AN INTRODUCTION TO LOCAL FIRST

Development for the twenty-first century

CONTENTS

To learn more about Local First or to participate, please visit www.localfirst.org.uk.

SECTION 1
LOCAL FIRST: THE CONCEPT

'Success should not be measured by outputs or the amount of money spent, but by the ability of Afghan institutions to deliver services, the Afghan private sector to generate jobs, and Afghan civil society to provide avenues for citizens to hold their governments accountable' (US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations 2011).

Local First is a development approach that looks first for the capacity within countries before bringing in external expertise and resources, recognises that much of this capacity is found outside central government, and understands that local people need to lead their own development.

It's hard to imagine a simpler or more commonsense idea – that development initiatives should support and amplify existing local activity, including civil society, private sector suppliers and government, rather than starting from scratch with concepts or goods and services from outside; and that development initiatives should be judged to a significant degree on the extent to which they leave local organisations stronger and more capable than at the outset.

Aid is not development, although it can lead to development. Development happens when all the resources of a country are used to the greatest effect – when the dynamism that exists is tapped into, and people practice self-help and mutual help, leading to self-reliance. Nowhere is this needed more than in countries that are emerging from conflict.

The *way* that outsiders work with local organisations really matters. Outsiders, with the best of intentions, can end up destroying the organisation that they wanted to support. Local First argues for initiatives that are:

- **Locally led**, where the local partner formulates the approach, and the outside agency provides, for example, resources and

connections to organisations working in similar ways for mutual learning and support.

Or else:

- **Locally owned**, where the approach comes from outside but there is a determined effort to 'transplant' the ownership of the work to a legitimate local organisation that over time can transform the programme into one that is locally led.

  This is in contrast to the very common phenomenon of:

- **Locally delivered**, where the approach comes from outside and a local organisation is selected to implement it, without having been involved in setting the priorities or the approach, and where there is no transfer of ownership.

Local First is not a wholly novel approach and there are many encouraging examples where it has been put into practice. However, most aid is still heavily influenced in its deployment by outside agencies. This is also the case with peacebuilding. Power is largely kept in the hands of outsiders. Yet the case studies summarised in this pamphlet, and described in more detail in the accompanying book, illustrate how locally led activities can be large-scale and effective in the areas defined by the World Bank as priorities in post-conflict countries – security, justice and livelihoods:

- Building Markets found markets for Afghan businesses at a scale which amounted, in one year, to 2 per cent of Afghanistan's GDP.
- Luta Hamutuk, in Timor Leste, has mobilised citizens to scrutinise infrastructure projects for a typical cost of $1 per $1,000 of investment.
- IBJ Cambodia is providing legal defence services in 17 out of 24 provinces in Cambodia.
- FOMICRES worked with the Christian Council of Mozambique to collect weapons and spread a culture of peace nationwide.
- CEDAC created peace committees across Burundi in 2006, 60 per cent of which are still active.
- In DRC, the Centre Résolution Conflits demonstrated a 90 per cent success rate in its disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme by focusing on effective reintegration.

But Local First does not mean 'local only'. The case studies illustrate a number of successful partnerships between local and outside organisations, where outsiders added value, but did not

take over – for example, the technical support to weapons collection provided by the South African army to FOMICRES in Mozambique. Conversely, the CEDAC case study suggests that while agencies such as UNDP used CEDAC to deliver their programmes across the country, they were unwilling to fund CEDAC's own priorities.

Putting Local First into practice requires rethinking assumptions about impact, developing new approaches to finding local capacity and shaping partnerships that work with locals on an equal footing.

Dilemmas

a) Finding and assessing local capacity

Finding and assessing local capacity to act on a particular issue requires specialist knowledge and experience – from a donor's field-based staff, an INGO or a local entity such as a chamber of commerce or a network.

Organisations need to be judged realistically, by what they have achieved in often challenging circumstances, with limited resources, and against their own objectives. Where organisations claim to be working for community benefit, their legitimacy needs to be tested. Interviewing 'beneficiaries' may not work when people feel that their answers will determine whether badly needed resources are to be provided. A better test may be the extent to which an organisation mobilises voluntary effort. People don't give their time to an organisation which they do not feel is working in their interests.

This is a far cry from the calls for tenders to be completed in a highly complex form, often in the applicant's second or third language, which have been criticised as favouring 'NGO businesses' specialising in bid writing. There is a place for open competition, but it should be supplemented by other forms of assessment by people with an in-depth knowledge of the field.

b) Supporting without distorting

Generally where local organisations receive external funding, it is in order to scale up their operations. This needs care, if it is not to destroy the qualities that made the organisation successful in the

first place. Masooda Bano's chastening account of how external funding destroyed functioning civil society organisations in Pakistan, also draws a sharp distinction between voluntary organisations and NGOs. Voluntary organisations engage volunteer effort, operate with a low cost base, and show long-term commitment to their mission and their community. NGOs don't have volunteers, have a cost base more in line with international NGOs, and take on the work that someone will fund. Turning a voluntary organisation into an NGO is unhelpful.

These case studies line up with Bano's analysis in showing how organisations can grow considerably in scale, as well as employ a team of paid staff, without losing their ability to mobilise voluntary effort. This is a function of how they engage with outside funders:

- They were pre-existing organisations, which had been created in response to a need, not to a funding opportunity.
- The organisations began with a voluntary self-help ethos.
- They sought funding or partnership (or in the case of IBJ Cambodia, where the local director moved from his previous position, a job) on their own terms.
- They limited the rewards to paid staff.

