restrictions imposed on foreign funding to civil society organisations in Ethiopia, the country is a particularly interesting environment in which to probe the relationship between international agencies and local organisations. In its 2013 Enabling Environment Index, CIVICUS found Ethiopia to be the eighth lowest country out of 109 in terms of the potential for citizens to participate in civil society. In the report, CIVICUS expressed concern over the implications such a low score has for the effectiveness of Ethiopia's donors:

> 'It is worrying that countries such as Ethiopia (8th lowest) and Vietnam (10th lowest) that have received substantial development assistance and are often praised by the international community for their economic performance have such poor environments for civil society. Either donor governments and financial institutions have not found ways to improve conditions for a vibrant civil society or are actively turning a blind eye to repressive measures.'[101]

In February 2009, the Ethiopian government adopted the Proclamation to Provide for the Registration and Regulation of Charities and Societies (CSP), Ethiopia's first comprehensive law governing the registration and regulation of NGOs. According to civil society observers like CIVICUS, the law violates international standards relating to the freedom of association. Notably, the Proclamation restricts NGOs that receive more than 10% of their financing from foreign sources from engaging in essentially all human rights and advocacy

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100 *Ibid.*
101 *CIVICUS (2013) 'Enabling Environment Index 2013', available at http://civicus.org/what-we-do-126/2013-05-06-10-38-39/1886-download-the-2013-enabling-environment-index-eei-report.*

activities. The restricted space within which civil society operates in Ethiopia should make supporting it a priority for international development agencies. However, in such a politically unstable context as Ethiopia, accountability may be a goal too far and donors may need to manage their expectations. State-building through civic engagement and the ability of civil society to hold government to account will be a process that emerges slowly and unevenly.

The CSSP has responded to Ethiopia's politically restrictive and unstable environment in the following ways:

- Self-consciously defining itself as being strongly aligned with national government development priorities.
- Maintaining a close relationship with government, especially through its networking activities, which bring state and non-state actors together to build trust between civil society and government.
- Not carrying out advocacy, and focusing on government service delivery priorities in areas such as health and education.
- Focusing on non-political forms of marginalisation and rights. Although it does address gender and ethnic exclusion, its approach to human rights is rooted in economic inclusion, or the abuse of rights such as human trafficking, rather than rights that more closely correlate with political governance issues such as voice, accountability and participation. The proportion of CSSP programmes that target hard-to-reach issues is 46%, and women and girls 33%.

Key results so far

Since 2012, CSSP has established direct funding and capacity-development relationships with over 200 CSOs across all nine regional states in Ethiopia. According to the programme's review process for the learning period 2012-13,[102] these relationships have resulted in the following notable accomplishments:

- Girls' dropout rates from schools in Munessa Woreda, Oromia, due to abductions and other factors, have been reduced significantly.
- Issues of Fuga minority groups affected by marginalisation in SNNP Region, as well as of children with learning disabilities in Tigray, are being dealt with.
- The impact of high levels of fluoride in drinking water along the Great Rift Valley region of Ethiopia is being tackled.
- Vulnerability to livelihoods shocks caused by unpredictable weather patterns (such as poor harvests caused by severe dry periods) among poor households in Benishangul-Gumuz and other regions of the country are being addressed.
- Efforts have been made to reduce the vulnerability of innocent children and their mothers in prisons in Oromia.

Granting modalities

Since its start late in 2011, CSSP has implemented a First Call for Proposals that was

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102 Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP) (2014) CSSP Annual Report for Learning Period 2012-2013. Addis Ababa: CSSP.

launched in 2012. Under the First Call for Proposals a total of 118 grants were awarded to civil society organisations in three windows: Innovation Grant, Networking Grant and Capacity Development Services Grant. In the learning period 2012-13, CSSP transferred €3,772,591, out of a total approved allocation of €5,660,139. The programme aims to reach at least 400 CSOs by 2016, and estimates that up to two million people will benefit directly from the programme.

1. Programme Grants

In 2013 CSSP disbursed Programme Grants to registered civil society organisations through two calls. Each call targeted a different group of pre-defined regions. The total value of each Programme Grant ranged from the Birr equivalent of €100,000 to €300,000, with the intention of running for two years.

In contrast to their Innovation Grants (their most common grants, which generally fund individual projects for a specific issue, or a single CSO), Programme Grants are intended to fund a group of activities implemented by a group of CSOs working together, with one CSO (the 'intermediary' CSO) taking a lead in directing and managing the programme, and being accountable for the disbursement and reporting on expenditure of those funds.

There can be two types of Programme Grants, one focused on a geographic region and another focused on an issue. In both cases, the Programme Grant must show how it will tackle at least one of the hard-to-reach categories.

2. Innovation Grants

CSSP also awards small Innovation Grants under a rolling call for proposals of up to six rounds, which will run until the end of the programme in 2016. These grants are open to Ethiopian CSOs that can propose innovative interventions aimed at solving critical social problems, or capitalise on available opportunities for positive change at the local level. The grant focuses on innovation, which can include approaches applied for the first time in a particular region or locality, or new ways of applying, adapting or developing an existing technique or initiative. But CSSP also welcomes innovation that involves experimentation, and allows for the risk of failure (as long as lessons are clearly learned and the implications of failure are appropriately considered).

CSSP allocated an indicative total grant fund of €4.5 million under the Rolling Call for small Innovation Grants. The minimum size of grant that can be applied for is Birr equivalent of €20,000. The maximum size of grant that can be applied for is Birr equivalent €30,000. The duration over which the Innovation Grant can be implemented is no longer than 12 months, and is disbursed in two tranches over that period.

Why it is locally led

CSSP has only recently concluded its pilot – or 'learning' – stage, at the end of 2013. It will not, therefore, be possible to reflect on its full results and impact until it has reached completion after 2016. However, CSSP has been designed and managed in a way that has already seen positive outcomes for a locally led approach. In the interviews conducted for this study, CSSP partners were very positive about the support they have received through the programme. Firstly, they praised its calls for proposals for being fairly open: CSSP has a mandate to support marginalised groups, but the project ideas that can fall within this are quite broad. Moreover, in contrast to other donors, the partners felt that most of CSSP's capacity-development support is demand-driven and geared towards developing the

organisation as a whole, rather than simply developing capacity to implement programmes or projects.

But perhaps most importantly, CCSP grantees were encouraged by the accessibility and openness of CSSP staff. This seemed to be a result of both the structure of the organisation (which is decentralised) and its culture, notably the attitude of senior staff towards their local partners. As one of its grantees made clear, 'We can't just pick up the phone and talk to someone at Irish Aid or DFID, but we can phone up Getinet [CSSP Executive Director] and he is always happy to discuss our problems and ideas. Even the staff at the regional offices are always there if you need them.'[103] Such positive perceptions were reflected in a review conducted for its initial learning period, where a Partner Satisfaction Survey completed in March 2013 indicated that 94% of respondents rated the overall support and services of CSSP as 'very good' or 'good'.[104] The CSSP approach appears to have had positive outcomes at the programme impact level, as well as in the perceptions of grantees. In an external evaluation of a CSSP pilot project designed to improve access to education for girls affected by migration, abduction and dropping out of school, CSSP was described as having had an 'uncommon record of success'; the programme received 'high' ratings for effectiveness, efficiency and impact, and 'very high' for relevance.[105]

CCSP has been identified as notable for its ability to extend the reach of its funds through targeting CSOs in geographically remote regions, especially smaller CSOs there.[106] In so doing, it illustrates a model that supports localised fund provision. Indeed, at the centre of CSSP's Theory of Change is the principle of 'targeting resources as locally as possible, in support of issues which are identified by local people and around which local coalitions for change can be activated'.[107] The following are some of the ways that the CSSP funding mechanism has been able to achieve this:

Decentralised structure – facilitating the management of smaller grants

By establishing four regional offices – Regional Business Units (RBUs) – CSSP has been able to decentralise the administration of its grants and the technical support that it gives to its grantees. The RBUs facilitate the management of smaller grants, including the application process of local CSOs. They are also key in providing monitoring and evaluation support to enable more in-depth review processes that constantly monitor and adjust to changing local contexts and realities. Regional offices therefore increase the accessibility and mentoring potential of the fund at the local level. This is true on both a bureaucratic and personal level; as one CSSP grantee noted, 'they [CSSP regional staff] are always there if you need to have a face-to-face conversation'.[108]

A demand-driven and organic approach to capacity

Whilst CSSP does incorporate supply-driven support in order for its partners to attain the reporting and accountability requirements of its donors, this has not been its dominant

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103 *Key Informant Interview, Local Civil Society Organisation/CSSP Partner, Hawassa, Ethiopia, March 2014.*
104 *CSSP (2014).*
105 *External Evaluation Team (2013) External Evaluation of CSSP Pilot Project on 'Mitigation of Challenges to Female Education'. Addis Ababa: CSSP.*
106 *INTRAC (2014).*
107 *CSSP (2014).*
108 *Key Informant Interview, Local Civil Society Organisation/CSSP Partner, Hawassa, Ethiopia, March 2014.*

approach to capacity building. From its outset, the CSSP decided it would 'let demand emerge'[109] organically from civil society and then respond positively to that demand, even as it acknowledged that this approach could take more time to deliver. Central to this model has been 'promoting capacity exchange', whereby CSSP has organised orientation and training sessions, relationship-building, monitoring, and learn-and-share events. These events have encouraged civil society members (of different types and levels of development) to learn from one another, and have emphasised consultation, debate and a spirit of mutuality. They have addressed issues and subjects including the structure of a call for proposals, the application packs, the law and operating environment, the monitoring approach, financial management and early lessons from implementation.

