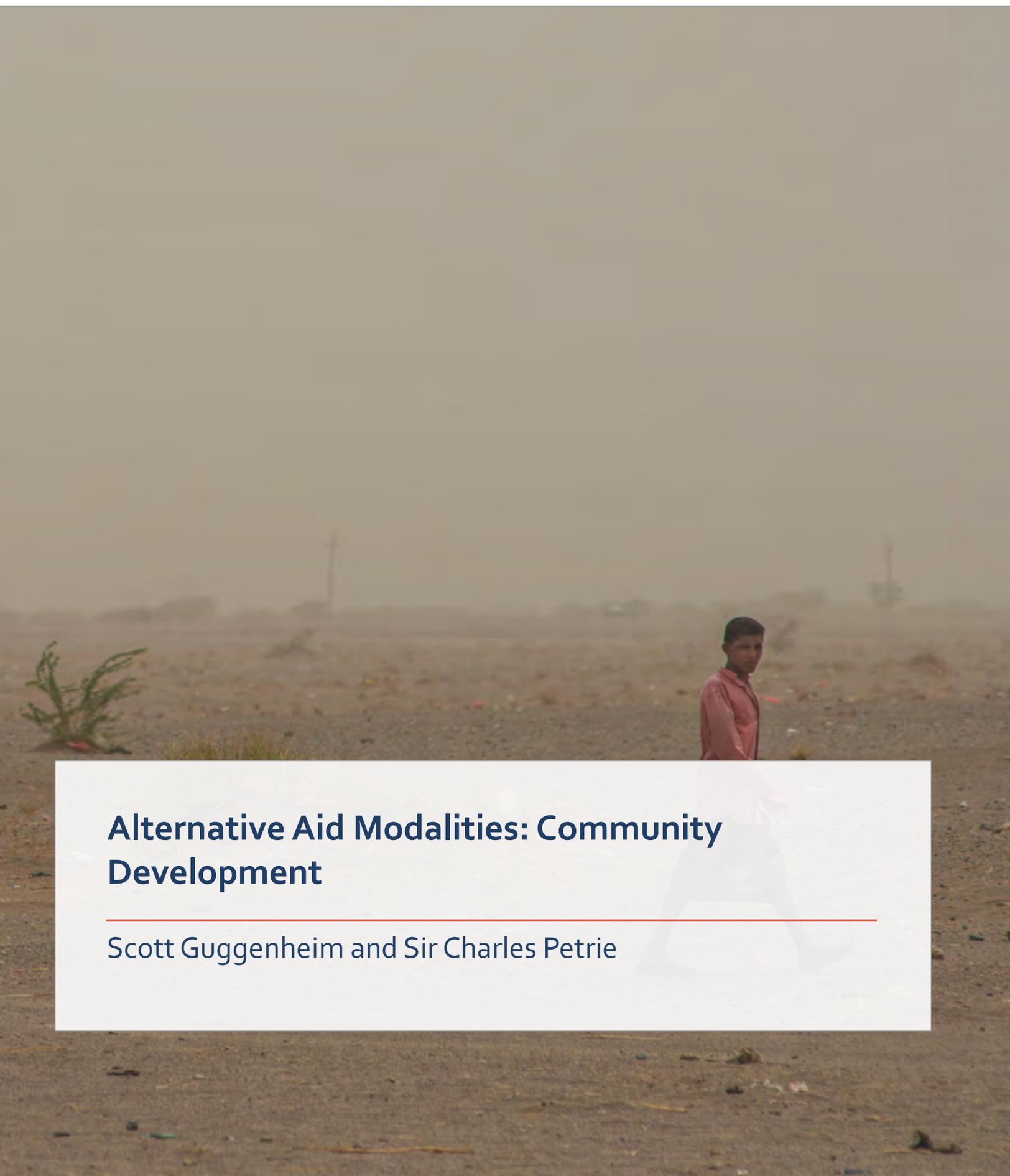


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A young boy in a red shirt is walking across a vast, dusty, and arid landscape. The ground is dry and uneven, with sparse, low-lying vegetation. The background is hazy and overcast, suggesting a dry, dusty environment. The boy is looking towards the camera.

Alternative Aid Modalities: Community Development

Scott Guggenheim and Sir Charles Petrie

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About The Center on International Cooperation

The Center on International Cooperation (CIC) is a non-profit research center housed at New York University. Our vision is to advance effective multilateral action to prevent crises and build peace, justice, and inclusion. Our mission is to strengthen cooperative approaches among national governments, international organizations, and the wider policy community to advance peace, justice, and inclusion.

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Charles Petrie was named Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the 2014 New Year's Honours list for services to international peace, security and human rights. Following the death of his father in October 2021, he became the sixth Baronet of Carrowcarden..

Economic sanctions and restrictions on development aid in fragile and conflict-affected states have become an increasingly prominent part of the international toolkit for dealing with regimes that violate international norms and rules or are beset by conflict. However, there is a well-known problem: **sanctions and cessations of development aid often end up hurting the poor more than the rich, particularly the political elites who the sanctions are most meant to target.** Donors try to limit the impact of sanctions on the poor through humanitarian assistance, usually run by United Nations (UN) agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). However, in all but the smallest countries, this is extremely expensive as well as a major organizational and logistical challenge. Most recently, situations such as those in Myanmar and Afghanistan have thrown the spotlight on the complexity of the discussion.

In a world of no first-best solutions, a close look at empirical experience will show (provided certain pre-conditions can be met) that donors can partially bridge the challenge of simultaneously upholding human rights values and protecting the poorest from the economic fallout caused by sanctions. These solutions require close attention to unpacking complex environments and using a difficult-to-wield set of tools spread over diplomacy, economic power, and development aid. **While not all risks can be eliminated, a variety of flexible tools already exists so that donors can help the poor in sanctioned and conflict-affected countries without undermining diplomatic goals of shunning the government elites or inadvertently financing insurgencies.**

With a growing number of donor-funded community programs in fragile or conflict-affected states, there are also donor concerns about legitimating national authorities, risks of financial diversion, and capture by armed combatants or local elites (full list of major concerns listed below). This paper highlights and addresses these concerns in detail and offers a series of recommendations, which in addition to good donor program design and management could mitigate some of the risks (but not fully eliminate them).

- Do community programs legitimize sanctioned regimes?
- Will community programs complement or compete with humanitarian aid?
- Does direct community transfer engender greater levels of capture and corruption?
- Does aid to communities exacerbate or mitigate local conflict?
- What does women's participation look like?

