



The Asia Foundation

**Strategic Approaches for Addressing
Violent Conflict**

Steven Rood, Ph.D.

Philippine Country Representative

presented to

Foundation for Advanced Studies on International Development
(FASID)

29 February 2008

Challenges to Foreign Assistance

Peripheral conflict areas often country's poorest

- Social indicators, particularly health and education, low
- State education systems weak, viewed with suspicion

Trapped in a cycle of violence and poverty

- Human and financial capital flow away

Ironically, economic development can exacerbate

- Works best in neighboring peaceful areas: “Injustice”
- Threatens both state & non-state local power structures

Multiple causality of conflict poorly understood



Risks in Addressing Protracted Conflict

Very Real Physical Risks to Personnel

- Internationals viewed with suspicion by government, attractive targets for terrorist or lawless violence
- Local national staff vulnerable, not seen as impartial
- “Community support” is no guarantee
- Confusion of security and development missions

Inadvertent exacerbation of conflict

- Project selection can favor one faction over another
- Excessive focus on one conflict aspect skews solutions

Donor fatigue or short planning cycles



Critical Governance Problems

Periphery areas are peripheral in state's focus

Weak structures of governance

- Poor planning, budgeting, treasury, personnel functions
 - Particularly worrisome for donor purposes
- Accountability is poor: *upward* to state, *downward* to citizens, *outward* to security forces & local power brokers

Associational structures are weak

- Private sector undeveloped
- Civil society organizations less prevalent

Divided loyalties of citizens, lack of legitimacy



Political Dynamics of Government Policy

Policy depends on coalitional relationship between center and periphery power structures

- Cavalier treatment can occur if periphery not in center's coalition
- Or, central state apparatus can take sides in periphery
 - Particularly if political or economic resources valuable

Populist majoritarianism can exacerbate

- Counter-productive policies may be popular nationwide

Short electoral and governance cycles can leave promises unfulfilled: “Not Invented Here”



How States Interact with Local Population

Often through local power structures (next slide)

- Can be beneficial as local knowledge and practices manage conflict
- Can leave local citizens at mercy of local power brokers
- Impedes the build-up of legitimacy of the central state

Security forces as the face of the central state

- Can be hard to convince locals of benign nature of state
- Thus delegitimizing those locals who cooperate

Particularized citizen loyalties a barrier



Interaction with Local Power Structures

Mutual dependence

- Periphery as resource for central state
- Central state is arbiter in periphery

Tacit or explicit interaction with non-state actors

- Can be part of negotiation processes
- Illicit interaction as aspect of weak governance
- Often opposed by state-affiliated lower power structures

Interaction is hard to institutionalize, often personalized



Effects on Violent Conflict

Exacerbation

- Projects provide one group with grievances
- Short-term fixes allow problems to accumulate
- Subjecting government to competing priorities so it loses focus

Amelioration

- Providing long-term hope
- Kick-starting social capital accumulation
- Outside donors as neutrals
- “mowing the grass” – keeping conflicts manageable



Strategic Approaches

- Decompose causality of conflict to address severally
- Donor coordination crucial to avoid overtaxing weak governance
- Conditionality can work with states but rarely with non-state actors
- Demonstrate success to citizenry
- Link individual successes to larger overall process

