



Image: Mercy Corps

PATHWAYS FROM PEACE TO RESILIENCE: Initial Findings from the Greater Horn of Africa on the Links between Conflict Management and Resilience to Food Security Shocks

BACKGROUND

A better understanding of the links between conflict and resilience in areas facing recurrent humanitarian crises is vital given chronic violence and instability are pervasive in the areas where major investments in resilience are being made. Yet how best to build resilience in conflict contexts remains unclear. Mercy Corps undertook research in the greater Horn of Africa to contribute to filling this critical knowledge gap. The central question this research sought to answer was: How do conflict management and peace-building programs affect households' resilience to shocks and stresses in pastoral areas in the greater Horn of Africa?

THEORIES TESTED

Previous Mercy Corps research the Horn of Africa demonstrated that peacebuilding interventions can have positive effects on pastoralists' abilities to cope with and adapt to severe drought. Building on these insights, Mercy Corps developed and examined two theories to identify specific strategies within conflict management programs that appear to have the greatest efficacy in strengthening resilience:

Summary

Household food security is gravely affected by economic and climate-related shocks. However, the effects of such shocks can be mitigated by strengthening conflict management skills and systems within communities and local institutions, and by improving collaboration between government representatives and traditional leaders on dispute resolution. Peacebuilding efforts, therefore, can play a critical role in supporting food security goals in areas experiencing recurrent crises.

1) Social Cohesion Theory: If groups in conflict have a safe space for interaction around shared natural resources, then stronger positive relationships and trust will grow between traditionally conflicting groups. These stronger relationships better enable communities to employ adaptive capacities in preparation for shocks and stresses and facilitate quicker recovery from them.

2) Enabling Institutional Environment Theory:

If influential formal and informal leaders are better equipped and work together to prevent conflict and resolve disputes, then people's mobility and access to resources will improve. Collaborating on conflict management efforts will also establish the basis for further cooperation in assisting their communities to respond and adapt to shocks.

Mercy Corps, with support from USAID's Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation, undertook research to test these two theories. The research was conducted in Northern Karamoja, Uganda, and in the Mandera Triangle with the aim of generating evidence that can be transferred to other contexts within the greater Horn of Africa.

KEY FINDINGS

Building resilience to shocks through peace-building efforts can support food security goals. Household food security is gravely affected by experiencing economic and climate-related shocks. The results of this research show that the effects of such shocks on food security can be mitigated by strengthening community and institutional conflict management skills and systems.

Peace and security conditions are better where stronger conflict management skills and systems are in place within institutions. Importantly, where government representatives and

Methodology

Mercy Corps adopted a mixed methods approach to the research, which included household surveys as well as individual and group interviews. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed at two points in time: in early to mid-2013, and again in early to mid-2015. Conclusions were drawn based on an analysis of trends over time, correlative relationships between variables of interest, and qualitative contribution analysis.



traditional leaders work together, more conflicts are resolved satisfactorily. This finding supports the value of the work Mercy Corps and its partners are doing to strengthen the skills of, and cooperation between, leaders of formal and informal governance structures that have responsibilities for conflict prevention and dispute resolution.

Greater inter-ethnic social cohesion was not found to be linked with improved security conditions nor greater food security. To achieve these interrelated goals, peacebuilding efforts need to invest more in translating improvements in individual perceptions and behaviors around conflict into changed group norms and institutional structures that can sustain peace. Strong examples of this are consensus-based natural resource agreements developed in the Mandera Triangle program and the Moruitit Resolution in northern Uganda.

Not all forms of social capital appear to be equal when it comes to building resilience. The results indicate that intra-ethnic social cohesion is linked to both increased peace and security as well as improved food security. Based on Mercy Corps' experience, effective ways of building this type of bonding social capital through peacebuilding interventions include bringing together diverse groups within communities to undertake joint economic development or rangeland restoration efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results have important implications for practitioners and policy makers working in conflict-affected contexts in the Horn of Africa:

- Aid actors interested in building resilience to food security shocks in fragile and insecure contexts should gear greater investments towards conflict management interventions.

- Programs with security goals should work to improve institutional-level conflict management capacities.
- Conflict management efforts must go beyond strengthening inter-ethnic social cohesion if they are to achieve transformative change.
- Development and humanitarian actors should support interventions that strengthen the social networks that people rely on during times of stress.

Full research reports (forthcoming):

“Pathways from Peace to Resilience: Evidence from the Greater Horn of Africa on the Links between Conflict Management and Resilience to Food Security Shocks”. September 2015. Washington, DC: Mercy Corps.

“Conflict and Resilience in Northern Karamoja: How Changing Conflict Dynamics and Conflict Management Capacities Affect Resilience to Food Security Shocks”. September 2015. Washington, DC: Mercy Corps.

“Conflict and Resilience in the Mandera Triangle: Contributions of Dispute Resolution over Shared Natural Resources towards Resilience to Food Security Shocks” September 2015. Washington, DC: Mercy Corps.

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With a network of experienced professionals in more than 40 countries, we partner with local communities to put bold ideas into action to help people recover, overcome hardship and build better lives. Now, and for the future.



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