

Reflecting on Peace Practice Program
Understanding Cumulative Impacts of Peacebuilding

Issue Paper:

**ADDRESSING OR NEGLECTING
“PERSISTENT ISSUES”:
Threats of renewed violence or
a long-term development agenda?**

We are seeking your feedback & reflections!

This Issue Paper is a working DRAFT.

*As part of our collaborative process,
CDA’s Reflecting on Peace Practice Program
welcomes your feedback,
based on your own experience and insights.*

*Please e-mail your thoughts or questions regarding this Issue Paper
by or before October 1, 2012
to Chloe Berwind-Dart at cberwind@cdainc.com.*

*Thank you in advance
for your observations and suggestions.*

This document was developed as part of a collaborative learning project directed by CDA. It is part of a collection of documents that should be considered initial and partial findings of the project. These documents are written to allow for the identification of cross-cutting issues and themes across a range of situations. Each Issue Paper represents the views and perspectives of a variety of people at the time when it was written.

These documents do not represent a final product of the project. While these documents may be cited, they remain working documents of a collaborative learning effort. Broad generalizations about the project's findings cannot be made from a single case or Issue Paper.

CDA would like to acknowledge the generosity of the individuals and agencies involved in donating their time, experience and insights for these reports, and for their willingness to share their experiences.

For background information on the collaborative learning process and cumulative impacts, please refer to the *Understanding Cumulative Impacts of Peacebuilding* document on the CDA website by directing your browser to the following pathway:

http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/other/rpp_understandingcumulativeimpactsofpeaceefforts_background_Pdf.pdf

Issue Paper:

**ADDRESSING OR NEGLECTING “PERSISTENT ISSUES”:
Threats or renewed violence or a long-term development agenda?**

Within the broader discussion about what enables “adding up” in conflict zones, one specific question concerns *what has added up*—and *what has not added up*. Another way of asking this is: Of the key drivers of the conflict (the original causes of war/violence), which ones have been addressed or are in the process of being addressed, and which have not? In the course of the war, did new issues arise—and have those been dealt with? And, of the outstanding issues or problems, which ones constitute a significant threat to ongoing progress towards durable peace? Can some issues be safely ignored?

Of the fifteen case studies completed under this collaborative learning process, four (Cyprus, Israel/Palestine, Sri Lanka, and Kosovo in 2004) involved situations in which there had been progress followed by reversals, setbacks or failure of peace efforts. Although included in our analysis, Haiti is a special case, since there was no real civil war there, but chronic violence and periodic instances of large-scale killings. In the remaining eleven instances, a peace agreement of some sort was signed among the contending parties or a peacekeeping operation deployed, and violence significantly abated. This paper will examine the preliminary conclusions emerging from those twelve cases (including Haiti) below, each of them a “post-conflict” or, more accurately, a post-war or post-violence setting.¹

WHY ARE WE CONCERNED ABOUT PERSISTENT ISSUES?

From a peacebuilding perspective, we are concerned about a range of “persistent issues” because they represent challenges to the process of consolidating peace—that is, to ensuring that the peace becomes durable and “irreversible.” Based on the case material and on the RPP consultations held so far, a number of questions have been posed?

1. Which issues are being addressed at all or adequately in the post-war situation?
2. Which issues represent a significant threat of a relapse into violence? What are the potential consequences of neglect or inattention to these issues?
3. What is the relationship of any of the identified issues with key drivers of conflict?
4. Are some issues significant because they are associated with particular actors or constituencies?
5. Which issues were addressed in any formal peace agreements? Which issues were left out—and why? Were those that *were* addressed treated adequately—and were the provisions of agreements actually implemented—and with what results?
6. Who defines what issues are important? Local actors only? The international community?

¹ The international community uses the term “post-conflict” to describe countries that have achieved a cessation of active warfare and, in many instances, signed a peace agreement. As we shall see, in almost all cases the “conflict” continues in important ways.

7. Are issues associated with the *past* and transitional justice (human rights abuses, war crimes, atrocities, truth and reconciliation, etc.) of more or less concern than *current* issues related to equity, access, participation, income inequalities, ongoing security concerns, etc.? What about *new emerging threats* that had nothing to do with the earlier causes of war/violence (such as crime, terrorism...)?
8. How can we establish urgent priorities or a sequencing of issues to guide policy makers, funders and implementing agencies?
9. Which issues should become part of a longer-term political, economic and social development agenda—and how can the development agenda be oriented towards addressing such key issues in a preventive mode?