There is a symmetry here with Bano's recommendations (2012: 175 ff.) about how to avoid destroying organisations through external funding:

- Do not pay high salaries to initiators – these sap both their motivation and that of their followers.
- Fund material activities that benefit the whole organisation.
- Monitor performance in terms of members' satisfaction and engagement.
- Be willing to work with organisations on equal terms, listening to their perspectives and approaches to development.
- Adjust incentives over time as the work develops

Another form of distortion occurs when local procurement is developed for a commodity that has only a temporary market, or where the local supplier is fundamentally uncompetitive. The Building Markets case study of local procurement in Afghanistan shows, among many positive outcomes, the challenge of an Afghan boot producer that succeeded for a while in supplying boots to the US Army, but was ultimately undercut by a Pakistani company. Hence Building Markets are emphasising working with private sector companies to procure locally.

c) Working at scale

It takes time for organisations to get to a size where they match the scale at which donors prefer to fund. The increasing emphasis on showing impact also tends to work in favour of large-scale projects. Almost always, external contractors, or multilateral agencies, are seen as the only organisations able to bid for work at the largest scale.

Yet it is at this scale that prioritising the use of local capacity could have the biggest long-term impact. Donors who genuinely want to prioritise locally led initiatives, will find ways to support groupings of organisations who collectively can deliver at scale. For example, the community-based DDR work described in the case study of the Centre Résolution Conflits (CRC) could be carried out, with support from CRC, by a number of other organisations based across Nord Kivu. Rather than demobilising 4,300 combatants and reintegrating 1,300, a consortium could work with five or ten times this number.

d) Redefining roles

Even if donor governments could be persuaded of the benefits of a Local First approach, would recipient governments accept it? Would the trade-off of greater use of local capacity, and a greater role for recipient governments in shaping their own contribution, compensate for the possible loss of access to aid funds and the prestige that comes from deploying those funds? Can desire to provide better public goods be harnessed?

The enthusiasm for the post-Busan New Deal for building peaceful states suggests that the principle of involving civil society more closely in a coherent national plan for peacebuilding is gaining acceptance.

Multilaterals will continue to have a big role to play. As the case studies demonstrate, their access to resources, technical expertise and logistical capacity can be invaluable to their local partners. But they need to be genuinely doing things that could not be done by one or more local organisations. Good examples of partnership need to be encouraged, for example the principle of co-design of projects with local partners.

Local First also represents a challenge for INGOs. There will certainly continue to be a role for them, but it may be a changing one – less an implementer, deliverer of stand-alone capacity-building

programmes and conduit for donor funds, and more a discoverer and nurturer of talent, with a very clear objective of enabling organisations to lead from the beginning, and to contribute their knowledge to the INGO and its other partners.

SECTION 2
CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1
Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration in Congo: CRC

After 15 years of conflict in DRC, many of the estimated 5 million people living in North Kivu continue to suffer on a daily basis and consequently have lost trust in the capacity of their government to resolve the issues facing this part of DRC, which include violent ways of accessing eastern DRC's abundant resources, myriad armed groups, the reintegration of militia groups into the national army, ethnic conflicts, underdevelopment, ongoing land disputes and large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees.

Two key challenges to address in fragile states like the DRC are the lack of social cohesion, and the need to restore confidence and links between civilians and their government. Much more than it damages buildings and physical infrastructures, conflict destroys trust and relationships, as well as the capacity and will of people to work together. These intangible qualities must be rebuilt if peace is to be sustainable. Restoring confidence between civilians and governance actors is needed to create forms of cooperation designed to address issues of conflict together. However, in the words of the Centre Résolution Conflit's current coordinator: 'The members of government are another country' (Rouw and Willems, 2009: unpublished field notes).

CRC works across Nord Kivu and Ituri, negotiating with militia

> **THE CENTRE RÉSOLUTION CONFLITS** (CRC) is a Congolese organisation of 20 years standing. Its work focuses on supporting the reintegration, after demobilisation and disarmament, of former militia members, while creating social institutions such as Task Forces and radio clubs. Working with MONUSCO and others, CRC's trustworthiness and long-term commitment help externally-led DDR programmes to succeed.

leaders for a return of combatants (including children) to the community, preparing communities to support their return, assisting the return of IDPs, and building social institutions to prevent conflict and stimulate development. The organisation has 17 full-time staff, a network of part-time staff and large groups of volunteers. Its work is informed at every step by the local population.

By constrast, externally led DDR programmes often have a difficult time connecting with local realities in ways that create sustainable solutions to the threat of armed groups, especially in terms of reintegration issues. However, it is vital to understand 'the "laws of the bush"… in order to break the cycle of returning to the militia. Reintegration must connect to life experienced by the combatants' (Rouw and Willems, 2010: 35).

Hence CRC plan the DDR process starting with reintegration: RDD rather than DDR.

Following the sensitisation stage, where CRC negotiates with militia leaders for the release of combatants, including children, CRC's approach includes four other key elements:

- Provision of a range of livelihood options, some of which are also open to members of the community.
- Reparation programmes are sometimes included in the reintegration process, whereby former militia members build roads or other facilities to benefit the community.
- Building social networks based largely on voluntary effort, which sustains the RDD process at the micro level over time.
- Context-specific indicators that measure success over the long term, not just at the point where a combatant leaves the militia group and disarms.

This approach succeeds. Through CRC's engagement with former combatants before, during and after their RDD work, only 10 per cent

of former combatants indicated that they were considering a return to the bush; whereas 58 per cent of former combatants who did not engage with the CRC process indicated that they were considering a return (Gillhespy and Hayman, 2011: 21). Relationships have been created that support and protect communities. Peace committees in communities help to organise the cooperatives while six Task Forces, made up of former combatants together with journalists and other community leaders, look out for emerging conflicts and seek to mediate before they lead to violence. One hundred and nineteen radio clubs provide a focus for the initial stages of DDR. As one ex-combatant explains:

'I can say I am Kidicho, I have been there with you, now I am here. They even cite the name – "You, I know you are there, I know you have been shot by the bullet. I know your wife. I know you are living on that mountain. I am already good here, you can come and join me"' (ibid.).

Radio is, therefore, a direct way for ex-combatants to encourage their former colleagues to also return to their own communities. In addition, some of the radio clubs have begun community livelihood projects, such as tree nurseries.