This paper aims to present a case on how to use one tool—**community-based approaches for delivering and monitoring aid—in fragile or sanctioned contexts, as community-based local governance type development models have been used successfully in a variety of fragile, conflict, and sanctioned countries.** Additionally, this paper will extract real-world illustrations of how these approaches can address donor concerns on providing post-humanitarian aid to poor people without unintentionally undermining sanctions on illegitimate regimes. Because the case literature on delivering aid under sanctions is small, the brief includes illustrations taken from aid delivery in conflict-affected countries, where governments may not be under sanction, but deep concerns remain about aid capture or aid further fueling conflict. Finally, in addition to selections from the literature, the report draws from the personal and professional experiences of the two authors, who have overseen or managed large-scale community-type humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development programs in Afghanistan, Burundi, East Timor, Gaza, Indonesia (including Aceh and West Papua), Myanmar, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, and Syria, and have been part of discussions over development options for countries under sanction in Ethiopia and Sudan.

In summary, **we propose ten recommendations for donors coming out of this research on how they can incorporate community-driven approaches for aid in sanctioned and fragile states situations.** These lessons are:

- International support in most contexts will be more sustainable if locally driven and owned
- Donors need to be willing to take on the political and fiduciary risks inherent in supporting processes in politically contested environments
- Donors operating in sanctioned or high conflict environments should commit to long-term predictable support to local community governance in implementing humanitarian and post-humanitarian support programs
- Support should be directed towards reinforcing local resilience, coping, and finding ways out of crisis
- Longer-term sustainable peace must often include some processes that allow populations to come to terms with the abuses of the past
- When engaging with local community structures, it is important not to confuse information sharing with coordination and consultation
- Donors working in a context of conflict or sanctions face a trade-off between formal financial accountability and development effectiveness
- The transaction costs of providing support frequently mean that donors are unwilling or unable to provide the smaller grants essential for supporting local processes, particularly local NGOs that are linguistically and politically competent and can facilitate inclusive decision-making
- Community openness to issues of social inclusion, particularly of women, to a great extent depends on the approach adopted
- Programs that work directly with communities can become a trust-building entry point for opening diplomatic engagements with sanctioned regimes

Introduction

Economic sanctions and restrictions on development aid in fragile and conflict-affected states have become an increasingly prominent part of the international toolkit for dealing with regimes that violate international norms and rules or are beset by conflict. However, there is a well-known problem: sanctions and cessations of development aid often end up hurting the poor more than the rich, particularly the political elites who the sanctions are most meant to target.¹ Donors try to limit the impact of sanctions on the poor through humanitarian assistance, usually run by United Nations (UN) agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). However, in all but the smallest countries, this is extremely expensive as well as a major organizational and logistical challenge.

How and when to move beyond strictly humanitarian aid in the context of a sanctioned or conflict-affected regime is both a timely but also a hotly contested issue. UN-sanctioned regimes are particularly problematic because even if aid delivery to poor people is possible, UN sanctions are imposed because the world community does not want to see these regimes legitimated unless and until they make significant reforms to bring them in line with global human rights standards. **Most recently, situations such as those in Myanmar and Afghanistan have thrown the spotlight on the complexity of the discussion.** For Afghanistan, there is a challenge particularly to not recognize an odious regime, but at the same time not wanting to stand by while some 40 million people sink into a poverty so deep that people are reduced to selling organs, children, and other unconscionable but desperate acts. In Myanmar, the outstanding challenge lies in how to stop the country from becoming the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)'s first failed state.

Defining an approach that can at least partially ameliorate the humanitarian critique of sanctions without undermining their goal of not legitimizing abusive regimes and upholding human rights and globally held values is not helped by the variety and nuances of sanctions, the diversity of the countries to which they are being applied, and the lack of clear definitions over what counts as “legitimate” and “legitimizing.” As a result, donors find themselves struggling to find a useful framework to guide action in this moral and political grey zone.

Donors are not unaware of this problem, nor is there any shortage of efforts to resolve it. **Several of the most successful solutions come by way of channeling humanitarian aid through the UN system.** As an example, rather than providing support to a government-run health or education system, donor aid can go to UNICEF, the World Health Organization, or UNESCO, which can then take on the executing role formerly held by a government's Ministry of Education or Health. Sanctioned banks and treasuries

can be replaced, up to a point, by informal moneylenders and credit systems, such as Afghanistan's *hawala* that can transfer fairly large amounts of money, even money sent from overseas capitals, without going through sanctioned central banks, albeit at a significantly higher cost.

However, each of these solutions has its limitations. **As a result of the security protocols under which they operate, UN agencies in politically complex situations of conflict are increasingly unable to access the most affected communities (as are other international partners).** But even when they are able to operate more or less effectively, using UN agencies to deliver development services such as health or education in countries under sanction is not only expensive, but over time it can also end up stunting the pre-existing national programs. The result is that when sanctions are lifted, there is not much left in a country's ability to take them over without interruption. Using informal moneylenders to substitute for a central bank, while an effective way of supporting local initiatives, also implies being willing to take the necessary political risk of allocating a not insignificant share of development aid just to cover transaction costs and accepting the movement of monies from a regulated system into an entirely unregulated one. This can implicitly defeat the first purpose of sanctions. There is also a certain amount of credulity in thinking that humanitarian aid can be delivered without, in one way or another, dealing with the proscribed authorities who actually control the country. As we will discuss in this paper, **the entire question of whether citizens in a sanctioned country would give sanctioned regimes legitimacy in exchange for service delivery is far from proven.**

Conflict and community

Understanding local dynamics is crucial for developing local interventions in many modern conflicts. A sizable number of today's conflicts result from the implosion of strong central authority. In the context of these fractured or failed states, attempts to re-establish some form of state structure with a strong central authority often generate local-level tension and renewed conflict and, in many cases, are either unachievable or can be done only with extreme measures of violence. And yet most international political and development instruments continue to focus on engaging with, if not recreating, strong central authorities, despite their lack of legitimacy. The international community increasingly realizes that efforts to extend the remit of central governments can delay rather than speed up peace. In some conflict contexts, rather than letting contending parties negotiate their own settlement, privileging central government systems can unintentionally erode the legitimacy and relevance of local administrations in areas under the control of non-government forces or traditional forms of governance. This can weaken their ability to participate in a peace process, as had been the case in Myanmar during the brief period of hope when peace seemed achievable. Western donors immediately shifted their financial support from local ethnic education programs, such as those run by the Mon (who were striving for a national-level, integrated, pluralistic education policy), to a central government more intent on projecting its authority.

In a world of no first-best solutions, a close look at empirical experience will show (provided certain pre-conditions can be met) that donors can partially bridge the challenge of

simultaneously upholding human rights values and protecting the poorest from the economic fallout caused by sanctions. These solutions require close attention to unpacking complex environments and using a difficult-to-wield set of tools spread over diplomacy, economic power, and development aid. While not all risks can be eliminated, a variety of flexible tools already exists so that donors can help the poor in sanctioned and conflict-affected countries without undermining diplomatic goals of shunning the government elites or inadvertently financing insurgencies.