Unfortunately, while the process so far has highlighted these questions, it has not answered them! This, then, becomes an important focus of the feedback workshop process.

THE NATURE OF PERSISTENT ISSUES

In reviewing the case studies, we found twenty types of conflict issues that were identified in more than one case.² There are few surprises among those identified, as these are issues one would naturally expect in a post-war setting, and many will take years to resolve.

Table 1 lists the issues that were found, categorized in several major domains: political, social fabric, security, justice and economic. Seven of the issues concern various aspects of political struggle, four relate to social fabric, three involve justice and two are in the economic sphere. The chart also identifies the number of cases where each issue was raised.³ One issue, “institutional dysfunction,” was identified explicitly in only five cases. However, general knowledge of these conflict zones would suggest that this is probably a more widespread concern, even if it was not mentioned in those specific terms.

Among the top five categories of persistent issues are inequitable economic development, distribution of benefits, and resource management (12 instances); governance, democracy and rule of law (11); structural inequalities and power struggles (11); and the need for improved inter-group relations (10). Dealing with the past/reconciliation was identified in nine cases. Six other issues were found in eight of the cases.

All of these are familiar themes in post-war peacebuilding. In many ways, RPP’s findings confirm the post-conflict peacebuilding agenda that international agencies have supported since the 1990s. However, the nature of the issues within each category and the persistence of issues long after the initial post-conflict agenda is implemented suggest that reconsideration of strategies and approaches may be necessary. Some cases show a greater number and density of issues (see Table 2 at the end of this paper, showing which issues were found in which cases). Liberia, for example, shows eighteen out of the twenty issues, and Burundi seventeen. In Northern Ireland our sources identify eleven and in South Africa only seven. Tajikistan exhibits

² The cases studies on Northern Ireland and South Africa did not include much information on remaining issues as such, as these were among the first cases completed, and this specific topic was not included in the original terms of reference for case researchers and writers. Therefore, we have asked people familiar with the situation in those two situations (including the case authors) to identify what they see as the important continuing issues.

³ This is not a calculation of the number of interviewees that raised the issue in each case. The qualitative interview information does not permit such quantitative analysis.

sixteen issues, Haiti thirteen, and Aceh ten. While we would not claim this to be yet another index of fragility, the “density” of issues in a single conflict zone may represent an indicator of vulnerability to renewed violence over time. In situations such as Tajikistan, Burundi or Liberia, where international attention and assistance has been declining as time has elapsed since the peace agreement and violence has remained minimal, this may suggest both an urgency and an agenda for conflict prevention. On the other hand, it would be important to delve further into each situation to judge the seriousness of the concern or issue, in order to determine with any confidence which issues constitute real threats of future violence. In addition, the nature of the specific issues within each familiar category may suggest that a shift of emphasis in longer-term post-agreement peacebuilding agendas is needed.

		# Cases
POLITICAL DOMAIN		
1.	Governance, democracy, rule of law	11
2.	Structural inequalities, power struggles, political culture	11
3.	Exclusionary policies/practices	8
4.	Corruption/impunity	8
5.	Indigenous/minority rights/identity/land/traditions	8
6.	Peace agreements/laws vs. implementation	5
7.	Inclusion/exclusion of groups from peace processes, spoilers	2
8.	Institutional dysfunction	6?
SOCIAL FABRIC DOMAIN		
9.	Need for improved inter-group relations	10
10.	Sense of national identity, unity, vision	5
11.	Dealing with the past, reconciliation	9
12.	Need for deeper dialogue (local or national)	8
SECURITY DOMAIN		
13.	Incomplete/unfair DDR, SSR, small arms	8
14.	Stability prioritized over peace/justice	4
15.	Dependence on external forces/roles	4
JUSTICE DOMAIN		
16.	Human rights abuses	4
17.	Transitional justice/impunity	6
18.	Judicial reform/strengthening	6
ECONOMIC DOMAIN		
19.	Equitable development, distribution of benefits, resource management	12
20.	Specific disputes over land, returns...	8