CRC works with MONUSCO and other international agencies. CRC's local knowledge and accompaniment on MONUSCO DDR initiatives has prevented misunderstanding that could have led to renewed violence. Without the support of outsiders like UN agencies, however, CRC would have had fewer options with which to negotiate with the Mai Mai. In particular, the combination of DDR facilities and services provided by the UN and the facilitation of the process by CRC renders demobilisation a more attractive option for militias.

In conclusion:

- Successful RDD programmes require local organisations and external organisations to work together, adopting the roles that each is best suited for.
- The process of RDD, as opposed to the programme, requires a local presence that can support it over the long-term.
- RDD programmes should be judged by indicators that are seen as relevant in the communities that receive them, not just by the number of weapons collected or participants in the programme.

CASE STUDY 2
Reintegrating combatants in Burundi: CEDAC

Since independence in 1962, Burundi has been plagued by ethnic tensions between the dominant Tutsi minority and the Hutu majority.[1] The most recent eruption of violence in 1993 led to the deaths of an estimated 300,000 people. A long and painful transition to peace thereafter culminated in the first democratic elections in 2005, and the election of Pierre Nkurunziza as President. At the end of 2006 he signed a ceasefire with the rebel FNL and, in 2009, civil war was officially declared to be ended. Nonetheless, especially since the 2010 elections, political tensions have remained high between the CNDD, which controls the government, and opposition parties.

Founded in 2005 in Bujumbura, CEDAC is a local and apolitical non-profit organisation.[2] Its founding president, Eric Niragira, was 14 years old in 1993: he lived through the conflict, was forced to support the rebellion and participated in military and political activities. When he returned to school in 1996, he found it a painful experience:

> *'On a daily basis, the army would gather fellow Tutsi students to participate in the killing of civilians who lived in the villages surrounding our lycee. When these students would return, the Hutu students were forced to wash their clothing and knives that were full of blood. We did this out of fear of being killed if we refused.'* [3]

Some years later he became an international youth group leader with CIRID,[4] a Geneva-based NGO founded by a Burundian national, which aimed to support the consolidation of peace in the African Great Lakes Region, and Burundi in particular. When CIRID wanted to recruit 24 locals for an externally funded project, hundreds of ex-combatants from the conflict that had just ended showed up looking for work. Eric and a group of friends decided to found

---

1 In addition, the Twa ethnic group comprises about 1 per cent of the population.
2 This description is based on the CEDAC website: http://www.freewebs.com/cedac/ biographyoftheauthor.htm.
3 Ibid.
4 Independent Centre for Research and Initiatives for Dialogue.

CEDAC with the aim of supporting ex-combatants, as well as the people of Burundi as a whole, in the development of the country.

CEDAC has created and continues to support a network of peace committees – 129 at community level and 18 at provincial level – made up of former combatants. The committees began as a forum in which both ex-combatants and victims of the conflict could discuss their grievances and problems, and find ways to help each other. They grew out of CEDAC's first initiative, a sensitisation campaign promoting civilian disarmament in order to directly address the proliferation of weapons and the armed violence this caused in Burundi. This campaign showed that ex-combatants from different armed factions could work together. Sixty per cent of the committees are estimated to still be active.

In 2007, working with UNIFEM, CEDAC led an initiative to establish a national structure composed of committees comprising female ex-combatants and women associated with the armed forces, at the local, provincial and national levels. These committees now form part of the CEDAC national network.

CEDAC supports the network of committees in two main ways. It trains their members, often with funding and assistance from external organisations. For example with CARE, Survivor Corps and the Centre for International Stabilization and Recovery, in 2007 CEDAC organised training for female ex-combatants on peer-to-peer support in the provinces of Bujumbura Mairie, Bujumbura Rural, Cibitoke, Muramvya and Bubanza. These provinces were chosen because of the heavy military activity that took place there. Female ex-combatants learned how to support one another in dealing with traumas from the war, an effective approach given that psycho-social support is very limited.[5]

CEDAC also works with external organisations to distribute resources for livelihood support to communities through the peace committees. A recent collaboration with UNDP involved a multi-stage livelihoods programme aimed at people associated with FNL. Participants began as members of cash-for-work crews, and were encouraged to save one third of their salary to be matched 4:1 by UNDP. These resources were used to create livelihood projects. CEDAC helped

---

5 *During the 2010 field research, limited psycho-social support was mentioned in several interviews with representatives of local NGOs, international NGOs, donors and the national government.*

> **CEDAC** was founded in Burundi in 2005 in response to the lack of opportunities for ex-combatants. In its first year it created 147 communal and provincial peace committees. An estimated 60 per cent are still active; the network now also includes women's committees.CEDAC helps committees support their members in livelihoods projects, through multilaterals' programmes, for example the distribution of seeds and fertiliser, or food for work programmes.

to create and support 41 associations in this second phase.

However, there are crucial differences between CEDAC's approach and those of outside interveners. Outside support generally has strict target groups and regions for purposes of manageability; eg, support for ex-combatants who handed in a weapon comes from the World Bank, support for the Adultes Associés from UNDP and support for women comes from UNIFEM. CEDAC, in contrast, prioritises inclusion. Differentiated support, creating differences in what groups get what kind of support and when, can be contradictory to the ultimate goal of reintegrating ex-combatants and uniting communities.

CEDAC recognises the dangers in serving as an implementation partner for other organisations, and has developed its own strategic plan for the coming years. While this mission is broadly supported, it has proved difficult to fund, with funders having their own ideas and priorities.

Funders should take note of the following recommendations:

- For successful reintegration of ex-combatants, the involvement of local communities is vital, and local organisations can play a key role in connecting outside interventions to them.
- Be more responsive to local differences and be open for local initiatives. Realise that such local initiatives could do a lot with relatively little money, if given the opportunity.
- When using local organisations as implementing partners, see how this can also support the mission of the local organisations.

CASE STUDY 3

Weapons collection in Mozambique: FOMICRES

The extraordinarily violent post-independence civil war in Mozambique ended with a negotiated peace agreement, in which a civil society organisation, the Christian Council of Mozambique, played an unusually large role, to the point where the Community of Sant' Egidio (a Catholic lay organisation based in Rome but with strong humanitarian ties to Mozambique) was a signatory to the final accord.