As noted above, this demand-driven, organic and exchange-based approach to capacity was appreciated by CSSP grantees in the interviews. Evaluation of the programme has also identified positive grantee feedback for capacity-building in the Partner Participation Survey that was conducted at the end of its pilot stage.[110]

Local leadership and a donor exit strategy for national ownership embedded into its monitoring and evaluation framework

Output Five of CSSP's M&E framework is the 'establishment of a high-quality civil society support facility with strong Ethiopian identity, with a future beyond 2016'. Although it is too early to say whether or not this will be achieved, according to its Annual Review its progress under all output indicators was either 'exceeded', 'met', or 'likely to meet'. Among the options for the post-2016 fund is the formation of a completely independent foundation, with a local board and small start-up endowment fund. This would represent the most radical transformation from international to locally led grant-maker, and a move towards the incorporation of community philanthropy models discussed in the previous section. However, in the current context of Ethiopia's authoritarian political regime, and the restricted space this creates for civil society, it is likely that the fund will continue to be managed by a consortium led by the British Council. That said, it is worth noting that all of the staff who manage the CSSP are Ethiopian. This contributes to its stronger national identity and facilitates relationships based on trust, mutual respect and understanding between the fund and its grantees.

Community philanthropy vs civil society fund: what differentiates the two

Both of the mechanisms explored here prioritise localised funding mechanisms. However, the community philanthropy model demonstrates a more locally led approach in two distinct ways:

1. Accountability: national and community foundations rely on a local asset base to carry out their activities; this is a defining feature of both the cultural and organisational DNA of a local foundation. Most importantly, it results in a funding and accounting approach that is based in the local context and that relies on existing social systems to enforce and maintain accountability. By making its intended beneficiaries co-investors – through their contribution of both material and non-material assets – a local foundation establishes a system of horizontal accountability

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109 CSSP (2014).
110 Ibid.

between itself and its community. This means that the survival of a local foundation is directly affected by any bad decision that it makes in the eyes of its beneficiaries, and it is directly answerable to them if it does.

2. <u>Sustainability</u>: closely connected to its accountability is the longevity of a local foundation. If it is not reliant on external donor funds, the foundation does not have a finite programme-defined lifetime. It is there for as long as its local beneficiaries wish to invest in it. Similarly, local foundations are not determined by the ebb and flow of programme cycles and project timelines. They represent a sustainable presence that can flexibly respond to the needs and problems of their beneficiaries as and when they arise. In the context of a civil society fund, staff are not driven by the same incentives that derive from long-term vision and presence. This is a result not only of changeability in programme cycles and project priorities, but also because internal donor and INGO success and incentives are presently defined by meeting shorter-term accounting and project metrics. By contrast, the staff of an independent foundation are likely to believe in their future and try to develop strategies to ensure their sustainability.

Sub-model B: The HIV/AIDS Alliance

The HIV/AIDS Alliance is an international NGO that works through 'Linking Organisations': autonomous local organisations that act as intermediaries between its International Secretariat and local service providers. It currently works with 38 Linking Organisations, supported by seven Technical Support Hubs across the world. Where it cannot immediately identify a local organisation to partner with, it commits itself to evolving country offices into 'sustainable locally led Linking Organisations'. An example of this transition can be seen in the case of its relationship with the Community Health Alliance (CHAU) in Uganda. Until recently, CHAU has been a country office and was funded through sub-grants managed by the secretariat in Brighton: in other words the Secretariat reported to the donor and the Uganda office reported to the Secretariat.

Since 2005, the Secretariat has provided both project-based and unrestricted funding, as well as both supply- and demand-driven technical capacity-building support to CHAU. As an international organisation, the HIV/AIDS Alliance is able to offer its partners decentralised support through 'Regional Resource Mobilisers' and technical support hubs. These are individuals who provide ongoing assistance and mentorship in technical aspects such as the writing of proposals. Until recently, the East Africa Regional Resource Mobiliser was based in Uganda, which was considered by CHAU to have been a key resource for them as they developed into an independent organisation. As a global network, the Alliance also enables its local partners to form relationships with a broad range of international civil society actors and practitioners beyond the Uganda context. This was felt by CHAU to have been particularly important for the transfer of knowledge and lessons learned in different contexts.

CHAU has now reached a level of organisational development that enables it to seek and receive funding directly from donors, without the intermediary management role of the International Secretariat, and it has transitioned from a country office to a Linking Organisation. Proposals can now be submitted directly to donors without having to go through the Secretariat (though they are there for support if needed). Most importantly, CHAU has established its own board of directors so that decision-making is now conducted in-country. The technical capacity-building support from the Secretariat will

continue, though on a demand-driven basis, as and where it is needed, but funds will slowly begin to be managed independently of the Secretariat. At present, although they have evolved into an independent organisation, they are still implementing projects that are managed under the country-office model.

The HIV/AIDS Alliance approach presents aspects of a locally led funding mechanism through a combination of decentralised capacity-building structures (regional support), peer and cross-regional learning (networking events), and perhaps most importantly, unrestricted funding to develop the autonomy of a Ugandan CSO.

Relevance to peacebuilding

In the peacebuilding sector, Peace Direct has observed that there is often a mismatch between the funding most donors provide and what is actually needed. The appropriate level of funding can range from a few thousand dollars to make a rapid intervention, to millions required for delivering proven approaches on a large scale. Even in the latter case, the parcelling of funds to local organisations will often require small quantities which will incur an administrative burden that most donors are not willing to pay for. This makes supporting effective peacebuilding even more difficult. It is further compromised by increasing examples of conflicts where the international community has no access, a situation that leaves any INGO intermediaries largely redundant or highly restricted.

So whilst the peacebuilding sector might not have benefitted from the kind of funding described in the models above, it is arguably a sector that would actually benefit the most, as these models resonate with many common peacebuilding activities. For example, local Peace Committees are a common part of the peacebuilding infrastructure and, whilst the better ones are able to mobilise local resources, small external funds can have significant catalytic affects to boost the ability of those committees. Such funds can enable local capacities to respond rapidly to emerging conflicts, preventing them from escalating; they can cover the costs for travel between communities by local mediators or provide small development initiatives (such as a water source) to ease pressure points that limit the ability of communities to resolve long-term tensions.

The flexibility of funding described in these examples is also relevant for responding not only to geographically specific issues, but also to changes over time. Local associations and networks which exist to respond to conflict often begin to focus on other issues in time, such as livelihoods or health. This may be a sign of the transitioning conflict, or it may be a sign of the link between conflict and development. Either way, initiatives that create a catalyst for the organic growth of civil society can support communities to transition as the conflict transitions. For example, radio clubs in DR Congo originally set up to address rumours that were inciting violence have evolved into community-led initiatives producing an exceptionally wide range of activities, from negotiations with armed groups to hydro-electricity generation to micro-finance schemes – all funded by communities themselves. This ability to bridge sectors is important for peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery. When combined with the advantages of flexible networks described in Theme 4, the ability for civil society to draw on existing expertise as issues arise makes for a much more self-sufficient and durable response to long-term peacebuilding.

There are a number of other characteristics of peacebuilding that make these models particularly relevant to it:

- As in Ethiopia, political or security realities mean that the international community rarely has access to areas that need peacebuilding most, so any approaches that enable more remote support are highly valuable.

- Peacebuilding initiatives often require small amounts of long-term funding accompanied by consistent and reliable non-financial support.
- The fast-changing context of conflicts favours flexible funds that can be adapted by local people who are best placed to understand the local nuances.
- Conflicts are often influenced by resources exacerbated by extreme poverty. In such contexts, outside funds can create further destabilisation of local dynamics. Requiring local match-funding, in cash or voluntary effort, means that outside funds will be more proportionate to local poverty levels and have less impact on local power dynamics.
- The development of formal and informal structures, systems and networks can build strong levels of social capital, including trust, which are central to peacebuilding and reconciliation processes.

THEME 4: SUPPORTING LOCAL ACTORS TO WORK TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE GREATER IMPACT

Foreign aid is often criticised for encouraging competition rather than collaboration. When competition for funding pits organisations against each other, the potential for collective action and collaboration among local civil society can be destroyed. As CDA's Listening Project found, competition between international agencies can also have negative impacts on the quality of aid. International assistance efforts are criticised for duplication and redundancy, especially in crises where there are multiple agencies responding to emergency needs. The following quotes from Time to Listen show how people on the receiving end of aid perceive this absence of collaboration:

> 'I believe... that they want to give out things quickly and to work with the easily accessed community because of competition. They do not want to address the real needs, but to try to show how successful their aid delivery mission is.' (Villager, Myanmar)[111]

> 'NGOs are fighting for the same beneficiaries and the most affected people because it is better for their reports and for their donors. They don't talk to each other. Don't bring your conflicts and tensions here.' (Buddhist monk, Thailand)[112]

> 'There is only one time we saw staff of one of these international NGOs come and meet us – they came to unveil the sign about their funding here. We haven't seen anyone that belongs to that sign since then.' (Local woman, Thailand)[113]

These quotes also illustrate how competition for funding and access to communities can lead to a preoccupation with self-branding aid projects. This points towards further challenges for a locally led approach, as communities struggle to take ownership over and understand the benefits of something that does not appear to be fully theirs.