This paper aims to present a case for using one such tool—**community-based approaches for delivering and monitoring aid—in fragile or sanctioned contexts.**² Community-based local governance type development models have been used successfully in a variety of fragile, conflict, and sanctioned countries. Organizations such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, UN-Habitat and others have been using community local governance support models in a variety of contexts where government capacities and presence are weak or under sanctions. For example, the community-based National Solidarity Program (NSP) covered almost 90 percent of Afghanistan throughout the twenty years of war since its 2002 launch; it has recently been re-named and re-started using the UN rather than government systems because of the current sanctions placed on the Taliban administration. Myanmar’s national community program began under a sanctioned regime, scaled up during the democratic opening under Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and is continuing in a modified form now that international sanctions have been re-imposed. The Yemen Social Development Fund has been the key pillar for providing both humanitarian and some development aid up until the present day, and while the government is not operating under formal sanctions, the risks of aid diversion to combatants pose similar challenges to humanitarian and development assistance amidst one of the century’s worst humanitarian crises.

Our analysis is not a systematic assessment of community-based local governance approaches. Those can be found elsewhere.³ Instead, this paper will **extract real-world illustrations of how community-based local governance approaches can address donor concerns about how to provide post-humanitarian aid to poor people without unintentionally undermining sanctions on illegitimate regimes.** Because the case literature on delivering aid under sanctions is small, the brief includes illustrations taken from aid delivery in conflict-affected countries, where governments may not be under sanction, but deep concerns remain about aid capture or aid further fueling conflict. Finally, in addition to selections from the literature, the report draws from the personal and professional experiences of the two authors, who have overseen or managed large-scale community-type humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development programs in Afghanistan, Burundi, East Timor, Gaza, Indonesia (including Aceh and West Papua), Myanmar, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, and Syria, and have been part of discussions over development options for countries under sanction in Ethiopia and Sudan.

Defining community approaches

For the purposes of this paper, community approaches are defined as programs that are focused on localized development that transfer development funds directly to a *local governance body* not dependent on the national administrative system (often, but not always, with the assistance of NGOs).⁴ Local governance bodies of relevance can include

local administrative councils, elected community development bodies, traditional local-level leadership, or even an autonomous village government. Local governance and community-based approaches are used in both rural and urban settings, although the bulk of the evaluation literature comes from programs operating in the countryside.

Care must be taken in how “community” is defined. Local governance is not always contained or circumscribed in formally defined townships or villages. In sanctioned countries such as

Myanmar, the township is often the unit of social control, and not merely a neutral body of community groups.

A recurrent problem for donor agencies working in sanctioned or fragile environments is that administratively defined levels of supposed solidarity are often taken for granted

Another example is Somalia, where geographical units such as a village may not be the right deliberative unit compared with highly flexible and mobile tribal bodies. A recurrent problem for donor agencies working in sanctioned or fragile environments is that administratively defined levels of supposed solidarity are often taken for granted. In fact, in some cases, conflict extends deep into the administrative units of the village or even to the level of the individual wards. Identifying the right groupings of local collective action needs to build on local knowledge of the precise social groupings.

In other contexts, breakdowns in higher-level administrative systems generate new forms of local management—such as the spontaneous municipal councils that emerged after national governments essentially

vanished in Syria⁵ and Libya⁶—to provide basic development services and operate separate and apart from the parties engaged in conflict. This is not to say all communities can always carry out these functions, but in many contexts, **communities do have sufficient social capital to function as recipients and coordinators of development support, if they are genuinely engaged in the process of prioritizing and implementing local development initiatives.**

Community approaches fit into the mainstream concept of “localization.” They start from the premise that however dramatic and intense the conditions local populations are confronting, local social institutions continue to maintain forums for discussion, resolve local disputes, and carry out collective actions such as maintaining useful community infrastructure. They also maintain local knowledge not easily available to outsiders, such as knowing who is in need, who provides respected leadership, or how to negotiate safe spaces with combatant parties.

As such, in principle, communities are capable of negotiating development priorities, managing investments, monitoring performance, and accounting for results. In many instances, communities confronting long periods of violence develop tightly knit structures with even greater capacity for resilience, as shown through the Myanmar situation (see Box 1).

Box 1: Supporting communities during early transition

An example of community resilience intensified because of conflict can be found with populations in the Myanmar's ethnic regions who hid in the jungle for twenty to thirty years, never more than a day's walk from their areas of origin from where they had fled the attacks of the Myanmar military. Surviving through a slash and burn form of subsistence agriculture, they had to move every two to three years to start anew (or sooner if fleeing a military attack). But they were never more than a day's march from their village of origin. The village community's systems of social organization and leadership remained intact, with a new community leader being elected yearly. When the ceasefire signed in February 2012 came into force, the internally displaced populations were finally accessible to outside humanitarian and development agencies. Their immediate needs were reassurance that fighting had truly come to an end and small amounts of support to allow them to start planting in the fields near the empty villages they had been forced to abandon decades before due to the continued fighting. However, the transactional costs of providing such limited support meant donors were unwilling or unable to provide the smaller grants that were essential for supporting these local processes.

Community development programs

The basic model for a community development program involves:

- Identifying the right local social cooperating unit to work with;
- Adapting financing modalities to enable them to directly receive funds; and
- Mobilizing facilitators who work with groups using a participatory approach to identify and deliver on local priorities.

Most community programs focus on building or repairing smaller infrastructure such as clean water, market roads, or farm irrigation, or they support rebuilding basic livelihoods. Community programs also often play a role in raising local awareness of humanitarian aid availability and in monitoring how humanitarian and other aid is distributed to community members.

Community empowerment programs offer some inherently attractive features for donors hoping to provide some form of basic development aid in the context of sanctions or conflict. They can build or reinforce social capital by restoring some degree of practical trust, such as when warring Christian and Muslim groups in Indonesia's Maluku province declared the inter-village development forums to be neutral territory. Community-based programs can cover large areas quickly, giving communities a quick, initial, and tangible installment of a "peace dividend." For example, East Timor's community program covered the entire

country within nine months of independence, providing burned out communities with the means to begin village reconstruction and plant fields with food crops. Because community programs involve direct transfers to local bodies, in principle they can bypass many of the most common risks of capture by national or sanctioned elites, intermediate bureaucratic diversions, or political partisans that can sour both donors and citizens.⁷ By minimizing the prescriptive earmarking of community funds, this provides a way to respond to local needs even in contexts where technical surveys and needs assessments cannot be carried out. Additionally, since all community empowerment programs should involve some degree of community monitoring, this at minimum can provide a means to verify the quantity and quality of aid delivered to communities from multiple sources, which addresses an important challenge for donor work in unsettled or inaccessible environments.⁸

Risks

At the same time, while community-empowering programs have the potential to help development agencies reach poor people without undermining sanctions, **the risks of working in high conflict areas or countries under international sanction should not be understated.** Engaging with local community organizations means that western donors need to be willing to take on greater political and accountability risks when providing support. The risks in question involve accepting a more distant relationship with the end-users of the support (too direct contact would endanger the recipients) and a reduced ability to adhere to strict reporting and accountability requirements. However, “more distant” does not mean the same as “none.” Donors have gotten increasingly effective at combining procedural reforms, new uses of technology for monitoring, and understandings of how to use social capital and end-user incentives to complement more traditional forms of accounting, to still be assured that aid is being used well.