The UN Mission, ONUMOZ, was relatively short-lived, and when it left in 1994, having overseen the demobilisation of 80,000 troops and collected almost 200,000 weapons, there were still serious issues about the number of weapons remaining and the safety of those that had been collected.

In 1995 a group of 14 Mozambican youths, which included a number of former child soldiers with combined experiences on both the RENAMO and FRELIMO forces, came together to discuss effective ways for community participation in peacekeeping and security processes. They worried that the disarmament process began by ONUMOZ remained incomplete. In the words of Albino Forquilha, the leader of the group:

'Many people were still traumatised by what had happened in the war and the devastated state of the country's economy, clinics and schools… We knew that with so many weapons in circulation, the fighting could be sparked again at any time.' [6]

With this in mind, the group established what they called an 'action of understanding', and adopted the name Community Intelligence Force (Força de Inteligência Comunitária, or FIC).[7] The actions of FIC, initially at community level, were to:

* Promote civic reconciliatory education among community members in order to build mutual trust.

---

6 *Interview with Albino Forquilha in The Independent, by Paul Vallely, May 2010.*
7 *For more information about FOMICRES, see: http://www.fomicres.org/index. html.*

FOMICRES was created by former child soldiers to deal with the large numbers of weapons scattered across Mozambique at the end of the war. Partnering with the Christian Council of Mozambique, FOMICRES both collected weapons and worked to reinforce a culture of peace. They also supported the South African initiative on small arms, Operation Rachel, and became a founding member of the Mozambican government small arms initiative, COPRECAL.

- Train community members on techniques to gain intelligence for public collection and destruction of small arms and light weapons that were still in illicit hands in the post-conflict period in Mozambique.

FIC joined together with the Christian Council of Mozambique in the TAE disarmament project, meaning 'swords into ploughshares'.

The main objective of the TAE project was to foster a culture of peace and non-violence by encouraging people to participate in weapons collection and involve them in weapons destruction activities. The project comprised six components:

- Weapons collection.
- Exchange of weapons for tools.
- Destruction of weapons.
- Civic education in the community.
- Transformation of the destroyed weapons into art pieces.
- Post-exchange follow-up with beneficiaries.

Information about where the weapons were was obtained through contacts with former combatants and leaders on both sides. Technical staff from Maputo would then travel to these areas to verify the information and subsequently collect the weapons and organise their destruction. Establishing trust with local communities and beneficiaries took time and the TAE staff had to approach people with great care on this sensitive issue. As a former TAE operations officer explains, 'The crucial part is the first interaction, first step. It must be done softly, slowly.'[8]

This provision of information was based around the idea that informants, collaborators and beneficiaries would receive tools in return for the weapons they surrendered. These tools included

---

8 *Interview with former TAE/FOMICRES operations officer, conducted April 2012.*

bicycles, sewing machines, sheets of zinc for roofing, agricultural tools and building materials. The type and number of tools received depended on the type and condition of the weapons being handed over. TAE personnel would negotiate this on a case-by-case basis with the informant, but some general criteria were followed; for example, for 1 operational weapon (or 12 non-operational arms or 520 units of ammunition), an informant could expect to receive 10 zinc sheets or 1 bicycle.[9]

Later, FOMICRES worked closely with the South African police in Operation Rachel, a cross-border weapons collection initiative. Operation Rachel provided logistics and technical support, but without FOMICRES' help would not have been able to gain the trust of communities in order to enter them to locate and collect weapons.

The impact of TAE in terms of weapons collected was relatively small, compared with ONUMOZ. In total just over 9,000 weapons and 912,000 pieces of ordnance were collected. However, the 2004 Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) commented:

> *'All things considered, for a church-run project to run a weapons collection programme for seven years and collect thousands of guns and large quantities of ammunition and explosives is no mean achievement. For them to do this with very limited government support is remarkable' (Faltas and Paes, 2004: 17).*

More significant but hard to judge was the spreading of the culture of peace, through the weapons collection process, including the provision of livelihoods materials to an estimated 77,000 people. Perhaps the biggest impact, in terms of pure weapons collection, was the contribution to the success of Operation Rachel.

The full case study draws many lessons. One particularly relevant to the theme of Local First, concerns the relationship between civil society and police/army-led initiatives. A certain distance needs to be kept in order that the civil society organisation does not appear to be 'on the side' of the government. On the other hand, FOMICRES' role in the creation of COPRECAL shows the positive value of local civil society organisations working side by side with government.

---

9 This exchange criteria was mentioned in interviews with beneficiaries in April 2012 and in the BICC Brief 29 report, where it is indicated that 1 arm = 12 non-operational arms = 520 units of ammunition (Faltas and Paes, 2004: 27).

CASE STUDY 4
Access to justice in Cambodia: IBJ

Among the many devastating impacts of the Khmer Rouge period in Cambodia was the destruction of the legal system. The current legal system has elements of Khmer, French and common-law traditions. However, it faces many obstacles in providing access to justice for all Cambodian citizens. The lack of basic infrastructure, including educational opportunities, qualified professionals, and adequate funding and resources, thwarts the functioning of the justice system (Hammarberg, 1997: 3)[10]. Although training programmes have now been put in place, legal decisions are often strongly influenced by corruption as well as political pressure (*ibid.*: 87).

The Cambodian detention and prison systems are lacking in basic infrastructure and resources, and as a result often violate detainees' and prisoners' human rights. Due to budget constraints, food rations are insufficient (*ibid.*: 4), and the sluggish justice system contributes to massive overcrowding. As the criminal justice system began to rebuild, the prison population quickly expanded.[11]

Legal Aid Cambodia (LAC) was created as a Cambodian NGO in the mid-1990s, and employed Ouk Vandeth as Head of Kandal Province. Ouk had worked in the Khmer Rouge labour camps, and then been employed in a refugee camp, where he saw many abuses of power. He decided to become a lawyer and, after training with Karen Tse, founder of International Bridges to Justice (IBJ), became one of Cambodia's first public defenders. LAC reached out to IBJ to join its efforts to provide legal assistance to the poor, and in 2007 Ouk Vandeth became the first Director of IBJ Cambodia.