Table 1: Persistent Issues: Categories and Occurrence in Cases

Issues in the Political Domain: governance, democracy and power

Concern regarding governance was extremely widespread, encountered in eleven of the twelve cases. Again, this is not surprising, as improvements in government effectiveness, delivery of services, and responsiveness to the needs and concerns of citizens remains a key challenge in most of the developing world. In almost all cases, the concern regarding

governance and democracy occurred in connection with the issue of structural inequalities and power struggles. If we look at the specific issues beyond the broad title, the concerns regarding governance and power involve deeply held values and practices embedded in the political culture of these societies. Thus, in Mindanao, interviewees noted the need for changes in the autocratic—even feudal—systems of local dynasties that dominate politics, often in collaboration with central government powers in Manila. Similar language is used in Mozambique to describe a zero-sum mindset in which political parties vie for total control over the state, in order to perpetuate the entrenched patron-client system. The underlying patron-client (or “Big Man”) model of governance is also seen as problematic in Liberia. Increasingly successful efforts at one-party capture of the state are found in Mozambique, Cambodia and Tajikistan.

Centralization of the state is seen as problematic in Tajikistan, Liberia, Mindanao and Haiti. In Tajikistan control of the state by a powerful clan from one region and lack of devolution of administrative power to other areas are elements of ongoing conflict and connected with disparities in access to economic resources. In contrast to most of the other cases, the divide in Haiti is largely along class lines, describing tensions between privileged urban elites, who have traditionally controlled government, and the broad mass of the population who remain desperately poor. The election of Aristide as a champion of the disenfranchised majority resulted twice in his ouster by a fearful elite class. In some cases, the problems of governance are traced back to the colonial legacy and inadequate preparation for administration of a modern state, as in Burundi, Mozambique and the Solomons, or rapid dissolution of a previous regime, as in Tajikistan.

In South Africa and Northern Ireland the governance issues were somewhat different, and there is a sense that the peace process is irreversible in those countries. In contrast to the other cases, new regimes in those settings inherited functioning and relatively efficient state structures, where the question was only which groups would control them. Interestingly, the twenty issues were less prevalent in South Africa. And, while some issues were present in Northern Ireland, they were seen to have been acknowledged and in the process of being addressed (and thus of less immediate concern). These societies are certainly not free from problems associated with conflict, but they are not plagued with the number and depth of issues faced by people and their leaders in the other cases. Nevertheless, in Northern Ireland, there is some perception that parties gain from emphasizing sectarian identities and claiming that the peace agreements constitute “sellouts” of their constituencies, particularly in difficult economic times.⁴

In the political realm, serious concerns arise when the issues of democratic governance and political culture—long term development issues—are coupled with claims of corruption, exclusionary policies and practices (based on religion, ethnicity, class, or geography/region), indigenous or minority rights, and failures to implement peace agreements. These trends in post-war settings are particularly disturbing when these factors constitute in whole or in part the original reasons for the war and violence. In other words, the causes of the conflict persist, despite years, sometimes decades, of fighting and concerted efforts to establish peace, often supported by enormous amounts of international assistance.

⁴ Correspondence with the case authors.

Burundi is an apt illustration. The ruling party did not participate in the peace process and feels no commitment to implementing the Arusha Accords (issue #7 in Table 1). They have been systematically undermining their political opponents and committing what many see as human rights abuses, despite considerable international pressure (issues #3 and #16). In fact, they are perceived as treating their election victory as equivalent to a military triumph and license to exclude others and engage in widespread corrupt practices (issue #4). While these are not unusual problems, given Burundi's history, the fact that they are not openly acknowledged as problems leaves little political space for raising these issues, much less addressing them. Thus the fragile peace in Burundi appears threatened by the persistence of issues from a long legacy of violence.

Issues in the Social Fabric Domain

The social fabric domain involves inter-group relations, perceptions and attitudes, social norms, and the degree to which people embrace a national identity, feel a sense of unity and support a common vision of the future. In ten of the twelve cases, inter-group relations were identified as problematic and in need of additional efforts. This issue was often coupled with calls for more effective efforts to deal with the past and to promote reconciliation—or for more general dialogue as a means for improving communication, creating mutual understanding and developing a better *modus vivendi*.