To respond to these challenges, a common approach among international agencies is to facilitate the building of civil-society coalitions and networks. Supporting models of collaboration among local groups is considered to have the following benefits:

- They promote collaboration and reduce competition among civil society in order to achieve broad social change.
- They enable donors to support smaller organisations, at the same time as achieving the scale that donors require in terms of funding and impact.
- By gaining access to smaller civil society groups that are more closely connected to constituents at the community level, donors secure the following: more accurate analysis and assessment of the situation from the diverse perspectives of those directly affected; improved prioritisation of strategies by listening to the poor and marginalised themselves; greater likelihood of sustained implementation through

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111 Quoted in M. Anderson, D. Brown and I. Jean (2012) *Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid.* Cambridge: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.

broader ownership; potential for closer monitoring of outcomes.[114]

- A diverse network is able to bring together a wide range of expertise and experience, enabling actors and organisations involved to combine skills, learn from each other and share resources.
- By virtue of the fact that networks have usually come together around a specific issue or problem arising from their environment, coalitions can be firmly rooted and very responsive to their context.

However, network support does not come without its own set of problems and challenges. For instance, external funds are usually channelled through one lead partner (normally the stronger and more organisationally developed one) that is responsible for reporting on behalf of the network. This can lead to problems, whereby smaller organisations lose influence and autonomy, especially if the lead partner is strongly influenced by external funding priorities. Indeed, analysts have observed that if coalitions are not handled with care, 'they may reflect as much inequality as they are trying to undo.'[115]

Diversity of members and geographical reach can be a source of great strength for coalitions, but it can also make them very complex, inherently unstable and difficult to coordinate, especially as they grow.[116] This diversity can make reaching common approaches and agreement difficult, and the type of leadership model used by a network will be key to its success. However, it should be noted that the models in this section point towards the importance of some level of contestation – especially in coalitions and networks that are engaged in addressing political challenges that require process-orientated, problem-solving approaches. Indeed, over-zealously pushing for consensus can push out smaller voices within a network and limit the space for testing new ideas and approaches.

This section will focus on two aspects of international support for models of collaboration among local entities:

1. How international agencies can reduce competition and scale up impact by supporting networks of local civil society actors.
2. How donors can create space for local problem-solving and encourage collective action by facilitating the relationships of different stakeholders around a specific issue or problem.

Model 1: International Rescue Committee support for women's network in Chechnya

The country programmes of International Rescue Committee (IRC) are starting to develop more flexible partnership approaches that better support partners' changing needs and priorities. One of these is an innovative Women's Protection and Empowerment (WPE) programme in the North Caucasus, where the IRC has moved from traditional sub-grant relationships with local NGO partners to supporting 12 local women's organisations to form a network for preventing and responding to gender-based violence (GBV) in the region. In doing so, IRC has transitioned from a model in which individual organisations are given funds to implement programmes on their behalf (including direct service provision), to a more equal partnership approach that encourages collaboration and locally led initiatives.

The programme initially focused on building the capacity of the IRC's sub-grantee local NGO partner, Sintem. The aim of this support was to develop Sintem into a leading GBV service provider and local resource hub, which would provide training and technical

114 Rick James (2002) *What Makes CSO Coalitions Effective? Lessons from Malawi.* Oxford: INTRAC.
115 P. Van Tuijl and L. Jordan (1999) *Political Responsibility in Transnational NGO Advocacy.* Washington: World Bank Information Centre.
116 R. James (2002) *What Makes CSO Coalitions Effective? Lessons from Malawi.* Oxford: INTRAC.

support to local women's organisations. While this provided the space and opportunity for Sintem to grow considerably, it also created a considerable capacity gap between this leading organisation and other women's groups, which were not receiving the same direct support from IRC. In addition, as more of these organisations came together, Sintem's already heavy workload increased; they were not only becoming a regional GBV hub, but also facilitating the expanding coordination efforts. It was in this context that an opportunity arose to build a mutually supportive network of local organisations, able to refer women and girls to each other's services, as well as to collaborate on projects, advocacy and joint applications for funding.

Ultimately this resulted in a more sustainable model for addressing gender-based violence and advancing the rights of women in Chechnya. As Inna, a representative from Sintem stated, 'We were like five fingers on a hand, like this [spreads her fingers]. Now, we are like this, strong [clenches her fist]!'[117]

Cooperation through competition: enhancing collaboration with competitive 'mini-grants'

The establishment of the women's network was not a completely linear process. Prior to 2010, Sintem had been working with around six other women's NGOs, but in an informal and irregular way. Attempts by these organisations and others to group themselves into a formal network had not been successful. The major challenges they faced were resource constraints, lack of trust among women's groups, and a sensitive context that makes addressing gender-based violence in Chechnya difficult.

In 2011, IRC and Sintem began to work in a more strategic way with the other women's organisations. With organisational and facilitation support from IRC, these organisations started to meet on a bi-monthly basis. These meetings were planned around referrals and coordinating services for survivors of sexual violence. However, only a small number of organisations participated and the group lacked sustained support, direction, strategy and a common issue around which to organise.

To respond to these challenges, IRC introduced competitive mini-grants to support the initiatives of smaller organisations, as well as encouraging them to attend coordination meetings. Grants of US$5,000 each, for preventing or responding to gender-based violence, were announced at each meeting. As well as encouraging participation, these mini-grants provided timely funding to smaller organisations facing high demands for the provision of support services to women and girls. Indeed, the mini-grants provided a low-cost, low-risk way for the IRC to support local organisations that otherwise may not have been able to navigate the IRC's reporting requirements.

IRC and Sintem held a consultative meeting with the NGOs around the structure and purpose of their meetings, and it was here that the groups decided to meet every month. This would not only coordinate services and referrals, but also provide space to discuss important events, critical work-related issues, best practices, experience, information and opportunities. This allowed coordination meetings to evolve into an organising platform around women's protection and empowerment work, offering a relatively neutral space to meet, work through differences, build solidarity and expand networks.

After a successful round of initial mini-grants, in 2012 the WPE and Sintem teams increased grant amounts to US$20,000 on the condition that two or three organisations jointly apply for funding. This encouraged greater cooperation and helped strengthen partnerships among organisations that had struggled to work together effectively in the

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117 Quoted in *International Rescue Committee (2013) 'Governance Sector Update: Quarter Four, 2013'. Internal document.*

past. Over the last four years, more and more women's NGOs have joined the network. They have mobilised and connected around a common goal of working on GBV and broader women's protection and empowerment issues. They have actively joined in the small partnership grants initiative, which has sought to build and promote local-to-local partnerships. These grants were semi-competitive, to build an important sense of healthy competition, but the pool of funding was enough for the whole network.

'Learn through doing' approach to capacity

Engaging in the mini-projects initiative over the last few years has provided the network members with an opportunity to access funding for their own ideas, as well as increase their technical knowledge and develop project-cycle management capacities. Rather than provide predefined training, however, the mini-grants system enables partners to 'learn through doing'. IRC staff are available to support partners with ongoing tailored capacity development, throughout the duration of the 3-6 month grant periods. Grantees receive practical help with writing and developing proposals, budgeting, programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and business development on a demand-driven basis. According to IRC, this approach has been greatly appreciated by members of the network, and IRC has seen a dramatic improvement in the quality of proposals, with partners requiring progressively less assistance in each grant period. During the first year of this method, IRC and their direct partner, Sintem, held many technical support meetings with the network partners; however, in subsequent years far less technical support has been requested as the confidence and abilities of network members grow in key areas of project management, such as proposal writing and project development.

Positive outcomes for a locally led approach

<u>Strengthening social capital for long-term impacts</u>

An important aspect of this approach is its ability to strengthen social capital through developing relationships and systems that derive their strength from non-material resources like trust and cooperation. If IRC were to leave tomorrow, or if funding suddenly stopped, the relationships that have been built through the network would continue. These informal, social relationships, which are being developed as an indirect result of the collaborative practice and initiatives of the network, are just as important as its more tangible components. They are important in terms of the depth and longevity of impacts, and also in overcoming a history in which women's groups have struggled to work together and were often more combative than collaborative.

   Indeed, before coming together through the mini-grants system, organisations where largely working in isolation or were at best fragmented into smaller in-groups, with high levels of competition for funds. In this context, groups rarely shared expertise and ideas, and there was a general lack of knowledge about each other's work. However, the continuation and regularity of the coordination meeting platform (which cultivates space for mobilising common resources and skills, as well as for open and challenging dialogue) has significantly contributed to increased levels of trust and mutual professional and emotional support between actors and organisations. These mutually reinforcing social structures are also valuable in contexts where government policy and laws are limiting the humanitarian space and activity of civil society. For example, when civil society in Chechnya started

to experience the impact of Russia's 'foreign agent' law in 2012,[118] groups in the women's network mobilised to provide each other with information and referrals to organisations for legal support, and offered each other moral support.