IBJ's research showed a serious lack of legal assistance in provincial Cambodia, so with external funding from governments and foundations, IBJ Cambodia set up eight provincial offices, serving 17 out

---

10 Thomas Hammarberg was the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Human Rights in Cambodia from 1996 to 2000.
11 This period marks the start of rebuilding Cambodian judicial institutions, including the prison system. Growing external pressures to implement the rule of law, combined with lengthy pre-trial detention, is usually given as the explanation for the increase in the number of prisoners during this time (Hammarberg, 1997: 4).

> **INTERNATIONAL BRIDGES TO JUSTICE** was invited by Legal
> Aid Cambodia, a local NGO, to join its efforts to provide legal
> assistance to the poor. After the Khmer Rouge had destroyed the
> legal system, research showed a serious lack of legal assistance
> in provincial Cambodia. So IBJ Cambodia opened eight provincial
> offices, focusing on supporting local defenders and encouraging
> the government to improve the quality of justice services.

of Cambodia's 24 provinces. There are now 31 local staff, with each
office having a lawyer, an investigator and an administrative assistant,
together operating a Defender Resource Centre (DRC). The DRCs
provide permanent legal aid in their province, and assistance to an
adjoining province, with the objectives of:

- Providing high-quality legal aid services to those who would
  otherwise be denied access to a lawyer. Lack of access to a law-
  yer puts the defendant at risk of rights violations, unfair trials,
  excessive pre-trial detention and greater risk of torture.
- Building capacity of both local- and national-level justice
  stakeholders to interpret and implement the laws correctly.
  IBJ Cambodia has developed collaborative and trusting
  relationships with key justice-sector stakeholders throughout
  Cambodia, both local authorities and criminal defence lawyers.
- Empowering ordinary Cambodian citizens and indigenous
  communities to understand and assert their basic legal rights.

*'I have many reasons that motivate me to work for IBJ. The first is to
provide pro bono defence to the poor. Without my defence, my clients
would be given the maximum sentence, which in most cases is unfair.
If my clients are innocent, I aim to prove this and have them acquitted.
IBJ has been increasingly recognised by competent authorities through-
out Takeo and Kampot as well as by the local people. This awareness is
due to our street law training and word-of-mouth. I have direct contact
with the police who can contact me by phone at any time. Having
direct access to our clients held in police custody provides a real oppor-
tunity to prevent them from being tortured and guarantees their right
to a fair trial. This is IBJ's mission and purpose' (Mr Kin Vibol, IBJ
Cambodia lawyer for Takeo Province).*[12]

---

12 Interview conducted 24 April 2012.

Creating effective partnerships is essential for IBJ Cambodia's work. At the national level, IBJ Cambodia works with the Ministry of Justice to implement its legal aid work and conduct its education and training programmes. To solidify this partnership, the Ministry of Justice and IBJ Cambodia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in May 2012, including the following agreements:

- Continue to increase and improve access to justice.
- Improve and promote human rights.
- Strengthen the rule of law.
- Encourage early access to a lawyer.
- Commit to citizen education of law and human rights.
- Ensure consistency in the application of the law by all justice stakeholders and law enforcement officers.

The MoU promotes cooperation between the Ministry of Justice and IBJ Cambodia to create a sustainable, state-operated legal aid system in Cambodia. As such, it is an important step towards building the foundation and structure for a strong and equitable criminal justice sector that is locally conceived and appropriate to local context.

CASE STUDY 5
Creating accountability in Timor Leste: Luta Hamutuk

After a long history of violent conflict, Timor Leste celebrates its first decade of independence in 2012. Reconstructing the country's physical and social infrastructures is a priority, but building a large number of infrastructure projects that either were destroyed or did not exist in the pre-independence era comes with risks. Whether they are managed by government agencies or private contractors, such projects are prone to corruption and misappropriation of resources. Therefore improving transparency and accountability is critical.

Economically, the country sources almost 90 per cent of its income from petroleum revenues, making it one of the world's most oil-dependent economies. However, little of the wealth trickles down to the population. This is despite the fact that the government of Timor

Leste has complied with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) by promulgating the Petroleum Fund Law in 2005. Under this law, the government established the Petroleum Fund, where oil revenue is deposited in order to secure the national budget for development. In 2009 an anti-corruption commission was established (Comissão Anti-Corrupção, or CAC).

Luta Hamutuk was established in 2005 by a group of activists passionate about ensuring accountable and participatory development in their country. Luta Hamutuk believes that local people best understand the specific needs and circumstances of their communities because they live in or near these project sites. Thus their voices must be counted. Luta Hamutuk enables communities to convey their concerns to those who are responsible for infrastructure projects, and to engage with key stakeholders in order to foster greater accountability at local, district and national levels.

They hold a three-stage theory of change:
1. People are made aware and informed of their rights.
2. People take action to hold the state accountable.
3. The state is more accountable and responsive.

Luta Hamutuk plays the role of catalyst and facilitator in these three stages of the change process. In stage 1, its role is to provide information and knowledge that otherwise would not be available to local people. This ranges from information about the state budget and oil revenues to local infrastructure projects. In stage 2, to enable local people to take action, Luta Hamutuk provides them with necessary capacities and resources, such as training on data collection, report writing and advocacy. In stage 3, Luta Hamutuk engages with and pressurises the government to perform its duties, as well as to be more responsive and accountable to the citizens of Timor Leste.

The process begins with community briefings by Luta Hamutuk staff, seeking out remote areas where people may have less access to information. During the briefing, staff try to identify members of the audience who could act as volunteer focal points. Their role is to collect evidence about the delivery of specific infrastructure projects, write reports and engage with local leaders and national policy-makers. One hundred and forty-six focal points have been trained so far in all 13 provinces.