In most cases, the presence of important concerns in the social fabric domain was not usually sufficient in itself to undermine the peacebuilding process. However, coupled with the absence of (or need for) deeper dialogue and/or the presence of persistent issues in the political or economic domain, these issues become more serious. There appears to be an expectation that issues related to inter-group relations, national identity and dealing with the past are long-term issues not solved in months or a few years. In this regard, it is instructive to point out—briefly—the massive efforts to break down hostilities and build a sense of unity in Europe in the wake of two World Wars, with particular attention to the relationships between people in France and Germany. A wide array of efforts, including student exchanges, paired cities, and artist exchanges were organized for thirty or forty years after 1945, to the point that young people in those two countries now have difficulty understanding the depths of animosity experienced by their parents and grandparents. Contending groups cannot be expected to reverse years of hostility and even mutual massacres after a few short years or a few joint workshops. However, clear commitments and visible efforts to improve relations will provide a sense of progress in this domain sufficient to prevent issues in this area from undermining momentum towards peace.

In some cases, the need for dialogue was in relation to quite specific groups. For example, in Mozambique there was a need for discussions between elected leaders and key representatives of ex-combatant groups, to resolve a series of aggravating issues that threaten the peace (connected to issue #13 regarding incomplete/unfair DDR processes). In other areas, the necessity for dialogue had a broader sense. In Haiti, dialogue across social classes is totally missing, so that fundamentals of the conflict remain unaddressed. In Burundi, exchanges between the government and opposition political parties are needed, while in Tajikistan dialogue is needed to address elements of the peace agreement, such as amnesty, that have not been implemented, and a broad set of issues remain unaddressed, since the National Dialogue Project has fallen apart without ongoing support from the international community.

In the Solomon Islands and Tajikistan the very nature of the nation or national identity was in question, as well as issues regarding a shared vision of the future, which was also an issue in Liberia and Haiti. In some cases, interviewees felt that dialogue among key groups was needed; in others they felt that stronger leadership could offer a more compelling vision to promote unity and further progress towards sustainable peace.

Issues in the Security Domain

The most salient issue in the security domain involved incomplete or unfair DDR processes—often coupled with issues regarding security sector reform (integration of armed forces, professionalization of the police, depoliticization of the military, etc.). In eight of the eleven cases, there were serious concerns with poor treatment of ex-combatants, persistent unemployment, and unfair distribution of payments. In Aceh, former rebel soldiers were not receiving payments in an even-handed manner, and some forces loyal to the government were not acknowledged in the peace accord, but received payments nonetheless, fueling tensions among the population. The persistence of the Armed Men of Renamo in Mozambique represented a clear threat to security, while former combatants were blocked from obtaining amnesty in Tajikistan. While ex-combatant issues do not represent long-term structural problems, they do constitute short- and intermediate-term threats, as, in many cases, former soldiers retain access to small arms and loyalty to their former commanders, which is a persistent threat in Liberia, for instance.

In several places, local populations felt dependent on the presence of international peacekeeping forces and feared that the security situation would deteriorate if those forces withdrew. In Haiti, interviewees appreciated the small gains in security provided by UN troops, but indicated that chaos would return if those forces withdrew. In the Solomon Islands, there were ambivalent feelings about the role of the regional peacekeeping force, RAMSI, but people also felt that their departure would bring a resurgence of violence. Similar sentiments were expressed in Liberia, where the army and police have been completely rebuilt from nothing, but their ability to keep the peace is still in question.

Issues in the Economic Domain

Most of the issues raised in the economic realm concerned horizontal inequalities, not the absolute levels of poverty. Interviewees pointed to questions about how economic benefits and international aid are distributed. Others identified issues regarding who has access to resources and how disputes are resolved, particularly those over land. Again, while it appears that people are generally concerned about the persistence of poverty, at the same time, they primarily want assurance that progress is being made and that the system is addressing issues of equity. Here there is a clear connection to government policies, decision making and repeated claims of exclusion, as well as perceptions of corruption and diversion of regular government revenues and development funds.