As the network has developed, partners have begun to increasingly self-initiate joint actions outside the remit of IRC and Sintem work, but still within the network's scope. For example, while IRC supported the network to win their first grant (from the Global Fund for Women), the network is now fully leading in the preparations and implementation of this programme, completely outside of IRC support. Noting that they see real benefits in combining their different services and skill sets to strengthen, deepen and expand services for women and girls, members are also starting to partner with each other in new ventures. (For example, they are developing holistic support-service models that include legal, psychosocial, economic empowerment for women and girls. This is in recognition that no one service is sufficient to meet the complex and multiple needs and priorities of women and girls who come to their organisations for support. Awareness of this complexity has added to the importance the organisations now place on working together.)

Reflecting on this process, IRC staff working with the network have noted that the more they have stepped back as an INGO that 'goes into' a region to implement projects or deliver services directly, the more self-initiated the work of local partners has become. According to IRC, they are 'really starting to see the impact of the array of interconnected initiatives to build local cohesion, networks, service provision and solidarity, with the local NGOs guiding and informing these processes at every step'.[119] The more IRC has enabled work to be led by local actors, the greater the strengthening of self-initiated collaboration, local leadership, and the informal, social and professional relationships that underpin the network as a whole. Within this process, IRC sees its role as a facilitator and mentor, able to provide technical assistance and capacity support 'as we travel together'.[120]

Connecting partners to other international organisations and donors

In recent years, external humanitarian and development funding in the North Caucasus has significantly declined, and international donors still active in the region tend to fund international organisations. The opportunities that do arise are extremely competitive and often involve complex application and implementation processes, which are beyond the capacities of many local organisations. Indeed, before joining the network, IRC's smaller NGO partners had compelling programmes but needed support to navigate more sophisticated application processes and connect with larger donors to tell them about their work. By organising as a network, the local partners have been able to apply jointly for grants.

IRC has connected the network to donors such as the Global Fund for Women, and has continued to work with the network to identify other potential donors and provide technical support on grant proposal applications. In a recent IRC application to the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the women's NGOs led the process of project design and development, structuring the activities and objectives around their priorities and those of their target groups: women and girls. One of these

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118 According to Human Rights Watch, this piece of legislation 'further expanded the already extremely intrusive state control over NGOs that receive foreign funding as well as representative offices/branches of foreign organisations operating in Russia'. For more on this interpretation and the law's stipulations see Human Rights Watch, The 'Foreign Agents' Law, Laws of Attrition, April 24 2013: www.hrw.org/ node/115058/section/6.
119 Amy Greenbank, Expat Technical Advisor (Young Women's Development Groups project), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Key Informant Interview (10/07/14).
120 Ibid.

projects extends to working not just with Chechnya, but also with four other North Caucasus republics on supporting inter- and intra-regional partnership and network-building between women's organisations.

In addition to connecting local women's groups with international donors, the IRC is also encouraging partners to grow their own local asset base. In response to the declining availability of international funds, in its projects planned for 2014-16 IRC has included 'learning by doing' capacity-development and action-planning components for local resource mobilisation and domestic fundraising. As the models under Theme 3 showed, not only does this counter dependence on foreign aid, it is also fundamental for ensuring civil society is rooted in, and built up from, its own community. There is a huge but largely un-tapped market for domestic fundraising in Russia, with some parts of civil society already beginning to develop creative means for growing their local asset base. IRC is planning to harness this momentum as the next step in its strategy for locally led practice in Chechnya.

Extending reach: cross-regional and peer learning

The network emerged in Chechnya, but more recently organisations from neighbouring regions have begun to attend some of the monthly meetings of the Chechen women's net-work. Organisations have felt inspired by the networking and mobilising of women's NGOs in Chechnya, to such an extent that, in two of the neighbouring republics, women's groups have started to form their own networks and coalitions around issues affecting women and girls, including GBV. These cross-regional meetings have provided spaces for peer learning – sharing ideas, experiences and promising practices. They have also created opportunities to build mutual support and a sense of solidarity across regions.

Model 2: DFID Pyoe Pin programme, Myanmar

The Pyoe Pin programme was initiated by DFID in 2006 to explore ways of supporting nascent civil society groups in Myanmar. It uses political economy analysis[121] to identify salient 'issues' around which networks and coalitions for change can be formed. In facilitat-ing this process, it takes on the role of relationship builder and broker, bringing together a broad range of stakeholders (including influential interest groups, state, civil society and private sector actors). The programme is managed by the British Council and now pools funds from two further donors: SIDA and DANIDA. It had a budget of £6.3 million in its first phase and £12.8 million in its second. The programme is due to end in 2017. As well as brokering relationships, Pyoe Pin provides its civil society partners with practical help in the form of small amounts of capacity building and financial support.

In the process of pursuing specific policy outcomes (in areas such as health and education), the programme builds linkages between groups that would not normally associate with each other, sometimes across ethnic and religious divides. Indeed, Pyoe Pin strives to support the democratic transition in Myanmar not only through tangible governance reforms, but also through intangible outcomes like building social and political

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121 Political economy analysis bridges the traditional concerns of politics and economics by focusing on how power and resources are distributed and contested in different contexts, and the implications for development outcomes. It gets beneath the formal structures to reveal the underlying interests, incentives and institutions that enable or frustrate change. These insights are particularly important for addressing challenging agendas around governance, economic growth and service delivery, which may not lend themselves to technical solu-tions alone. Source: DFID (2009) 'Political Economy Analysis: How to Note – a DFID Practice Paper'. London: DFID. www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/PO58.pdf.

capital. By promoting collaboration among disparate actors, as well as civic engagement in governance processes, Pyoe Pin aims to contribute towards systemic, transformational change in state-society relations.

Impact so far

According to figures published on the British Council website, in the programme's first phase, 1,017 organisations were directly engaged and 8,813 individuals were involved in project-related capacity-building activities, and a total of 185,815 individuals directly benefited from programme activities. Other evidence has pointed towards the programme's success in building confidence and capacity in a significant proportion of Burmese civil society, as well as demonstrating the value of open and informed governance processes.[122]

However, it should be noted that these gains remain fragile. As Myanmar gradually emerges from decades of international isolation, growing external interest and foreign resources are being channelled into the country, including private sector investment. This will have a strong impact on the political economy of international development assistance in the country. In terms of challenges for locally led programming, increasing numbers of donors and large amounts of aid risk swamping local capacity, distorting local priorities and damaging the agility of informal civic movements. The ability of governance programmes like Pyoe Pin to remain locally led will become increasingly important in this context of multiplying, and sometimes competing, global interests.

Pyoe Pin's issue-based programmes and some results are described in the box overleaf.

'Politically smart and locally led'[123]

Pyoe Pin is funded through the broader DFID Civil Society Strengthening Programme (CSSP) in Myanmar, which has been designed by DFID to provide 'a different type of support'.[124] In an attempt to move away from top-down, delivery-driven aid modalities, it defines its role as combining the following:

1. Capacity building: mentoring, training and organisational development, tailored to an organisation's own needs.
2. Funding to pursue issues that matter to a range of local civil society organisations. This may include social service delivery (e.g. health and education), economic opportunities and livelihoods, environment, or governance and the rule of law.
3. Building linkages between groups that would not naturally associate, in particular across ethnic and religious divides.
4. Small amounts of core funding for a few strategically placed organisations unable to obtain significant funding from other sources.

Rather than simply allocating funds and providing predefined capacity-building support, the Pyoe Pin programme takes what Booth and Unsworth call a 'politically smart' and 'locally led' approach to network- and coalition-building.[125] The programme seeks to facilitate

122 Shields, Dermot (2013) 'Burma Civil Society Strengthening Programme (BCSSP): Mid-term Review'. DFID, unpublished. Quoted in D. Booth and S. Unsworth (2014) 'Politically Smart Locally Led Development: ODI Discussion Paper'. London: Overseas Development Institute.

123 The information provided here, though supplemented and validated with in-country interviews, relies to a large extent on case-study analysis of the Pyoe Pin programme conducted by David Booth and Sue Unsworth at the Overseas Development Institute in D. Booth and S. Unsworth (2014) Politically Smart Locally Led Development: ODI Discussion Paper. London: Overseas Development Institute.

124 DFID, Civil Society Strengthening Programme (Burma): Programme Summary.

125 D. Booth and S. Unsworth (2014) Politically Smart Locally Led Development: ODI Discussion Paper.

PYOE PIN ISSUE-BASED NETWORKS AND ACTIVITIES

Rice: Control by the military government over the rice market chain, together with constraints on credit, led to stagnation of output and a virtual collapse of rice exports. An opportunity for change arose in 2008, following Cyclone Nargis and a drought that exposed the fragility of many rice-growing farms. Traders, input providers and processors could all see benefits from sector reform. Pyoe Pin supported a series of measures, including farm-level piloting of credit and extension advice; a seed multiplication scheme and upgrade of local milling standards; and links with a rice trader to demonstrate the potential for exports and increased revenue. This showed that better credit and extension advice could result in very significant improvements in yield and quality, and led to the development of policy proposals for improved management of the sector. These were taken up by key stakeholders and contributed to influencing government policy, including increased credit support for farmers, removal of barriers to the movement of rice between regions, and removal of export taxes on rice.