The challenge for western donors in supporting local community or local governance mechanisms is the extent to which they are able to or are comfortable with switching from supporting specific outcomes to supporting processes. The underlying objective of supporting local community structures in politically complex conflict settings is to reinforce their resilience and their ability to resist oppressive forces. These leadership structures need to have the capacity to continue delivering to their communities. This, in turn, necessitates the long-term, even at times open-ended, commitment of donors to support these local governance efforts. Failing this level of predictable support, local community leaders can find themselves facing difficulties in retaining their authority over communities, who may end up turning to more radical elements who can provide the same services.

Risks tend to be of four types. First, **there are risks in the external operating environment**, particularly when conflict and capture extend deep into the community itself. In Aceh, studies suggest that at least some demobilizing Free Aceh Movement (GAM) fighters demanded that community councils earmark funds for them, with instances of conflict appearing when the councils refused. As discussed below, the Taliban shadow administration in Afghanistan began charging taxes, including on communities in several of the areas where they had *de facto* control. In a more subtle illustration, donor-supported community programs in Myanmar unintentionally threatened to undermine and antagonize the less well-funded but nevertheless present services being run by ethnic insurgent groups.

The second risk, **undoubtedly more common risk appears because there are also more than a few tokenistic or poorly designed programs claiming to be community-driven but which lack any sort of real community-run planning and management program.** Poorly designed programs can be captured and diverted, with or without conflict or international sanctions. Comparing Kenya with Indonesia, Jean Ensminger of Stanford University provides a detailed description of how the shared title of “community-driven” can mask dramatic differences in content, with immediate effects on issues such as corruption, capture, and responsiveness to local needs.⁹ Most importantly, poorly designed or managed programs quickly lose community ownership, leading not only to wasted funds, but also a loss of community interest in providing “eyes” on how donor money is being used.

A third risk derives directly from **the realities of being under sanction or driven by conflict.** Donor programs are always being monitored by armed groups, both oppositional and those working for the pariah regimes. In extreme cases, development programs will be attacked. Community programs are generally less likely to be attacked (because both sides want community support), but they are not always immune from violent assaults. All donor programs in these contexts should include a strong sanctions regime that halts activities when continuing them means that lives are at risk. In particular, donors should divert normal program or partner publicity efforts into less risky or more distant opportunities, in order to keep program staff or villagers safe.¹⁰ Such rules need to be negotiated upfront.

Finally, a fourth risk comes from the fact that **supporting processes rather than outcomes does not always allow for the full application of vetting procedures within the context of the war on terror.** Donors need to make context-specific assessments of the risk versus efficacy trade-off, followed by adjustments to their procedures. In Afghanistan’s National Solidarity Program, the World Bank and the government negotiated a special “high risk areas strategy” manual of adapted fiduciary controls for areas where direct oversight in Taliban controlled regions was too dangerous. Third party monitoring affirmed its efficacy. Conversely, in Syria, the suspension of assistance to traditional local governance structures resisting the encroachment of internationally proscribed groups for fear of seepage ended up facilitating the takeover of the communities by the extremist forces.

Operational Constraints

As a result of the growing threat to western nationals, tighter security regimes have been put in place by many humanitarian actors across the board, and especially by the UN to deal with local threats that can even be acted on globally. Thus, an Al Qaeda warning against the UN in the Sahel needs to be taken seriously in Kuala Lumpur, Nairobi, or any other part of the world. This, in turn, has led to a greater physical distancing of most humanitarians from the contexts in which they have to intervene. As a result, the ability of many international humanitarian actors, and most especially those of the UN, to engage with communities directly has increasingly diminished. And with that, one of the critical means of first-hand understanding of the conflicts, their impacts on populations, and the potential to identify paths out of the violence that can directly improve program designs is being lost.

Addressing donor concerns

Donors considering community-based approaches will confront at least four important overarching issues and questions.

- First, for regimes under sanction the first-order important political question is: **will providing aid to communities be interpreted or used as implying legitimacy for a regime that is under sanction?** Similarly, will the provision of support engender greater local support for the sanctioned authority?
- Second, **will community approaches complement or undermine humanitarian efforts?**
- Third, whether done through UN/NGO partner agencies or done directly with communities, **does the direct transfer of funds to communities pose fiduciary and capture risks that end-to-end humanitarian and contractor-run projects would not?**
- Fourth, **will conflict within and between communities prevent collective decision-making community projects require, and even aggravate rather than resolve local level conflict?**

Each of these over-arching questions raises additional questions within it. Under the question of legitimation, it is important, for example, not to relativize the trauma that communities have been subjected to. And the obverse side of legitimating a sanctioned regime is whether transfers to communities will give insurgent movements legitimacy in areas they control. In terms of the question about complementarities with humanitarian efforts, can community approaches help humanitarian agencies monitor and report on humanitarian aid's final distribution, or can they identify eligible people who would otherwise be missed? Or will the two approaches find themselves in competition? And with respect to the fiduciary risks of hands-off transfers to communities, it turns out that there is also a real possibility there might be less rather than more fiduciary risk in community programs compared with other forms of service delivery. Can we unpick the factors that make a community approach more or less vulnerable to capture? Finally, on the issue of aggravating rather than resolving conflict, this is a genuine question about whether the international community even holds the diagnostic tools to make a sufficiently rigorous assessment before jumping in.

Table 1: Political economy framework for assessing community development options in conflict or sanctioned environments