A typical community briefing agenda includes the presentation of *faktus informasaun* (factsheets) about national and local issues

LUTA HAMATOK is a Timorese NGO that trains local citizens and groups to effectively monitor government expenditure and oil revenues. Formal transparency mechanisms exist for both, and 90 per cent of government revenue comes from oil. Luta Hamatok is supported by Integrity Action in this work.

relevant to the community, prepared by Luta Hamutuk staff. Fact-sheets focus on budget allocations for infrastructure projects in their area, the national budget, and oil and gas issues. This is followed by a discussion session to address questions from local residents. Often, this part of the meeting triggers critical thinking about government plans and policies, especially as this relates to local developments and projects.

This is reflected in comments from two participants at a community briefing, held in April 2008 in the village of Maumeta Vila (Atauro Island) in the District of Dili. As villager Patricio de Jesus says:

'It is clear that Timor Leste is a state rich with natural resource but we, the people, don't feel it, since the government do not realise its programmes like they said during campaign' (Luta Hamutuk activity report, 2008).

Where the focal point has the time and skills, and the local government is responsive, a monitoring committee may also be established. These committees (there are currently three) focus on particular local projects, ranging from road rehabilitation to developing schools and healthcare facilities. And where appropriate, Luta Hamutuk may mount a media campaign to pressurise the government to act.

Because of its entirely local content, Luta Hamutuk's initiatives can be very cost-effective – one example calculated a cost of $1 for every $1,000 of project that was monitored.

From their own experience Luta Hamutuk recommend that:

- More people, especially the marginalised, should be encouraged to take part in community-driven accountability processes.
- These processes should take into account Parliament's responsibility in relation to government projects.
- Networking with donors and other civil society organisations can help these approaches to spread.
- In the long run, formal accountability mechanisms should be set up that require public participation.

CASE STUDY 6
Local procurement in Afghanistan: Building Markets

Building Markets set out in 2006 to increase the proportion of international spending in Afghanistan going to Afghan businesses, in order to build the economic capacity of Afghanistan and create employment.

An early success was in the supply of bottled water to the US Army, who were spending an estimated $58m on purchasing and shipping in bottled water. Investors had already built bottling plants in Afghanistan, providing employment and safe drinking water. The Building Markets team identified and organised visits to 12 plants, and shortly thereafter the US military became the largest purchaser of Cristal water, from Afghanistan Beverages Industries which at that time employed 350 people. This saved the US over $50m/year.

Over the six years of the project, Building Markets developed an approach that worked on the supply side and the demand side. On the supply side, local suppliers were trained to understand procurement processes and effective proposal writing, so they could successfully bid for, and win, contracts. Over six years, the team trained staff from 1,556 businesses. These suppliers won 333 contracts worth $144m, which they attributed to a greater or lesser degree to the training.

On the demand side, a Tender Distribution Service distributed tender announcements and other business opportunities to local companies, online, by email and SMS, or where necessary in hard copy. An Online Supplier Directory provided buyers with information on local suppliers, searchable by sector and location, and with supplier information verified by their staff.

Suppliers and customers were also brought together in Business Matchmaking initiatives, including events where they could meet face to face. Some of these were aimed particularly at businesses led by Afghan women.

Building Markets' theory of change is that market-driven economic growth is a critical factor in eradicating poverty. The fastest way to grow SMEs is to give them access to new markets. The easiest markets

> **BUILDING MARKETS**, a Canadian NGO, aimed to increase
> the proportion of international spending in Afghanistan going
> to Afghan businesses. They worked on both the demand side,
> to make buyers aware of Afghan businesses and enable them
> to distribute tenders, and on the supply side, helping Afghan
> businesses to meet buyers' standards. To date, $1billion
> of contracts have gone to Afghan businesses.

to access are those that are already there but hard to penetrate –
the international agencies and multinationals that operate within the
country but find it easier to pick up the phone to a supplier in Dubai
than walk down to the local market. These barriers are due to lack of
information – buyers and sellers can't find each other. Once connect-
ed, local sellers no longer need assistance.

The impact over the six years of the programme was impressive.
In total, 1,364 contracts worth US $1 billion were recorded from buy-
ers and suppliers, where Building Markets' help was a factor in secur-
ing these contracts. In Helmand, over three years, 349 contracts were
recorded, valued at over US $100 million. At their height in 2008,
these contracts represented 2 per cent of the Afghan economy.

Afghan businesses were thereby helped to create or sustain an
estimated 130,000 six-month jobs, or 65,000 full-time equivalent jobs.
These were generally skilled jobs, which gave employees an opportu-
nity to further develop their skills in business, finance and teamwork.
The cost per full-time equivalent job was estimated to be £180
(UK government programme) or US $226 (whole programme).

Building Markets came into Afghanistan as an outside organisa-
tion. They built capacity in the country and, at the end of the project,
handed some aspects of the programme over to the Afghan govern-
ment. However, there are clear challenges to the sustainability of the
programme without Building Markets' continuing involvement:

- When the programme ended in Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad and
  Kandahar in 2010, and there was no longer a field presence,
  there was a noticeable drop in matchmaking requests received
  from regional centres.
- An attempt to persuade suppliers to pay for services, which had
  appeared promising in market research, met with resistance
  when Building Markets attempted to implement it.

Some of the businesses also found it hard to sustain their levels of turnover as the programme came to an end. A company supplying boots to the US Army, which had flourished since 2007 as a result of help from Building Markets, found itself undercut by Chinese and Pakistani suppliers in 2012, as the Afghan government took over responsibility for its own purchasing. Seven hundred jobs were at risk.

Hence, the recommendations from Building Markets are aimed not just at international organisations, but also at the Afghan government and Afghan businesses:

- The government needs to have an assertive policy on local procurement and champion Afghan-first approaches to humanitarian, development and reconstruction initiatives.
- The private sector needs to invest in skills development and modernisation, and be prepared to pay for business development and professional services.
- The international community needs to put in the work to procure effectively from local companies, adapt its procurement policies to meet their needs, and measure economic impact and job-creation effects as part of regular programme implementation.