Education: In response to low standards in the non-formal sector – on which poor people depend disproportionately – Pyoe Pin has facilitated the creation of two main groups. The Monastic Education Development Group (MEDG) brought together senior monks from all states and regions who had not previously met as a group to develop a policy framework for the sector. Yaung Zin, a teacher's education group that includes all major service delivery actors in the non-formal sector, has developed and piloted the first competency-based teacher-training programme in Myanmar. The MEDG has developed a comprehensive strategic plan that includes rolling out this competency-based training programme across the country. Both groups are now collaborating around a common agenda and are having some success in influencing the development of a government policy framework for the professionalisation of teachers in both the state and non-state sectors. Another partner, Shalom, working with a coalition of ethnic state actors, has conducted research on problems of access to education of children from ethnic groups, including the highly politicised issue of mother-tongue language. The research has helped to advance politically neutral technical advocacy, leading to changes to the law allowing mother-tongue instruction and the translation of education materials into ethnic languages.

HIV/AIDS: Since 2008, Pyoe Pin has supported the development of a network of organisations working on HIV/AIDS, which now has active members in every state and region. A specific achievement was to influence the Ministry of Health to reverse its initial position and agree to include funding for civil society organisations in its proposal to the Global Fund. The networks have also been successful in influencing the distribution of anti-retroviral treatment to townships, resulting in more effective and equitable distribution. HIV network leaders have played a vital role in delivering the national HIV response, by improving prevention initiatives and strengthening treatment provision for marginalised groups, including ethnic and faith groups and sex workers. Advocacy work by the Sex Workers in Myanmar network has succeeded in changing the criteria for access to antiretroviral therapy, allowing sex workers to

(continues)

local actors to organise around and pursue specific issues of salience to them. In line with the third CSSP support role outlined above, it does so through a brokering and convening role, negotiating relationships and facilitating the collaboration of a diverse range of actors. Pyoe Pin fits within DFID's broader vision for change in Myanmar, but it has avoided dictating either the specific objectives or the process of influencing governance in the country. It relies to great extent on the resources and knowledge of its predominantly Burmese team, whose contacts and understanding of the political context have a strong influence on what the programme seeks to influence and how it seeks to do so. According to Booth and Unsworth's analysis, this willingness to take a back seat on the part of DFID has been 'critical in freeing the frontline personnel to explore pathways towards changes that were both worthwhile and tractable'.[126] Indeed, the approaches it uses to identify these tractable issues are also 'politically smart'.

The programme's strategy is based on a foundational political economy analysis conducted by an external consultant in cooperation with Pyoe Pin staff. As the programme develops, this analysis is regularly updated and adjusted in line with the changing political context. This, as well as ensuring Burmese programme advisers and other local actors influence the analysis, has enabled the programme to respond flexibly to contextually salient issues and opportunities as they arise. Tractable issues are identified and addressed as entry points into broader and perhaps more challenging governance reform processes. Using political analysis in this way, then, not only ensures that the programme's strategy is politically astute and responsive to the context, it also encourages problem-solving through cycles of iterative reflection and readjustments that draw on a wide range of both external and local knowledge and expertise.

This 'politically smart' approach is partly necessitated by context. Pyoe Pin staff members are conscious of the volatile political environment in which they work, and in particular the changeability of government office holders. In such a context, strong anchoring within, and understanding of, the local context is essential, as is flexibility and the ability to respond to rapidly changing circumstances.

How it works

Formally the Pyoe Pin programme has accomplished its locally led approach to coalition-building in various ways. The following practical approaches stand out as being particularly characteristic.

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126 *Ibid, p. 17.*

(continued)

receive treatment. Recently, by working with other actors and drawing on their convening and political skills, the seven HIV networks helped secure revisions – through inclusive public consultation – to a new draft Association Law affecting civil society organisations. This has provided a consultation to a new draft Association Law affecting civil society organisations, and has provided a positive model for open and informed policy development in Myanmar.

(Source: D. Booth and S. Unsworth (2014) 'Politically Smart, Locally Led Development'. London: Overseas Development Institute.)

<u>Political economy analysis – let locally identified issues drive the process</u>

Rather than predefining the sectors in which it would work, Pyoe Pin draws on formal political economy analysis at country level to identify locally felt and tractable development issues. An external consultant was brought in to produce the foundational analysis, but it was conducted through a process that was brokered by the programme's three most senior Burmese advisors, who identified key figures for the consultant to draw knowledge from and helped guide conversations and meetings. The Pyoe Pin team leader is an expatriate, but the programme has been effective at employing advisors with a deep understanding of the political context and how it affects development issues in Myanmar. They represent a broad range of the country's regions and many are well connected through having their own political heritage. This helps to ensure that a spectrum of different stakeholder perspectives influences the political economy analysis, and that the process generates debate and local problem-solving rather than enforcing a predefined idea of how change will happen. As noted above, the analysis is continuously reviewed and adjusted in order to assess the effectiveness the programme's strategies and respond to the changing context; Pyoe Pin staff are key contributors to this process. In terms of wider support, funding is allocated by the programme for: networking, research studies to provide evidence, study tours to learn from regional experience, and piloting to demonstrate potential benefits of the strategies identified through the analysis.

<u>Investing in and brokering relationships to discover common interests</u>

Pyoe Pin is underpinned by a theory of change rooted in bringing together and facilitating

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ACCOUNTABILITY LAB

The Accountability Lab takes a similar approach to the Pyoe Pin programme, in solving governance issues through modelling itself as a 'connector in building a community for change'. In an impact assessment,* local partners shared their views on the support they received from Accountability Lab. The following quotes capture how favourably they perceive its networking role:

'Its role as a connector – helping bridge the gap between activists, communities, government, media and civil society organisations, without being biased against any of them.'

'The Lab is very outgoing and stresses meaningful participation and networking among different stakeholders. One of its core competencies is to bring in people from diverse background to work for a cause.'

'For me it is the networking and development of contacts and webs of support for smaller organisations and even individuals. Without this there would be less space for collaboration and less cross-pollination of ideas.'

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* Anonymous Accountability Lab partner impact assessment respondent, in Accountability Lab (2013), Accountability Lab Impact Report 2013. Washington DC: Accountability Lab.

joint action between different interest groups, including NGOs, faith groups, professional and academic organisations, business interests, government officials and parliamentarians. According to Booth and Unsworth's analysis, the programme illustrates a donor playing a 'catalytic role' by bringing together various actors to address a development problem or issue around potentially shared interests.[127] As opposed to more traditional approaches to civil society coalitions, contestation is often part of the process, and Pyoe Pin coalitions do not necessarily consist of like-minded groups beyond overlapping interests around a specific issue or problem. The networks also represent various degrees of formalisation, from loose groups of individuals who meet regularly to more structured civil society networks. As with its approach to political economy analysis, Pyoe Pin programme advisors take a large role in defining relationships during network-building, and they are the ones most directly engaged in subsequent political processes. They are key in building links to decision-makers or other people with authority and influence. Within these processes of network-building, extensive use is made of personal contacts, family networks and trusted insiders (for example, retired officials). Coalitions can also connect individuals who are regionally dispersed, such as the Monastic Education Development Group.

Providing timely and flexible funding and capacity support

Capacity and funding support under Pyoe Pin is designed to be 'issue-based' rather than 'project-based'. Funding has been allocated in small amounts of timely support, so that local programme actors can pursue local issues and respond to the local context. For example, prior to 2014 by-elections, Pyoe Pin has supported civil society partners to carry out political economy analysis in the states and divisions in which seats will be contested, to better understand and anticipate the nature of political change and contestation in these regions.[128] Similarly, in response to the growing traction around community forestry in conflict-affected regions, as new laws are being developed, Pyoe Pin has supported learning exchange visits for local government and civil society to visit other forest areas.

Pyoe Pin purposefully does not call for bids from its civil society partners, preferring to retain local problem-solving rather than funding allocations as the main source of motivation. It deliberately avoids funding a single dominant partner, in order not to create a dependency that would make disengaging difficult if it felt that money had become too strong an incentive. The programme also recognises the need for a certain amount of bureaucratic flexibility in the application of reporting requirements and in defining how funds are used. This is to avoid the enforcement of institutional templates and programme requirements that distort local agency and restrict innovation. According to Booth and Unsworth's analysis, Pyoe Pin interventions have not been driven by aid or aid conditionality; rather, aid is used flexibly and strategically in support of locally led objectives.

Model 3: IFRC scaling up through 'design, test and duplicate' model in Burundi [129]

Between 2005 and 2010, the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) engaged in a process of organisational development that saw the Burundi Red Cross (BRC) transform

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127 *Ibid.*

128 *To illustrate just how volatile Myanmar's political landscape can be, these planned by-elections were subsequently cancelled by the Government in September 2014.*

129 *This case has been adapted from its original more expansive version: IFRC (2012) 'A Red Cross Unit in Every Community: Developing Community Volunteer Countrywide in Burundi Red Cross Society'. Geneva: IFRC.*

from a National Society without any sustainable presence and activity at community level, into an organisation delivering local services in 98% of the country's communities. During this process, it grew from a handful of volunteers to over 300,000 volunteers in four years. As well as growth in quantity and quality of local services, the mobilisation of approximately 1 person in 30 of the population has had equally important intangible impacts. According to volunteers, collective action of this kind has contributed to a culture of peace and non-violence in communities, many of which had remained fragmented after years of conflict between Hutus and Tutsis during the 1990s. Through striving to create a system that relies on existing resources and capacities, the success of this model has also increased the resilience of Burundi's most vulnerable communities and their ability to respond to their own development challenges. The growth of the Burundi Red Cross was a planned organisational development process using IFRC's own 'design, test and duplicate' methodology. It shows how external agencies can support the scaling up of community-driven development strategies and disaster response.