Goals	Community-based Approach: Key Features	Risks	Considerations
Development: Effective and inclusive delivery of critical development aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local aid projects planned and delivered through local community groups, thus responsive to their needs, utilizing local resources, and benefiting from specific local knowledge (e.g., environmental factors such as soil conditions, identifying the poorest, etc.) - Speed and efficiency of delivery (ref Aceh or similar) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tokenism, weak design not well suited to social institutions or not truly participatory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity of local partners and performance metrics used - Will community approaches complement or undermine humanitarian efforts? - Can community approaches help humanitarian agencies monitor and report on humanitarian aid's final distribution, or can they identify eligible people who would otherwise be missed - Are alternative options available?
Political: Aid not connected to pariah regimes	Local aid project planned and delivered through non-govt social institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will providing aid to communities be interpreted or used as implying legitimacy for a regime that is under sanction? - Risk of causing/ deepening conflict—when conflict and capture extend deep into the community itself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relationship of sanctioned regimes (and insurgent movements) to aid and to community groups - Political economy assessment of pariah regime penetration at local levels - Conflict assessment tools—what do we know/can we diagnose and predict?
Transparency: Sound financial management meeting international standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct transfers to community accounts limit complexity of financial management arrangements. - Community monitoring helps control budgets and expenditure - Simplified accounting systems used to audit funds - Small size of grants to each community limits large-scale leakage and corruption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the direct transfer of funds to communities pose fiduciary and capture risks (greater than alternatives)? - Hidden taxation by armed groups - Risks of capture from elites within the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the existing risks and how are they balanced? Are they worsened through community-based approaches? - Trade-offs between <i>ex ante</i> (prior review) and <i>ex post</i> (audit and evaluation) forms of accountability. - Where is the boundary of donor liability? - What are appropriate sanctions to apply in high-risk areas where external interventions are built-in parts of the landscape?
Impact: Ability to monitor and demonstrate impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community monitoring systems verify quality and quantity from multiple sources - Ability to identify and deliver to “invisible” and marginalized poor people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inability to field enumerators - Survey sensitivity - Reprisals to communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What data collection capacity exists and how do these relate to what is possible if working with community-based institutions - How participatory can monitoring be? (i.e., moving beyond community gatekeepers, access to digital/mobile options, etc.)

Most donors also have social goals they would like their aid to achieve. Among these goals, increasing women's participation in public spaces is a prominent issue. The challenge of the latter is gauging how far and through what means this objective can be achieved in the short term without compromising the efficacy of a local governance entity in the context of conflict. **Attempting to engineer social change in an effective manner demands a long-term commitment or level of engagement.** Donors also normally expect to see their aid improve the life chances of the poor and marginalized. Where aid follows periods of conflict, donors typically like to see aid strengthen peace agreements, particularly in the area of demobilizing and peacefully integrating former combatants into host communities. Somewhat paradoxically, whereas in "normal" development, donors would like to see aid promote some degree of government accountability, under sanctioned regimes, the goal is usually to keep government out of it entirely. Do community programs get this balance right?

These are all difficult questions where answers will be as much about "who, when, how, and under what conditions," rather than a definitive yes or no. In fact, our first and most important argument is that a **close understanding of the country context and the political economy of conflict should be pre-conditions for any intervention in conflict-affected or sanctioned regimes**, including deciding whether to embark on a community development approach. Nevertheless, while we do not know all the answers to these questions, this does not mean we know nothing at all.

2. Findings

As noted, there is no body of systematic evidence that would allow a quantitatively rigorous answer to the donor concerns described in the previous section. The total number of sanctioned regimes is still small (though growing), and within that set, the number of sufficiently rigorous and/or thorough impact evaluations is even smaller.

However, the number of fragile or conflict-affected states with donor-funded community programs is now fairly substantial,¹¹ many of which raise the same donor concerns about **legitimizing national authorities, risks of financial diversion, and capture by armed combatants or local elites**. The following discussion draws on both sources, using both quantitative and qualitative reviews. Of these, the most important conclusions for the topic at hand are the following:

- **There is no compelling evidence that community programs increase the legitimacy of national administrations, whether sanctioned or not** (though they can affect perceptions of local governments.¹²)
- **There is no sign that delegating funding decisions to communities increases risks of corruption or diversions to sanctioned activities.** On the contrary, there is strong qualitative evidence that efforts by fighters or officials to direct aid to other uses meet with strong resistance, such as when Pashtun communities in southern Afghanistan had funds stolen by Taliban fighters and traveled to Taliban headquarters in Quetta to demand their money back (they got it.) However, there is strong evidence that in areas where armed insurgent groups can enforce taxation on external aid, community programs will also pay the rebel “tax,” as will NGOs and private contractors. (e.g., ATR Consulting’s 2019 report).
- **With respect to complementing humanitarian targeting, community approaches are particularly useful for ensuring good beneficiary selection, particularly in areas where proper census data is missing.** Furthermore, effectively engaging with local communities allows international actors to access geographic areas their security protocols would otherwise prohibit them from doing.
- **While all development programs suffer from varying degrees of elite capture and exclusion based on gender, community approaches have proven to be well above-average at including women in local decision-making.** But for this to happen in some of the most patriarchal environments, western donors need to commit to a long-term engagement and let local realities drive the pace and style of reform.
- Community-based programs started in conflict or post-conflict contexts can bridge peace-to-development transitions and help lay the foundations for a future, more representative form of national governance system.

In summary, the key finding is that donors' main concerns are ameliorated by the evidence available, and most of the key risks can be mitigated (though not eliminated) through good design and management, particularly if donors adopt some of the reforms proposed in the concluding section of this paper.

2.2 Addressing the more difficult issues

This section reviews selected evidence on the five major donor concerns in more detail.

Do community programs legitimate sanctioned regimes?

Global reviews of community development have found no link between community approaches and support for national administrations.¹³ Beath and Fotini offer the most methodologically rigorous case evaluation of whether successful community programs translate into national government support, but while they found many positive benefits from the Afghan National Solidarity program, they did not see a translation of small programs run by village councils into support for the national government, nor did positive reviews of the program itself compensate for local anger about rising levels of violence and corruption in their provinces.¹⁴ While the community project did good things for poor communities, it had no measurable impact on local support for either the national government (responsible

for delivering the project) or the Taliban attackers.¹⁵ Casey similarly reports minimal impacts on either the perception or performance of political institutions in post-conflict Sierra Leone, while also finding positive local economic impacts whose benefits for poor household livelihoods were sustained over time.¹⁶

Community programs at best can improve perceptions of local authorities but they will not change their views of unjust or illegitimate regimes

These reviews are being done in fragile and conflict-affected states but not in internationally sanctioned regimes, so to some extent the question of whether support to communities will legitimate a sanctioned government is still open. However, while not proven conclusively, the inference is pretty solid. Community programs at best can improve perceptions of local authorities but they will not change their views of unjust or illegitimate regimes. Patrick Barron, summarizing the literature on conflict and community

programming in East Asia, found that while community programs increase villagers' overall attendance in non-project community meetings, this did not translate into villager acceptance of state taxation or jurisdiction over crimes.¹⁷ It is worth noting that most of the programs that Barron reviewed were delivered through unsanctioned governments, and yet they still did not confer legitimacy, which came from elections and other sources.