SECTION 3
PUTTING LOCAL FIRST INTO PRACTICE

The proposals in this paper present a paradox. They could be viewed as a small shift in the role of international intermediaries *vis-a-vis* local entities: many donors and INGOs genuinely believe that their approach is already Local First. But in fact they require a fundamental transfer of leadership from outsiders to insiders.

Here are some suggestions for small changes that could, over time, nudge practice in the direction of Local First.

Suggestions for donors

Suggestion 1: Enlarge the definition and role of capacity assessment, and ensure that the assessment includes the motivation and social accountability of organisations.

From a Local First perspective, current approaches to capacity assessment have three limitations:

- *We assess need but not capacity.*
  If a needs assessment is conducted without a parallel capacity assessment that looks at which institutions at local, state and national level are currently meeting the identified needs, or could do so with additional resources, then almost inevitably external delivery solutions will be sought.
- *We don't have good ways to find capacity in non-traditional places.*
  In any sector, it is easy to identify the central government agencies that have responsibility for delivering services. Strengthening their capacity, if done effectively, is clearly a very high priority. But the capacity to deliver may also be found in far-flung places, beyond the capital city, through particularly effective state and local government institutions, through civil society networks[13] or organisations, or in the private sector. Justice is a prime example where in many low-income countries, particularly post-conflict and fragile states, a vanishingly small proportion of justice is provided by the formal state sector.[14]
- *We assess capacity against predefined criteria, rather than investigating what organisations are already able to do.*
  The capacity that Local First prioritises is the capacity for innovation and entrepreneurship – for seeing opportunities and devising effective ways to exploit them, for taking existing

---

13 *For descriptions of civil society networks in many environmental fields operating at a large scale, see: Bigg and Satterthwaite, 2005.*
14 *In Sierra Leone, only 15 per cent of justice is delivered by the central justice sector, with approximately 85 per cent of the population falling under the jurisdiction of customary law, defined by the constitution as 'the rules of law, which, by custom, are applicable to particular communities in Sierra Leone' (Chirayath, Sage and Woolcock, 2005: 3). Likewise in Malawi, between 80 and 90 per cent of all disputes are processed through traditional justice forums (Scharf, no date). In Bangladesh, an estimated 60 to 70 percent of all disputes are processed through customary law. (See also: Programming for Justice, 2005.)*

local practices and adapting and improving them and, above all, for listening to the demands and needs of the population and seeking to meet them. These are the characteristics of a genuine voluntary organisation.

Suggestion 2: Make a commitment to using external organisations as a last resort, not a first resort, and as supportive partners to local organisations, not as contractors.

There is considerable inertia in the system and an understandable desire on the part of organisations charged with using public money wisely to continue with tried and tested methods. Hence even with the determination of the Head of USAID to increase the proportion of its resources going directly to local organisations and governments to 30 per cent, the proportion going to US commercial contractors actually went up in 2011.[15]

Donors will need to find new ways of supporting locally led networks and consortia, in order to enable large-scale projects to be locally delivered.

Suggestion 3: Identify a few sectors within which to experiment with a Local First approach and aim over time to target an increasing percentage of funding within those sectors to locally led or locally owned programmes.

Measurable targets are important in forcing change, so it is not surprising that these are increasingly being mentioned as a way of shifting the emphasis towards a Local First approach. As well as the USAID target mentioned above, the UK International Development Committee recently recommended that 10 per cent of UK aid to DRC should go to local organisations (International Development Select Committee, 2012).

Targets could also be applied equally to the procurement of goods and services from the commercial sector, and to the use of NGOs to provide services in sensitive areas such as justice, security and accountability – sectors where a stronger civil society presence is also likely to improve government performance, as the case studies indicate.

---

15 *Source: www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/07/18/hired_gun_fight.*

Suggestion 4: Commit to long-term evaluations of impact, sustainability and value for money from locally led versus internationally led projects.

It's hard to compare value for money and impact in projects where local and international efforts are closely intertwined. Nevertheless, if Local First is an idea worth testing, then evaluations need to be able to discern to what extent programmes are genuinely locally led.

Success or failure needs to be viewed over at least a five-year timeframe. Assessments should capture impact that goes beyond what was specified at the outset (for example in the log frame), in order to gauge the added value of having locals working as principals not just as agents. And the sustainability of the work needs to be assessed, after the programme ends, and checked several years later.

Suggestion 5: Enable structures that allow local organisations to scale up their impact.

Commitment to Local First will recognise that consistent funding is needed if local organisations are to be able to run programmes at the same scale as multilaterals and INGOs. Local organisations, as they scale up, will need funding and possibly support with core functions such as finance, governance and measurement of impact. This support may be to organisations, networks or – like the organisations that feature in these case studies – to organisations with extensive networks of paid and volunteer staff in different parts of a country.

Suggestion 6: Ensure that all evaluations include an assessment of the impact of the project on the growth or decline in local capacity.

In the UK government's recent, extremely thorough, review of multi-lateral organisations, the organisations were judged against 41 criteria. None of the criteria referred to the organisation's success in transfer-ring responsibility to local organisations. This could be construed as an assumption that the need for multilaterals' presence will never end. If the ultimate goal of aid is for countries to graduate from receiving it in order to be self-reliant, then every programme should have explicit goals about the extent to which, at the end of the programme, local organisations (whether public sector, private sector or non-profit) have taken over aspects of delivery.

Suggestions for INGOs

Suggestion 7: Evaluate in what ways organisational practice is locally led or locally owned, and how this can be demonstrated.

INGOs working in different fields will have different starting points. Locally led may be much easier in development, where timescales are relatively long, than in humanitarian work, where a rapid initial response is needed. Locally led may be essential in fields where trust is paramount, such as peacebuilding, and perceived as less important in more technical fields.