Why it is locally led

The experience of IFRC in Burundi is an important learning opportunity for the dynamics of major organisational change in a resource-poor environment. It shows how a focus on self-led and self-resourced community-level service delivery can drive major organisational change. Most significantly, over the four to five years of the change process, the National Society's business model moved from receiving and spending donor funds in project-based activities, to mobilising communities to deliver their own community services.

According to IFRC's model, a strong National Society is one that is able to deliver countrywide, through a network of volunteer-based units. It is a relevant service to vulnerable people that can be sustained for as long as it is needed. The Burundi case shows how a National Society may overcome the constraints of working in a chronically poor environment to deliver simple services based on volunteer effort and community resources, rather than on international programme funding. This service-delivery capacity, strengthened by local knowledge and acceptance, as well as training to identify the most vulnerable people in the community, has attracted other partners. For instance, the World Food Programme has found the network of local units to be a much more effective service provider for distributing food than NGOs, who are not connected to or accepted by local communities. Working through an existing community structure also has more attractive cost implications, because it does not require the creation of new infrastructure or the employment of new staff. Moreover, project-based structures often disappear once the funding is finished, which could have negative implications for the sustainability of knowledge within communities.

How it works

The growth of the Burundi Red Cross was structured around their 'design, test and duplicate' methodology, which was developed by the IFRC Secretariat. This is an organisational change process that starts from the bottom and works up. It views the community level of a National Society as the key foundation for the development of its other structures. The principle is to design, test and develop a sustainable unit in one community, before improving and replicating this model in other communities. In order to enable this, investment finance should be made available to pay for the organisational costs of setting up local units. However, the principle is that external funding should not be used to finance community-level services or ongoing organisational development, which should be supported by communities themselves. The components of the unit are a simple

HOW A UNIT PROVIDES SERVICES AT THE *COLLINE* LEVEL

The *colline* (village) is the interface between the National Society and the community, where local human, financial and in-kind resources are mobilised. At the *colline* level, the Burundi National Society has 98% coverage of the country, totalling around 2,850 units. Each unit is led by a committee responsible for identifying vulnerable people and raising and managing volunteer and other resources to meet their needs. A typical unit is made up of at least 50 volunteers (some of whom will pay a formal membership fee of US$0.40). Volunteers usually include young and old people, of both Hutu and Tutsi groups, as well as returned refugees and people identified as 'most vulnerable' by the committee.

Services provided by the *colline* unit typically include building and maintaining village infrastructure, tilling fields, transporting the sick to health facilities, paying for medical care for individuals, and providing food and other items to vulnerable people. All these activities rely on local resources sourced by the unit. Normally a group will meet once a week for up to three hours to carry out its chosen activity. In *collines* with many volunteers, several groups will form and work in different places.

In most units, a combination of local membership and income-generating activities provides funds to support the services of the unit. For example, members (of the 'Red Cross Group') might join together to buy goats. These goats could be used to manure the field of an old person whilst also being shared among group members for the same purpose. On being sold, some of the money raised is put aside to help vulnerable people, some might be reinvested, and the remainder might provide a return on members' original investment. There is, therefore, a considerable element of self-help in group membership, which accounts for the strong growth of the more dynamic groups: it is in people's personal as well as shared interests for them to volunteer. A further feature of local resource mobilisation is the support given by local authorities, who will sometime give land that can be used to generate funds by the unit. In return, units may help organise communal labour days with local authorities. This also provides an opportunity to make the work and activities of the Red Cross more visible to the communities in which they operate, thereby encouraging membership for those who are not already involved. In addition to delivering services, volunteers often meet following their work in order to exchange knowledge and experience. In these contexts, they may receive information on the Red Cross 'Fundamental Principles', or on simple health messages, for example.

Each *colline* produces a monthly report on simple indicators: number of volunteers, number of vulnerable people helped, number of houses built, etc. These are submitted to the communal level, with an average rate of return of about 80%. Such reports provide an indicator of the health of the unit, as well as collecting the National Society's impact, and are collated at each level of the organisation. Indeed, the *colline* unit is supported by three further tiers in the organisational structure of the National Society: commune level, provincial 'branch', and national level.*

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* For details on how these other levels support the work of the colline unit, see the full case study: IFRC (2012) A Red Cross Unit in Every Community: Developing a Countrywide Community Volunteer Network in Burundi Red Cross Society. Geneva: IFRC.

service that can be carried out with resources available within the community, and a simple organisational structure that allows for volunteers to 'own' the organisation, to reach decisions, to raise local resources and to interact with the rest of the National Society.

In order to make the 'design, test and duplicate' methodology effective, initial units are established in communities where there is the highest possible chance of success. Such a context would be marked by buy-in and commitment from local communities to volunteer processes and local resource mobilisation. When seeing the successful establishment of a unit in one community, others are encouraged to follow suit. The process creates something like a domino effect, until at last even those communities in which the initial chances of success are weak also develop local units.

A unit is considered sustainable when its service is important but simple enough for the community to resource both the activity and its supporting structures. This might be through a combination of local leadership, volunteer time and donations. Because the National Society is unlikely to have the resources to support thousands of individual units, it is important that they are not dependent on the National Society to carry out their activities. By the same token, for the development process to be successful, the cost to the National Society of setting up each unit must be kept as low as possible. While formation of the early units is resource-intensive, learning from initial experiences allows the project to scale up at the lowest possible cost and with increased chances of success.

Once there is a critical mass of units in one area, a support structure can be developed, or adapted from existing structures, to meet the minimal coordination and support needs of local units. Again, this is a process of testing a model in one location, and systematically adapting it to conditions in others. Learning, supported by cycles of reflection and documentation, is therefore key to the process. Rather than inhibiting the scaling up of the units, failures and mistakes in one location are viewed as opportunities to deepen the learning process, and do not prevent the methodology from being tried in another. Of key importance is that the reasons for failure are analysed and the learning applied in the next attempt. Due to the low cost (small amounts of time and associated travel and accommodation expenses) of establishing a unit, failure does not carry the same inhibitive risks that a more expensive investment would. Once the project is firmly established in one branch, the methodology and learning can be replicated across other branches based on National Society capacity and financial resources.

According to IFRC, the following contributing factors underpinned the success of this organisational development process in Burundi:

- Within the National Society, there has been high-quality leadership and management to define a realistic vision for the National Society, and to manage limited resources to implement it.
- Burundi has huge needs. With domestic services and international aid only able to meet a fraction of them, the potential for communities to self-mobilise is enormous, and the National Society's strategic vision recognised and built on this potential.
- The homogeneous geographic and cultural character of Burundi make it very suitable for the methodology applied, meaning that once established, the new units could self-replicate across the country very rapidly (with only one area, the central area of Bujumbura, having a significantly different dynamic because of its urban rather than rural setting).

Sub-model: Paung Ku – micro-grants to support community networks

Save the Children founded Paung Ku (PK) in 2007 as a mechanism to allocate small grants to local groups within a consortium of international and local organisations. It has since transitioned into an independent Myanmar NGO and has shifted from its original focus on service delivery and emergency response to more politically responsive advocacy. A central element of its support remains small grant-making, in particular to networks of civil society actors and activists. These networks are often fluid and changeable, coming together around a particular issue and then dispersing again. Others are more formalised.

In the Delta region, Paung Ku has documented lessons learnt from supporting the Zonal Committees. At first the Zonal Committees were a disparate collection of community-based organisations that had formed themselves in order to respond to the devastation following Cyclone Nargis in 2008. After realising that groups in the neighbouring villages were experiencing similar problems, in 2010, their leaders decided to form a network. At that time, the Delta networks comprised 42 village groups; by February 2013, this had increased to 93 groups.

Together the Zonal Committees have been able to engage in national policy-making by advocating as a group on issues related to land rights and livelihoods. For example, after hearing of new land law being developed in Parliament, the networks asked PK to connect them with legal aid services that could explain the legislation and its potential impacts. After a series of workshops, the Zonal Committees decided to develop a set of recommendations that were supported by a petition signed by over 1,500 farmers from areas covered by the networks. The recommendations addressed issues relating to agricultural loans, land ownership, freedom of choice for crops, and fair market prices. The petition was sent to President Thein Sein, as well as speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament and local government. Through engaging in processes like this, networks not only act but also learn collectively. Expanding their knowledge of key legislation (such as the Farmland Law and its connection to the Constitution) has built their capacity to participate in political process at the national level. It has also sharpened their collective strategy and vision.

Paung Ku has supported the growth and development of these networks in four key ways:

1. The first step was funding.[130] PK was able to support the groups with mini-grants as their functions and aims developed from emergency relief in the aftermath of Nargis, to longer-term development programmes through which networks were established. PK supported work in new areas by providing operational funding for the networks, including travel and meeting costs, mobile phones for network leaders and the hiring of external personnel (eg legal advisors in case of new land laws).

2. PK has also provided direct training to the groups. This has included the areas of project-cycle management, bookkeeping, leadership, gender sensitivity and disaster risk reduction. PK also responds to requests from the networks for training in specific areas such as organic farming and land rights.