A closely related, practical concern for donors is how to find legitimate authorities to work with in situations where there are few ways to verify the validity of claims to representativeness, particularly when government representatives are either under sanction or else clearly predatory. Virtually by definition, in sanctioned states, state political structures are not recognized as legitimate. However, that does not mean that everything has ground to a stop. For example, when the central state authority was challenged in Syria and Libya, spontaneous municipal councils made up of technical staff, academics, volunteers, and local

leaders took over the delivery of basic social services and municipal functioning. These did not come to power through any sort of electoral process, but they nevertheless had popular legitimacy.¹⁸

Finding who to work with in contested areas or where state authority is largely absent is done best by taking advantage of local knowledge and working through procedures that allow local actors to negotiate acceptable compromises. Although the Indonesian government was not under formal sanction in Aceh and East Timor under Indonesia in the 1990s,¹⁹ each provinces' administration was heavily contested by armed parties. However, local intermediaries ran a low-key dialogue with both sides which ended up declaring government-run community programs "humanitarian support for the people," and insurgent groups agreeing to let local administrative bodies run them without interference. A similar process operated in Mindanao in southern Philippines, where insurgents gave a pass to the government's apolitical community program for Muslim areas. The key thread in all three cases is that these agreements were negotiated quietly and on-site, with representatives from both sides who could provide credible assurances that communities could proceed with the program.

The issue of finding a legitimate body is not always just a matter of insurgents agreeing to leave villages and local authorities alone. Approaches accept government administrative units without question can inadvertently compromise the outcome of a longer-term political settlement by unintentionally eroding the legitimacy and relevance of local administrations in areas under the control of non-governmental forces. This has been the case in Myanmar, where opposition groups are providing certain services to minority populations. In these areas, aid strengthening the government's enforcement of tax collection or delivery of schools and clinics will unwittingly undermine the opposition's negotiating hand.

Donors or NGOs working in sanctioned states can run the risk of buying into recently created "authorities" that find themselves either competing with more established or traditional authorities or unwittingly taking sides in a local factional dispute. On the one hand, the new bodies will have access to money and jobs that traditional authorities do not. Local political divisions can then map themselves onto traditional and new bodies, inadvertently producing more conflict. Murtashazavilli, for example, argues this is what happened with the Afghanistan National Solidarity Program (although other studies do not confirm this finding, again highlighting the importance of understanding local context).²⁰ On the other hand, donors often have very specific targets for women's participation, or for the inclusion of poor or marginal groups, which would simply be impossible to achieve using only traditional mechanisms.

Whether to work through pre-existing structures versus creating new structures has no automatic answer, but the analysis of empirical experience provides some guidance. In most rural contexts, traditional leadership councils focus on issues of law, dispute resolution, and moral practice. Involving those leaders in discussions over how best to organize planning and implementation of local development projects can help create the space to form some sort of "development council" in such a way as to prevent any competition or overlap with local authorities. It is, of course, important to have guidelines—produced through dialogue with traditional authorities—which define acceptable boundaries. For example, in Afghanistan, community development councils created through the National Solidarity Program (NSP)

worked with local authorities to restrict the council's mandate to development planning, ruling out dispute resolution and political leadership functions, which traditional leaders defined as their responsibility. Despite twenty years of ongoing conflict, there were very few cases of intra-community conflict created by traditional leadership's opposition to the new councils. This approach resulted in traditional leaders supporting the community development councils' work. For example, it was largely customary leaders that helped to negotiate the safety of the NSP staff moving through districts controlled or partially controlled by insurgents. Similarly, in post-conflict East Timor, community development councils were formed only with the approval of the *liurai*, all-male bodies charged with interpreting traditional law.

Will community programs complement or compete with humanitarian aid?

Humanitarian aid must operate in frequently inaccessible, high-risk (for security reasons), and volatile environments where needs are urgent and normal systems for registering populations are missing or inoperative. In such situations, community-based programs can complement humanitarian aid delivery in two ways. First, humanitarian agencies working under conditions of time pressure often risk excluding some of the most vulnerable people, such as female heads of household, disabled people, or families afraid of public exposure. Working through community-level forums can identify excluded groups who, for one reason or another, are not being reached through standard channels.²¹ It can also ensure proper identification of all areas of the community, particularly those that are more remote or not immediately visible as being part of the community. This is important as areas that are removed from the main parts of the village tend to house latecomers such as displaced groups or poorer clans. Second, very few humanitarian programs are able to provide independent verification that aid has reached beneficiaries. Community-based monitoring systems can provide both real-time red flags when outside actors are interfering with aid distribution and a means to collect data when aid is coming from multiple sources.

However, there is one area where humanitarian aid and community programs often find themselves in competition. Particularly when governments operate under full sanction and all programs are both outsourced and off-budget, humanitarian programs and localized development programs will often be competing for the same pool of skilled national NGOs and community facilitators. This problem can become acute when nationwide sanctions are suddenly applied in contexts where the total supply of qualified facilitators is limited. While donor programs eventually find solutions to this problem, the more strategic approach in fragile contexts, where demand for skills is unpredictable but likely to be urgent when it comes, would be for donors to invest and sustain sufficient local NGO capacity to be able to train and deploy larger numbers of qualified staff on relatively short notice.

Do direct community transfers engender greater levels of capture and corruption?

A sizable number of today's conflicts are a result of the implosion of strong central authorities. In the context of these "failed states," politicians use the exacerbation of differences along clan or ethnic lines to gather support and assert their control. Good social analysis is a core input to all localized project designs, regardless of their context. But what is specific to sanctioned or high conflict environments are the decisions about using or not using government financial systems and forms of accountability. As a matter of practical concern, once financial transfers go beyond direct execution by humanitarian NGOs, who in

a community receives the funds and how they account for their use defines all the rest of the program.

Donors are rightfully concerned that loosening up direct controls over aid delivery will allow their capture or diversion by conflict actors. However, the global evidence is that while this is not an imaginary risk, with the important exception of insurgent taxation that is discussed below, diversion of community transfers to malign actors not only does not happen very often but in many instances, it has proven to be the form of aid delivery where efforts to divert or capture aid resources meet the most opposition from local-level actors. Thus, in the example of the Afghanistan's National Solidarity Program, when a rogue group of armed Taliban militants stole a community grant, villagers mounted an expedition to the main Taliban shura in Quetta and got the money returned. Similarly, in 2018, when Afghanistan's Finance Minister was conducting public budget hearings across the country, tribal leaders repeatedly asked him to replace financial support through aid contractors and even some NGOs with more money for the community program because they could then give him credible guarantees that no money would be diverted.²²

Donors are rightfully concerned that loosening up direct controls over aid delivery will allow their capture or diversion by conflict actors

More quantitatively, project-level evaluations consistently find community-built infrastructure can cost up to 35 percent less than development infrastructure built by regular government programs, a *prima facie* indicator of both less corruption and greater efficiency.²³ In areas affected by sanctions or conflict, execution must be outsourced to somebody other than the government. When this happens, the costs of aid delivery by development agencies, NGOs, or contractors can go up exponentially because of layers of contracting and security support needs that directly funded community programs do not have to pay. Back of the envelope estimates for this differential also compared donor versus community costs to build primary schools in high conflict Afghanistan, which showed communities could construct 10 schools by themselves for the amount that it cost donors to build roughly the same school.