Nevertheless, anyone working in development must surely see their ultimate goal as to have empowered people to do their own development and become self-reliant. Therefore, all development organisations should consider how their ways of working reflect Local First values, and how they would demonstrate this. The Local First community of practice (www.localfirst.org.uk) is being developed to support new ways of working.

Suggestion 8: Set a goal to increase the Local First orientation of their work, and define how this increase can be demonstrated.

A second step is to look for areas of improvement and set some goals. For example, this could be a goal to directly channel a greater percentage of funds to local organisations, rather than through the organisation's local staff, or to ensure that all evaluations measure the extent to which responsibility and capacity have been transferred to the local partner. Again, these goals will need clear measurement targets.

Suggestion 9: Make a practice of seeking out local suppliers of goods and services, including audit, market research and evaluation.

A concerted move by INGOs to use services such as audit, market research and evaluation from local suppliers would help to create employment locally, and have other benefits – for example, local evaluation staff can travel to areas out of bounds to international staff.

Suggestions for local NGOs

Suggestion 10: Seek funding and support on the organisation's own terms insofar as possible and resist being cast as delivery agents.

Local organisations face difficult choices when they are asked by funders to deliver programmes that they believe to be sub-optimal, or even likely to fail. Taking on the contract ensures the organisation survives and may enable it to keep its own programmes going, but risks tarnishing the organisation's reputation. Local organisations should at the least remain very clear about why they are undertaking a piece of work, and maintain their ability to set their own priorities.

Suggestion 11: Maintain the involvement of the wider community as volunteers and ensure that the organisation has a survival strategy in the absence of external funding.

Local organisations that want to scale up their impact need to safeguard their ability to continue operating in the absence of funding from international sources. Funders can be fickle, more often facing constraints of their own that work against long-term funding relationships, while host governments may impose restrictions on funding from abroad. Hence local organisations need to cultivate local sources of funding and have a strategy to safeguard the capacity they have put in place, where possible through generating local funds.

Suggestion 12: Remunerate paid staff in keeping with local wage rates.

Local organisations that look to the long term need to safeguard their ability to mobilise volunteer effort and to have a wage structure that is sustainable. Both require salaries to retain a relationship with local wages. The authors of these case studies have seen their partners on a number of occasions go without any salary in order to preserve the organisation. This is not desirable, but is a strong indication of their motivation.

Suggestion 13: Seek to connect community-based activity with local and national government, as well as with the work of INGOs and multilaterals, in order to coordinate with and influence them

Local organisations need to play their part in achieving a degree of coordination between their work and the initiatives of multilaterals, and local and national governments. They have valuable insights to contribute, and their work will be easier and more effective if these insights inform the work of other players. This is a long-term endeavour, but important both in its own right, and because it will be an important touchstone for donors seeking a joined-up approach.

A Local First community of practice is being developed to support new ways of working that reflect the values of Local First. See www.localfirst.org.uk.

References

Bano, Masooda. *Breakdown in Pakistan: How Aid is Eroding Institutions for Collective Action. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.*

Bigg, Tom and Satterthwaite, David (eds). *How to Make Poverty History: the Central Role of Local Organisations in Meeting the MDGs. London: International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), 2005.*

Chirayath, Leila, Sage, Caroline and Woolcock, Michael. *Customary Law and Policy Reform: Engaging with the Plurality of Justice Systems. Washington: World Bank, 2005.*

Faltas, Sami and Wolf-Christian Paes. *Exchanging Guns for Tools. The TAE Approach to Practical Disarmament – an Assessment of the TAE Project in Mozambique. BICC Brief 29. Bonn: Bonn International Center for Conversion, 2004.*

Gillhespy, Tom and Carolyn Hayman. *Coming Home: A Case Study of Community-Led Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration in D R Congo. London: Peace Direct, 2011.*

Hammarberg, Thomas. *'Situation of Human Rights in Cambodia', Report to the 53rd Session of the Commission on Human Rights, Geneva, 2 April 1997.*

International Development Select Committee. *Working Effectively in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States: DRC and Rwanda. London: UK Government, 2012.*

Programming for Justice: Access for All. *A Practitioner's Guide to a Human Rights-Based Approach to Access to Justice. Bangkok: UNDP, 2005.*

Rouw, Hans and Rens C. Willems. *Connecting Community Security and DDR: Experiences from Eastern DRC. The Hague: Peace Security and Development Network, 2010.*

Scharf, Wilfried. *Non-State Justice Systems in Southern Africa: How Should Governments Respond? Cape Town: University of Cape Town, no date.*

US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. *Evaluating US Foreign Assistance to Afghanistan. Washington: US Senate, 2011.*

LOCAL FIRST ORGANISATIONS

Local First is supported by the organisations below, all of which assisted in the creation of these case studies.

A Local First community of practice is being developed to support new ways of working that reflect the values of Local First. See www.localfirst.org.uk.

We would be delighted to hear from other organisations and individuals interested in helping Local First or in knowing more about it.

- Building Markets (formerly the Peace Dividend Trust), www.buildingmarkets.org.

- CEDAC (Centre d'Encadrement et de Développement des Anciens Combattants), www.cedac.webs.com.

- Centre Résolution Conflits (CRC), www.peacedirect.org.

- FOMICRES (Força Moçambicana para Investigação de Crimes e Reinserção Social), www.fomicres.org.

- Integrity Action (formerly Tiri), www.integrityaction.org.

- International Bridges to Justice (IBJ), www.ibj.org.

- Luta Hamutuk, www.lutahamutuk.org.

- Peace Direct, www.peacedirect.org.

- Swisspeace, www.swisspeace.ch.

The full text of these case studies is published as *Local First: Development for the Twenty-first Century*, and can be found on Amazon or at www.localfirst.org.uk.

'Local First is a development approach
that looks first for the capacity within countries
before bringing in external expertise and resources,
recognises that much of this capacity is found
outside central government, and understands that
local people need to lead their own development.

It's hard to imagine a simpler or more
commonsense idea. 🔲

– Carolyn Hayman, OBE
  Peace Direct