3. PK has played an important role in facilitating linkages between the groups and external actors. For example, PK facilitated exchange visits (in which groups visit neighbouring villages to observe and learn from parallel development projects). PK has also connected the networks to journalists, legal experts and other local and international NGOs.

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130 Paung Ku began its Cyclone Nargis relief programme in May 2008. It focused on providing small grants for relief and rehabilitation projects defined by village groups. In total, during the 18 months following the cyclone, PK supported over 700 of these projects. Each project received up to US$7,000 in grants.

4. Finally, PK has provided mentorship to network committees and village-level groups. Mentoring has been designed to encourage reflection on group processes, in order to make them more inclusive and effective, especially with relevance to gender relations.

Reflecting on this process, Paung Ku has drawn the following lessons for external organisations wishing to support locally driven, grassroots networks:

- Generally, the ability of PK to allow their support to evolve flexibly according to group and network needs was critical. Throughout the period of engagement, PK's work encompassed various fields and often required them to respond to a number of support needs simultaneously (including relief activities, local community development projects, regional networking, media engagement and national level advocacy).

- Network leaders have commented that throughout this process, PK allowed the local groups to remain in the driver's seat. Decisions on which areas to engage in, and what training or support requirements were needed, were made in conversation with PK.

- PK concludes that networking is best supported by harnessing the momentum of existing grassroots movements and working with them in a responsive and flexible way. In this case, groups in the Delta were already mobilising themselves in response to Cyclone Nargis.

- The fluid nature of grassroots networking means that supporting them through standard project-based approaches is not appropriate. Where support to the Delta networks was most effective was in the willingness of PK and other external agencies to work across sectors. This involves doing away with fixed plans and alignment to specific issues – and responding to problems and opportunities as and when they arise, always in line with the interests and priorities of the networks themselves.

- Rather than attempting to 'grow' grassroots networks, the experience of PK shows that external agencies should position themselves so that they are able to respond to opportunities when they arise, in line with existing movements and the wider social context. The ability to allocate micro-grants in a timely way and without too many conditions seems key to this approach.[131]

Relevance to peacebuilding

A challenge for large-scale local peacebuilding is the complexity of resolving conflict, which requires multiple actors at different times throughout the peacebuilding process. There is also an inconsistency of capacity and skills of local peacebuilders, which can make designing and implementing projects more difficult, often leading to international agencies dominating the process. What these examples show us is a better way of seeking out the local capacity and harnessing it to provide a more complete response to the needs of the communities. They also recognise the importance of demand-driven capacity-building, which is better able to respond to the nuanced needs of both the context and the partners. Whilst it is harder work and requires more time and patience, the result is a stronger civil society and more locally led and sustainable responses.

The case studies are also relevant for the peacebuilding sector, as responses to conflict require a cross-sector approach, and the reality is that conflicts do not transition in a linear process from conflict to emergency to development. Rather, a conflict will ebb and flow.

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131 For further detail, see original case study analysis in Paung Ku (2013) 'Growing Networks? – Supporting Networks in Myanmar: a Case Study of Paung Ku and Village Networks in Ayeyawaddy Delta'. Yangon: Paung Ku.

By linking different capacities and skill sets together at the local level, communities are more able to transition as the conflict transitions, and respond to changing challenges and opportunities as they arise, rather than being dictated by external categorisations.

Other key aspects of relevance in the models explored here include:

- Often informal networks and collaborations between peacebuilders already exist, which can have deep links with communities and potential to work at scale.
- Local civil society brings its own networks and trusted contacts, which are highly valuable for peacebuilding.
- Conflict analyses require input from a variety of sectors. Linking local capacities together can serve to provide a better understanding of conflict and better responses to it.
- Informal networks can enable more fluid alignments of interests forming around a specific theme or issue before they dissolve again. This flexible approach can be relevant in fast changing and complex conflicts.
- International resources for peacebuilding are relatively small. Adopting approaches that facilitate the strengths of local capacities will enable much greater impact from limited resources.
- Issue-based networks can be useful entry points to peacebuilding (for example, using common health issues to bring together two conflicting ethnic groups).
- Flexible funding can enable networks to be more responsive to the varying and changing needs of the conflict context.
- Civil society can often mimic the dynamics of the conflict in wider society. If the international community adopts a facilitative approach, it can better help civil society to manage these tensions and build peace within civil society itself.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRACTICAL GUIDANCE

What general good practice principles can be drawn from these models? What attributes do they commonly present?

A) Flexibly adapting to local priorities, contexts and realities

<u>Designing</u>

In order not to be restricted by predefined and homogenous interpretations of how change happens, flexibility on the part of international organisations is key. For its ability to respond to local priorities and realities on the ground, the DANIDA Peace Security and Development programme is particularly notable. Although the initial project design derived from the Danish government's global security interests, partners were given the time and resources to reshape it according to locally felt concerns. Even during the programme, partners felt that they had the space to make programme adjustments according to shifts in conflict dynamics on the ground.

<u>Listening</u>

Listening, by its very nature, requires a certain level of openness and flexibility, especially if international agencies intend to be led by the feedback they receive. Responding to the challenge that aid receivers feel they are rarely asked questions about the issues they most wish to discuss, CDA's listening methodology is designed to be purposefully malleable. This ensures that conversations are steered in a direction that captures the full extent of participant interests and priorities. The Life and Peace Institute's (LPI) participatory action research (PAR) methodology is also designed to be flexible, so that research facilitators and communities can negotiate and renegotiate their interpretation and analysis of the conflicts that affect them, which also allows those involved to respond to changing conflict contexts.

<u>Identifying capacity</u>

Similarly, the models presented here show how international agencies can define and prioritise capacity according to local contexts. Most importantly, this means recognising existing capacity before considering gaps and need, as shown in the 'capacity empowerment' model of ActionAid Myanmar. It also means defining which capacities matter and why, according to local realities and the priorities of local constituents. When trying to identify potential partners, this would also involve basing capacity assessments within wider contextual analyses of the social, economic and political factors that affect the implementation of programmes on the ground. Ultimately, it means shifting how international aid organisations currently prioritise capacity: from a fixation with institutional templates and organisational ability to manage projects, to an approach that purposefully encompasses broader values such as long-term vision, and relationships with and commitment to local constituencies. As was seen in the approach of Peace Direct, this could involve developing a pre-partnership relationship with a local actor or group based on small amounts of core funding for up to a year, before entering a formal relationship.

Finally, the value-based, flexible approach to capacity would involve a fundamental shift in the attitudes of international organisations: from perceiving themselves as providers or trainers of external technical expertise, to facilitators of local expertise and capacity. It would involve shifting the interpretation of capacity away from a funding and/or training relationship to one that values non-material support in the form of relationships and mentorship, for example. It would also prioritise the capacity to be self-sufficient and find resources within the local community or in government services.

B) Providing support in a timely and responsive way

Small grants

Closely connected to the principle of flexibility is the ability to position external support so that it is timely and responsive. This is particularly important for funding mechanisms, and a number of the models show how small-grant mechanisms are effective for responding to opportunities as they arise. Small amounts of targeted funding can be used to react to particular events or changes in the socioeconomic and political environment. The Global Greengrants Fund is designed specifically to support local activists responding to campaigning or advocacy opportunities. Due to their fluid and changeable nature, this is an especially relevant approach when supporting networks. In politically volatile contexts like Myanmar, where the environment changes rapidly and regularly, it becomes even more important. The models of both Pyoe Pin and Paung Ku recognise this. These models also indicate that small grants are important in order not to swamp local capacity. Community funds can be effective at scaling their growth to the pace of community change, by balancing external inputs with a local asset base. In this context, the community philanthropy model shows how match funding can be used to encourage local resource mobilisation.

Capacity support

Although capacity building has not been an explicit focus in this study (which looks at how existing capacity can be identified, rather than new capacity built), many of the models show that support of this kind can be responsive in a similar way to locally led funding. The more organic approach of 'learn through doing', cultivated by IRC's repeated rounds of mini-grants in Chechnya, is a notable example. Similar responsiveness is seen in Pyoe Pin's approach. For example, reacting to the growing importance of community forestry as government legislation and policy develops in this area, the Pyoe Pin programme facilitated cross-regional learning visits for partners working in Myanmar's different forest regions. Ultimately, timely and responsive funding and capacity support is another way to ensure that external assistance is firmly rooted in, and driven by, local realities and priorities.

C) Participation

Greater participation of local actors is frequently called for, and the practitioners of international aid organisations often make efforts to ensure that this is 'meaningful'. These models demonstrate the importance of participation for a locally led approach in various contexts: in research, during planning stages, when implementing change processes, and in monitoring the effectiveness of international assistance. In all contexts, 'meaningful' participation cannot take place without listening, and where it seems most effective is when it empowers local actors to influence and drive processes of change in their constituencies.

Empowerment

In the ActionAid fellowship programme, participation is facilitated through the use of specific participatory tools and methodologies. Fellows use these tools to engage communities in analysing the dynamics and causes of their poverty, as well as strategies to overcome them. Participation in these processes is at the heart of an empowerment model geared towards action and learning. Of central importance to this approach is encouraging fellows and communities to value their own resources and capacities, and to use them in the implementation of self-defined development strategies. Similarly, LPI in D R Congo seeks to challenge the bias of thematic expertise over local knowledge in peacebuilding, by turning affected communities into producers of knowledge and analytical actors in their own right. Like the fellowship programme, it is a process that is learning- and action-orientated, enabling local communities to better understand the problems that affect them, whilst giving them the agency to design their own responses and approaches.