At times, economic issues lie at the heart of the conflict, such as in the Solomon Islands, where years of favoritism towards people from Malaita (in terms of government and security sector jobs), as well as transmigration policies, have caused the people of Guadalcanal to build a sense of grievance that led eventually to violence. Certainly economic issues drive much of the conflict dynamics in Haiti, as already noted. In Aceh, local people have long resented the flow

of oil and natural gas revenues derived from Acehese resources into central government coffers, while they have seen relatively few benefits.

The case evidence seems to suggest that economic issues are not of significant concern by themselves. Rather, only when issues of poverty are coupled with problems in political decision making and structural inequalities, do they become a threat to the peace. In fact, as we examine the cases further, we will need to resolve contradictory evidence. For instance, in two of the cases, Sri Lanka and Cyprus, considerable economic progress was made—by some groups—even in the midst of conflict. Here again, the answer may lie in the differential gains and the perceptions of government policies, rather than absolute levels of poverty. The cases also suggest that economic factors may serve as a motivator, given expectations of a peace dividend or economic prosperity (or fear of something worse). But economic progress does not seem to be correlated with progress in the peace process. That is, it does not appear to contribute to adding up. This may be because many of the economic programs, such as youth employment, DDR, or ex-combatant training, are not sufficiently comprehensive or linked with other efforts, or do not attain the scale needed to produce real transformation. At the same time, economic factors were cited as a persistent problem in all twelve cases, suggesting that unrealized expectations in this domain in a post-agreement period, especially if mobilized politically, could become quite destabilizing.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PERSISTENT ISSUES

In most of the case studies, the persistent issues represent key conflict factors that were not being addressed—or were being addressed inadequately. However, such issues have not caused fragility in the peace process in all cases. RPP’s preliminary findings suggest that the number, severity and diversity, or combination, of issues prevent “adding up” to more sustainable peace. The prevalence and persistence of deep issues of political culture and governance suggest that the transformational impact of peacebuilding interventions has been limited with regard to the issues that matter the most for sustainable peace. The considerable money, technical assistance and programming committed has not substantially touched the most important issues of political culture and concentration of power. This problem, coupled with effects of exclusion and unfair distribution of resources, appears to form the primary concern of peace proponents in the majority of case studies in the RPP process. The lack of progress also suggests that the peacebuilding community may need to rethink its strategies, focus and scale of efforts to address these core issues.

Perhaps more important is the failure to acknowledge key issues or denial of their importance. In a few cases, progress, accompanied by an open recognition or identification of persistent problems and a process for addressing them, has supported further momentum. Where, for example, the new government or regime has not been connected with the old system and has a clear commitment to pursue change, such as South Africa, Northern Ireland, Solomon Islands and Liberia, peace processes at all levels have continued to “add up,” despite the incomplete nature of the peace process. The post-apartheid government in South Africa is intent on dismantling all of the institutions, policies and practices that entrenched white privilege there. While there are complaints regarding the slowness of economic progress for large numbers of people, there is no doubt that changes have occurred, from the constitution to specific policies to the reallocation of government resources. Similarly, in Northern Ireland, people describe the peace process as “irreversible,” even though concerns linger over groups that remain ready to

undertake violence to pursue their goals. In the Solomon Islands, the significant problems were openly acknowledged and concerted local and international efforts were underway. There, the international community's efforts were concentrated on national level government institutions in a significant state building enterprise, while local community and church organizations (often with international support) were working from the ground up on issues of reconciliation and dialogue. Although there were critiques about the disconnect between these two types of efforts and the slow pace of progress, nevertheless, there was appreciation for the fact that the fundamental issues were recognized and addressed.

Liberia is a more mixed picture. The elected government has been quite willing to acknowledge the problematic nature of the regimes from the 1980s onward, as presented clearly in government documents, including the Poverty Reduction Strategy. At the same time, they have been reluctant to deal with long-term issues of power and privilege associated with the dominance of Americo-Liberians over all other local tribes since the 19th century establishment of the nation. The persistent marginalization of rural areas over Monrovia and the relative neglect of other tribes remain points of contention. To quote the case study:

Many interviewees, apart from those subjective assessments of the current situation in Liberia, stressed that they found the conditions in post-war Liberia to resemble pre-war Liberia and that the root causes of the war had not been properly addressed. One observer noted that the fact that many people were “disgruntled and marginalized” had not changed. Widespread poverty, underdevelopment, exclusion of parts of the country and the marginalization of parts of the population were all cited as root causes of the conflict that have largely remained unchanged. According to those interviewed, most development remains focused on Monrovia at the expense of the countryside, and “resources are not being distributed as they should be.” The government is seen to take action mainly for its own benefit or for the benefit of the rich. One informant summed it up as follows: “Those who were wealthy sent their kids abroad and they are coming back now and get all the good jobs. Corruption and lack of opportunities [continue], just like in the history of our country.”⁵

These four cases (South Africa, Northern Ireland, Solomon Islands and Liberia) are the exceptions; the other eight cases exhibit persistent, sometimes deliberate blindness to the existence or the severity of the persistent issues. As a result, they exhibit a greater sense of vulnerability to a return to violence and a more negative perception of the accomplishments of the peace process. As suggested above, some of the issues represent “normal” concerns for institutional, social and economic development, but it is the *combination, density and severity* of issues that represent the threat to sustained peace, especially when attention to these factors is suppressed.

The persistence of these issues, in some cases more than ten years after a peace agreement, suggests that a renewed agenda for peacebuilding is needed. Thus Tajikistan is confronted by discontent from the sub-regions of the country that are systematically excluded from power, decision making and access to resources; persistent claims of corruption and favoritism; a series of unresolved issues in the formal peace agreements and current policy debates; as well as claims of discriminatory practices in relation to ex-combatants and

⁵ Kurz, Christof, “Peacebuilding in Liberia,” Reflecting on Peace Practice Project, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2010, p.41.

government positions. While the population seems content, for the moment, to trade assurance of security for progress in more open governance, it is unclear how long this will last.

The Haiti case study makes a strong argument that the fundamental issues that drive conflict in the country are neither acknowledged nor addressed. In fact, the ruling elites appear to operate out of deep fear of the general population; they concentrate on maintaining control over the security situation, at least to contain localized violence in poor neighborhoods. Repeated attempts to achieve change nonviolently through the ballot box have failed, as the power elites have rejected the results and ousted the champions of change. The question in Haiti is whether the current stalemate, overseen by UN peacekeepers, can last—and whether the strategy of ignoring the more fundamental problems can succeed in the long run, or whether violence will continue to erupt periodically.

CONCLUSION: DO PEACE EFFORTS ADD UP?

The original reason for commissioning these “cumulative” case studies was to address several questions: How do various peace efforts “add up” to sustained peace for a whole society? Are the efforts undertaken in these post-violence settings sufficient to prevent a relapse into violence over time? This paper has examined one dimension of the issue: the nature of persistent issues and remaining threats to renewed violence in the aftermath of an agreement.

There is no debate about the fact that the effects of war and violence persist long after a ceasefire, a peace accord, a new constitution and a first peaceful election take place. It would appear that the international community generally feels that its job is done once those basic steps have been taken—and that the longer term work of addressing the lingering problems should be incorporated into “normal” development processes. However, the evidence suggests that national governments and their international partners (donor governments, UN agencies, even international NGOs) a) seldom acknowledge the very existence of the issues identified in these settings—even when those issues are significant and unmistakable; and b) even when they do recognize the issues, they fail to devote adequate resources to address them at a realistic scale and depth.

For instance, mechanisms like the UN Peacebuilding Commission and Fund allocate relatively small amounts of money to “post-conflict” peacebuilding, in relation to the scale of the problem and the resources made available for other kinds of assistance. Also, so far, the process for identifying the priority needs of the countries receiving PBF funds has failed in most cases to focus on the real drivers of conflict. Instead, funds have been allocated to the priority projects of implementing UN agencies, or to the priorities of the governments in power, which are seldom committed to addressing the real conflict issues. The Peacebuilding Commission is only an example; other donors have also taken a superficial approach to the issue of consolidating peace in post-war settings.

The RPP case studies were not focused exclusively on the question of such persistent issues. Thus none of the cases should be considered definitive analyses of the salient issues that demand attention. Nevertheless, interviewees in every situation were quite forthcoming about the changes they saw as needed to consolidate peace. This experience suggests that it is not difficult to identify key priorities in terms of the outstanding issues. Once such issues are identified, the subsequent challenge is devising effective strategies for addressing them and mobilizing the will and resources to implement programs of change over the long haul.