Good quality, conflict-sensitive analysis can design procedures that will limit fiduciary risks. In the careful analysis of the causes of corruption in Kenyan versus Indonesian community projects cited earlier, Dr. Jean Ensminger highlighted the role that top-level monitoring coupled with local-level transparency played in preventing private deals by powerful people. Of particular interest for the topic at hand is Ensminger's finding of the extent to which management culture, particularly the positive role played by donors in fostering and preserving anti-corruption practices, could empower reformist staff and communities to act on cases of abuse.²⁴

In general, community programs are robust with respect to arbitrary grabs by insurgent groups, if for no other reason than that in most cases they cannot survive without local support. At the margins, though, there will always be extreme cases where the presence of

armed militants within a community poses threats to the integrity of aid delivery. These cases are extremely troublesome for donors (as well, of course, for communities) since most donors lack procedures for liquidating liability when communities are forced to surrender funds in the face of force.

More common, though, is that in areas of weak, contested, or absent government authority, insurgent groups will demand and obtain tax payments on all donor support. A review of Citizen's Charter projects (CCAP) in the highest risk regions of Afghanistan found that some if not most of the communities were paying taxes to the shadow Taliban government.²⁵ However, anecdotal reports from local meetings similarly found that NGOs and private companies were also paying Taliban taxes and levies in those areas, hardly a surprise in an environment where heavily armed militants had free rein to set up a shadow administration in large parts of the country. Field studies from Aceh during the GAM insurgency also found tax payments to GAM administrators recorded in village accounts, again with a similar finding that NGOs and private companies were also being taxed to be allowed to continue operations. (In both cases, while villagers kept records that recorded these payments, the other two groups did not.)

Does aid to communities exacerbate or mitigate local conflict?

Often, the key contextual factor to understand is what the right decision-making unit is, such as hamlet, village, or clan. Communities in conflict areas are not blank canvasses that can simply forget past traumas or other forms of division. Old grievances, internal migration, and economic inequality are always present and cannot be wished away. But they can be addressed. Often but not always, one of the most important first steps is to give support for community-based reconciliation and healing programs, even before launching

into development aid, as McNairn argues for Rwanda²⁶ and Wandita²⁷ for Timor L'este. Such programs should include whole-of-community approaches to reintegrating former combatants, including, wherever possible, letting communities set criteria for reintegration support such as aiding victims as well as combatants, requiring community service, and resolving property and other disputes.

Communities in conflict areas are not blank canvasses that can simply forget past traumas or other forms of division

The overall evidence of community programs positively affecting more general aspects of local conflict is still weak, but it is not non-existent. Gibson et al., writing on community work in two high-conflict parts of Indonesia, found that "KDP (N.B. Indonesia's community program) also cultivates a set of collaborative routines of conflict management that villagers can use to interface with

more organized and influential actors.²⁸ Within sets of facilitated forums extending from neighborhood to village to sub-district levels, the simple act of participating in KDP planning and decision-making forums often becomes the first occasion in which villagers from different identity groups congregate around purposeful collective action and decision making." Barron reports a similar finding of positive spillovers for local-level conflict resolution in several conflict-affected regions of countries of Southeast Asia.²⁹

Strand’s review of community programs in conflict areas found that “while the establishment of participatory community processes may constitute a useful framework for negotiations and dispute mediation, and even contribute to building trust locally, community-level reconciliation need to be linked to comparable processes on a national level.”³⁰ And, summarizing findings from a 2019 review of communities in Afghanistan’s most hotly contested regions, ATR authors³¹ write that

In 15 communities out of 16, it was found that CCAP did not create conflict. The quantitative data confirm this major finding, with a negligible average of 7 percent of respondents selecting “The CC program creates tensions or fuel existing conflicts” as a statement best describing the program. Similarly, 73 percent of male respondents completely agree or somewhat agree that “the CCAP helps communities decrease tensions.

They go on to make the important point that:

Rather than creating conflicts, CC processes have simply reshaped ongoing local conflicts. For instance, the CDC election and clustering process were reported in qualitative interviews to be the main avenues by which the tensions from existing local conflicts were appearing in the CC processes. These risks could probably be mitigated or prevented if the role or capacity of social organizers was strengthened.

However, poorly designed programs that channel aid to only part of a community or to some communities and not others can make conflict worse rather than better. Bigdon and Korf, for example, write how aid channeled only to Sinhalese communities in Sri Lanka led to increases in attacks by the Tamil Tigers during the Sri Lanka conflict.³²

Involving women

Donor aid expects to see global humanitarian principles respected, of which women’s participation is often the most noticeable because it is also often the most resisted. How to ensure gender equity in donor programs operating in environments where women have highly constrained or non-existent public roles is certainly a challenge. Changing norms about gender is going to be slow in any development context and there is a long history of international donors creating gender quotas and targets that are largely illusory in practice. Nevertheless, “slow” does not mean “impossible.” In Afghanistan’s Citizen’s Charter—surely the iconic location for opposition to women’s inclusion in public deliberation—local communities in the very conservative south were given very mild incentives for forming women’s councils (“*shuras*”) physically separated from men’s deliberations. Whether to allow women to meet and discuss their development needs was entirely up to community leadership, but communities that allowed a women’s *shura* to form received more money than those who refused. Over time, a significant share of even these deeply conservative communities opted into the idea of forming women’s *shuras*, undoubtedly with varying degrees of substantive discussion. But by 2020, some 40 percent of communities across the south were reporting success. No other on or off-budget donor approach even came close to this performance level. Whether they will continue under the Taliban *de facto* administration now that the re-named program has resumed is an open question, but program staff are cautiously optimistic that the Taliban will turn a “blind eye” to their continuation.³³

East Timor offers a second interesting case, one that illustrates how close attention to the specific approach taken to gender inclusion matters. In East Timor, women are not as socially and economically isolated as they are in Afghanistan, but they too do not participate in public

deliberative fora. In East Timor’s community program, program-created women’s councils were given a financial budget to spend on their priorities. However, once women set their priorities, both men and women had to vote on which priorities would be funded. By contrast, villagers reported how past programs that limited decision-making on women’s programs to women only had generated so much community and household level conflict that they were stopped.

Box 2: Community Councils and Women’s Participation in Afghanistan

In her review of possible pathways to advance women’s participation in Afghan subnational governance, CARE International reviewer Rebecca Haines noted that of all the many efforts by donors to promote women’s participation, the community development councils were the most trusted and effective. However, as Haines notes, it was the design of the community council process itself that created the enabling environment for introducing women’s participation.

“After 2001, one of the first significant programmes launched by the government of Afghanistan, with support from the international community, was the National Solidarity Program (NSP). NSP was a large community- driven reconstruction and development programme, which provided block grants to communities for rural development priorities and supported the establishment of Community Development Councils (CDCs) to oversee the use of these grants. From 2003 to 2015, approximately 35,000 CDCs were established around the country, representing about 80% of Afghanistan’s communities.