Accountability

Other models show how participation can promote accountability. This could be in the form of listening mechanisms that make concerted efforts to close the feedback loop, so that information received is connected to wider monitoring and changes in policy and practice. Save the Children's model in Pakistan, which integrates its feedback mechanism into broader monitoring and evaluation structures, is notable is this regard. Participation in the form of contributing capacity, time and resources can also foster accountability. For example, the community fund model indicates that making local constituents co-investors (through membership, material contributions and volunteer efforts) cultivates 'horizontal accountability'. Although more research is required to better understand the potential role of community philanthropy in mainstream development practice, where a fund balances external with local investment of this kind it is less likely to be motivated by external priorities than a donor-funded NGO. The survival of a community fund is intimately connected to its beneficiaries, rather than external donors. The proximity and reliance of these funds on their local investors may also cultivate more transparent and direct lines of accountability, than in cases where fund providers are further removed, both culturally and physically.

D) Change is a process

Underlying nearly all of these models is recognition that change is a process: and that, rather than leading, international actors must understand their role as facilitating progressive, cumulative change. This means openness to testing, learning and developing through repeated cycles of implementation. Indeed, the terms 'iterative' and 'process-orientated' have been frequently used to describe the models explored here. Closely connected to this change-facilitating role is a willingness to engage with complex social, economic and political problems. Particularly in peacebuilding contexts, technocratic responses, often driven by a perception of the need to remain impartial, can leave international actors unable to respond to the unpredictability of what is happening on the ground. Indeed a number of these models show that, in order to be effective, interventions need to accept that change is complex, takes time and involves learning from both successes and failures along the way.

The Pyoe Pin and SAVI programmes were particularly notable for their willingness to engage in political processes through 'politically smart' approaches. Similarly, the DANIDA PSD programme allowed itself to be led by locally felt security concerns, rather than being restricted by the need to remain impartial. It let its civil society partners determine the

actors and networks they engaged with on the ground, which included religious figures and terror suspects. Similarly, LPI's approach in Congo illustrates a willingness to engage in the complex and unpredictable dynamics of conflict and conflict transformation. The models are also notable for their use of iterative, process-orientated cycles of action, reflection and learning, seen in the 'design, test and duplicate' methodology used by IFRC to scale up in Burundi, and IRC's repetitive cycles of mini-grants used to foster collaboration among women's groups in Chechnya.

E) Broadening the definition of success

A number of these models cite both 'tangible' and 'intangible' aims and results. Concrete outputs and quantifiable impacts are teamed with less measurable outcomes, such as processes that strengthen social capital. Often, less tangible results are longer-term endeavours and are therefore closely connected to the idea that external support must understand itself in terms of facilitating progressive change, rather than quick-fix projects and programmes.

For instance, a number of these models illustrate processes that seek to change attitudes, break patterns of behaviour or build new relationships. In environments where relationships between state and society have been historically fraught and marked by low levels of trust, intangible outcomes (such as increased confidence to engage with duty-bearers in the ActionAid Myanmar model) are especially meaningful. The Pyoe Pin programme also aims to balance tangible change in government policy and legislation with broader goals to facilitate the democratic transition in Myanmar (for instance through strengthening the confidence and capacity of civil society to engage in governance processes).

Other models indicate that very tangible approaches like the IRC's mini-grants system in Chechnya can foster less tangible results, such as collaboration and relationship-building between civil society groups that had previously struggled to work together. However, the challenge remains in how such outcomes are measured and, indeed, valued by international aid organisations. With the exception perhaps of the ActionAid model, 'intangible' results appear to be framed as a secondary by-product of more concrete and quantifiable outcomes. To encourage locally led programming and partnerships, it seems necessary to broaden the definition of success, so that efforts to achieve and measure long-term, intangible results are equal to those for short-term and concrete ones. This, like many of the other changes recommended, will require changes in the way that staff performance is measured.

In order to align practice with these principles, what specific tools and approaches do the models offer that can be employed by international aid agencies?

Theme 1: identifying and supporting local capacity

1. Before entering into a formal partnership or designing a programme, a capacity assessment should take place that focuses on identifying existing resources and skills; this should take place before determining needs and gaps. Moving away from the deficit model and designing value-based capacity assessments would involve using reflective and participatory mapping tools, especially at the community level.
2. When identifying partners, look beyond organisational capacity to develop programmes; prioritise values such as local reputation, long-term vision, history of community engagement and work, ability to mobilise local resources. Invest time and resources in face-to-face interaction and analysing the wider context in order

to understand how your choice of partner could influence the political, social and economic environment (eg local power dynamics).

3. Recognise the power of the individual by supporting informal as well as formal actors and structures; developing individuals through mentorship (eg ActionAid's fellowship programme) is just as important as growing formal civil society organisations.

4. Rather than predefined capacity-building programmes, use approaches that encourage learning through doing (eg the competitive mini-grants system). Capacity development is a process, and supply-driven aspects should be complemented by more organic, demand-driven models.

Theme 2: listening to local voices to develop responses and approaches

1. Allocate time and resources for local partners to shape the programme according to their priorities, resources and context; this could mean allocating up to a year in time, and small amounts of seed funding for local actors to do a planning process.

2. Use flexible listening mechanisms that involve participatory methodologies (eg participatory action research) to avoid being led by externally constructed narratives (eg in peacebuilding contexts) that do not reflect local realities and lived experiences.

3. Close the loop in feedback mechanisms (eg through integrating them into M&E systems) so that information received is not just recorded but acted on.

4. Nurture direct relationships with partners by creating feedback channels and spaces that allow donors and grant managers to be accessible to grantees (eg through decentralised structures and informal channels such as phone calls).

5. INGOs and multilaterals should locally procure (and donors should fund) ex-post evaluations/sustainability studies five to seven years after the successful conclusion of projects and programmes, to assess the sustainability of impact and the extent to which local actors were strengthened.

6. INGOs and multilaterals should use the Keystone Accountability Survey or another partner feedback mechanism to assess quality and perceptions of local partnerships.

Theme 3: using funding mechanisms that enable rather than distort local entities

1. Use an intermediary and/or pooled funding mechanism. The CSSP model in Ethiopia offers a number of good practices in this regard, including: a decentralised structure; an approach to capacity building that is demand-driven and organic; and strong local leadership, where managerial staff invest time in being accessible to and building relationships with their grantees.

2. Develop a long-term strategy to support and channel funds through community development funds. Donors could start this process by forming collaborations with independent foundations to more fully understand the community philanthropy field and how it can be incorporated into mainstream development practice. One example is the Global Alliance for Community Philanthropy (GACP), a multi-donor and multi-stakeholder collaborative engaged in a series of joint research and learning activities aimed at advancing the practice of community philanthropy and at influencing international development actors to better understand, support and promote community philanthropy's role.

3. Channel funds through and/or engage in the development of local institutions and/or community funds. This would involve:
   • Small amounts of money consistent with the pace of community change and scaled to absorptive capacity.

- Core funding to strengthen the overall effectiveness of local institutions, not simply their ability to implement programmes.
- Flexibly funding different types of activity, depending on the stage of an organisation's development and the local context.
- Using mechanisms to encourage grantees to build their local asset base through mobilising resources locally (eg match funding).

Theme 4: supporting local actors to work together to achieve greater impact

1. Because networks are often fluid and changeable, external support should position itself so that it is able to respond to opportunities when they arise, in line with existing local change processes and the wider social context. This could mean not being tied to a specific issue or linear path towards change (as seen in the Pyoe Pin and Paung Ku models).
2. Take a more catalytic role by acting as a broker and convener of relationships (eg between different actors in governance reform processes), rather than simply as an external fund-provider and capacity-builder.
3. Use iterative, process-orientated and cumulative approaches when supporting networks (eg capacity-building through repeated cycles of mini-grants, and 'design, test and duplicate' methodology). These help build collaborative relationships and promote progressive change over time.

What are the wider, systemic changes required for the aid industry to function in a more locally led way?

1. Move away from big aid to small, targeted and strategic funding. An approach of this kind could range from core funding (to help an organisation develop on its own terms) to activity-based allocations (to help local actors respond to specific opportunities or changes in their environment).
2. Nurture more beneficent and flexible bureaucratic environments. This could be as simple as ensuring that grant managers are available to talk to grantees over the phone as an informal feedback and monitoring approach.
3. Create space for ideas and new approaches to be tested and developed. This is connected to: having faith in the ideas of local partners; creating space for local actors to shape the design of programmes; and conceding that change is a cumulative process where learning through mistakes is as important as achieving successes.
4. Place more value on non-material, less tangible resources and outcomes, such as social and political capital or relationships based on trust.
5. Develop shared approaches for measuring 'intangible' aims and outcomes.
6. Develop staff performance metrics that encourage locally led practice.
7. Remove pressure to spend and stringent 'value-for-money' cultures in aid bureaucracies.

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Unlocking the power
to get things done

Rosie Pinnington

❝This study aims to contribute to the growing
recognition and development of locally led aid
modalities and partnership models. By identifying
good practice examples in the peacebuilding,
development and humanitarian fields, it hopes
to contribute towards a shift in practice within
the aid industry, whereby locally led approaches
are prioritised.❞

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