“NSP took somewhat different forms in different places, and also iterated in various ways over time. Given the informal nature of CDCs as governance bodies, there have been wide variations in election practice and CDC structure. In a detailed study, eight types of CDC election practices were identified, resulting in four types of CDCs, often distinguished by gendered structures and practices. Most significantly for the present study, in subsequent phases of NSP, the programme strengthened quotas for women in CDCs, eventually requiring half of CDC members to be women, including half of the officer positions in each council. According to a number of studies on the impact of NSP, communities that participated in NSP are more likely to perceive women as having a role to play in community decision-making and political activity. It also appears that participating in NSP improved women’s mobility and enhanced their interaction with each other (strengthening their social networks). In general, NSP appears to have had a measurable effect on the space for women in community decision-making, contributing to normalizing a process of more inclusive consultation that may not have been present before.”

From R. Haines, 2020 “Social inclusion in fragile contexts: Pathways towards the inclusion of women in local governance processes. Perspectives from Afghanistan.”

3. Conclusion: Ten Lessons for Donors

The overarching recommendations that come out of this summary review of community approaches in sanctioned and fragile states can be summarized as follows:

- **International support in most contexts will be more sustainable if locally driven and owned.** Conflict-affected communities have their own local histories, experience, aspirations, and awareness of how to function within their immediate political landscape. The international community needs to acknowledge and accept its own often limited understanding of the complexity of the processes they are engaging with and adapt their instruments accordingly.
- **Donors need to be willing to take on the political and fiduciary risks inherent in supporting processes in politically contested environments.** Good technical designs can minimize these. There is no evidence that donor support to impoverished or suffering communities translates into support for sanctioned regimes.
- **Donors operating in sanctioned or high conflict environments should commit to long-term predictable support to local community governance in implementing humanitarian and post-humanitarian support programs.** It is not realistic to think that large programs in such contexts can successfully resist their capture by predatory forces without this.
- **Support should be directed towards reinforcing local resilience, coping, and finding ways out of crisis.** While outputs are important and should not be forgotten, mainstream international community assistance instruments need to focus primarily on empowerment and process rather than limiting themselves to service delivery and sectoral inputs. Particularly in the early stages, well facilitated, whole-of-community programs promoting local level dialogue and negotiations will be better than highly specialized or targeted programs that unwittingly introduce divisiveness. Budgeting should reflect these priorities.
- **Longer-term sustainable peace must often include some processes that allow populations to come to terms with the abuses of the past.** Where these are relevant, donors should diversify their support for such processes to complement high-level peace commissions with community-led approaches that build peace within local communities. Donors should avoid DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) programs that privilege combatants over victims.

- **When engaging with local community structures, it is important not to confuse information sharing with coordination and consultation.** A recurrent problem with “community participation” in fragile states is how much “participation” is nominal rather than real. Nominal participation almost always ensures that disputes are papered over rather than resolved. Political capture is virtually guaranteed, and in areas of ongoing conflict, nominal consultation quite often ends up with donor-funded facilities abandoned or destroyed and communities more rather than less fragmented by donor aid.
- **Donors working in a context of conflict or sanctions face a trade-off between formal financial accountability and development effectiveness.** At present, lengthy donor review and procedural requirements often undermine their own strategic goals. Striking a better balance requires keeping designs simple and moving from *ex ante* to *ex post* forms of fiduciary controls.
- **The transaction costs of providing support frequently mean that donors are unwilling or unable to provide the smaller grants essential for supporting local processes, particularly local NGOs that are linguistically and politically competent and can facilitate inclusive decision-making.** A growing number of mechanisms are providing credible ways to do this. This would entail the development of a two-track strategy that enables aid to be delivered whilst local capacities are being built. Implicit in this is the ability to conduct a real assessment of what institutions or organizations are to be developed.
- **Community openness to issues of social inclusion, particularly of women, to a great extent depends on the approach adopted.** Approaches that allow communities as a whole to debate and agree to are more likely to succeed than mandated rules that appear to divide communities and foster resentment.
- **Programs that work directly with communities can become a trust-building entry point for opening diplomatic engagements with sanctioned regimes.** The degree to which national authorities are given an oversight or enabling role and how well they perform can be a useful and credible trigger for follow-up dialogue and negotiations.

Endnotes

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- 2 Other impetus to the aid modalities study.
- 3 Rao, Vijayandra and Ghazala Mansuri, “Localizing Development: Does Participation Work?,” The World Bank, 2013, <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/11859>; Casey, Katherine, “Radical Decentralization: Does Community-Driven Development Work,” *Annual Review of Economics* Vol. 10 (2019): 139-163, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-080217-053339>; Wong, Susan and Guggenheim, Scott, “Community-Driven Development: Myths and Realities,” Policy Research Working Paper No. 8435, The World Bank, 2018, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29841>.
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- 7 Even here, care should be taken to avoid prematurely concluding that oppressive state actors can be automatically bypassed through direct transfers alone. In Afghanistan there is little risk of Taliban objecting to direct community transfers; but in Myanmar, commentators suggest that direct transfers to communities in opposition areas could put a target on their backs (Mary Callahan, personal communication).
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- 10 There are also cases such as in Aceh, Indonesia, shortly before the 2004 tsunami, where conflicting parties considered donor-flagged programs as “neutral” or “humanitarian” territory to be left out of attacks.
- 11 Wong and Guggenheim, “Community-Driven,” 2018.
- 12 Casey, C. R. Glennester, E. Miguel, and M. Voors, “The Long Run Effects of Aid: Evidence and Forecasts from Sierra Leone” *Stanford University King Center on Global Development*, 2021, Working paper 1089, <https://www.nber.org/papers/w29079>; Beath, Andrew, Fotini Christia, and Ruben Enikolopov, “Randomized Impact Evaluation of Afghanistan’s National Solidarity Programme,” World Bank, 2013, <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/16637>; Wong and Guggenheim, “Community-Driven,” 2018.
- 13 Wong and Guggenheim, “Community-Driven,” 2018; Casey, “The Long Run,” 2021.
- 14 Beath and Fotini, “Randomized Impact,” 2013.
- 15 Summarizing results from a 2014 survey of 5,000 households in northeast Afghanistan, Gostznyi and his team similarly write that “The analysis confirms our previous assumptions that a more active CDC (“community development council”) is associated with more positive perceptions of village-level governance. Contrary to our initial expectations, however, we found no statistically significant relationship between CDC activity and the perceptions of district-level governance. This suggests that while supporting and building the capacity of CDCs is valuable in its own right as it improves village-level governance, it apparently has no impact on the perceptions of state-provided governance, and by extension, the Afghan state itself.”

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- 18 Megirisi, “Order,” 2018; Donors also do not always apply broad-brush sanctions to all sectors or levels of a government. When donors sanctioned the Meles government in Ethiopia after violence against demonstrators, these sanctions applied only to top level budget support and programming. Budget support to social service ministries for subnational service delivery actually went up.
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