ROADS TO PEACE?

Infrastructure in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States: Field Studies Concept Note

A DIIS/UNOPS Collaboration
February 2018
INFRASTRUCTURE IN FCAS

Background

This Concept Note has emerged from the 2017 Roads to Peace (R2P) Workshop. This workshop was organized and facilitated by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) on the 9th and 10th of February in Copenhagen. During two days, 42 representatives of 26 different organizations from the public, academia, non-governmental organizations, and private sector came together. The discussions during the two days focused on six challenges identified in a DIIS/UNOPS background paper framing the debate regarding the impact of infrastructures in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS). The goal of this initiative was to gather a multi-stakeholder group linking donors, academics, and practitioners together to look at the six challenges and learn from shared experiences in working in FCAS.

The R2P workshop group expressed several areas of common understanding during the breakout discussions:

- Infrastructure is multidimensional and crosscutting. It impacts while also receiving impacts from many social and environmental sectors. In particular, effects of infrastructure implementation on dynamics of conflict and fragility can vary tremendously and need to be better understood.

- Infrastructure does not only include the physical assets but also its institutional and knowledge components. Without all three of these being taken into consideration, infrastructure can fail.

- The suggestion from the background paper to understand infrastructure across the five dimensions of OECD fragility (see background paper diagram) was well received by the participants.

Participants agreed that "Roads to Peace" is an important initiative and that a next step should include the systematic gathering of field data on experiences to create a body of best practice for infrastructure planning and implementation during and after conflict. The relevance of this initiative aligns with several international initiatives and agreements, including the role attributed to infrastructure in the Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Secretary General’s initiative on 'Sustaining Peace' which calls for inter-agency strategic planning to analyze and address conflict in all stages from design to post-conflict. The facilitation of sustainable livelihoods and the provision of infrastructure and services is central to sustaining peace, therefore giving the "Roads to Peace" initiative additional edge.

Rationale

Infrastructure crosscuts many dimensions – economic, social as well as those related to stability and security. The track record of infrastructure contributing to security and stability in fragile and conflict-affected contexts is, however, highly contested. Despite this diagnosis, donors assign infrastructure a prominent role in addressing situations of violent conflict and fragility across the globe.

The main takeaway from a DIIS/UNOPS study on the topic is that there are a lack of systematic studies on the interlinkages between infrastructure and conflict/fragility which seek to answer the questions: How does infrastructure programing interact with local dynamics in fragile and conflict-affected areas to produce intended and unintended outcomes? In order to answer this question, DIIS and UNOPS will carry out three in-depth country case studies in representative settings, to create lessons for infrastructure planning and implementation across FCAS.
CASE STUDIES CONCEPT NOTE

Objective

The study will generate field-based evidence on the main challenges to infrastructure interventions in FCAS. It will provide donors, project managers, and implementers with a more systematic view on the interaction of infrastructure with OECD-defined dimensions of conflict and fragility (security, political, economic, environmental, and societal).

Informed by a novel approach to the interaction of infrastructure with aspects of conflict, fragility, and society, this project will: a) identify main frictions; b) arrange and systematically analyze them in a way that that; c) informs guidelines on infrastructure programming under conditions of conflict and fragility.

This concept note outlines the overarching theoretical framework, methodology, outputs, and timeline.

Analytical framework

Intervening in violent conflict constitutes what has been called a ‘wicked problem’ – one that evades clear definition and one that is marked by complex interdependencies and a high amount of unpredictability. This study takes this notion as its starting point to systematically explore typical frictions that arise in selected cases of infrastructure interventions in conflict-affected societies. The starting point for our research will be in Sub-Saharan Africa. If interest and funds are made available this could, in theory, be expanded.

The main theoretical premise underpinning our case study research is that it is necessary to move away from an output-based understanding of infrastructure towards a process-based one which interacts with different dimensions of conflict and fragility. It is these linkages that make or break infrastructure as an agent of change.

We understand the linkages to be based on two principles:

1. Infrastructure not only involves the physical asset but also the institutions (bodies and frameworks that regulate infrastructure programming) and knowledge (the expertise the stakeholders bring to planning, design, implementation, use, and maintenance).
2. At the same time, infrastructure interacts – at all stages – with the political, economic, social, security and environmental dimensions of the local context.

These two set of interactions form the basic premises for the UNOPS/DIIS field study.

Methodology

Cases

The main purpose of the joint field study is to identify challenges that evolve in the context of infrastructure planning, delivery, and use in the context of FCAS. For this study, the case studies will be an infrastructure project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), South Sudan and Somalia. In Eastern DRC we will pick infrastructure projects which were implemented as part of MONUSCO’s stabilization efforts in the Kivus. For Somalia we are likely to identify one project in Somaliland and one in South Central (subject to assessment by UNOPS staff and local researchers). Decisions on the feasibility of the South Sudan case will be made after discussion with UNOPS regional focal points and local staff.

Selection of sites/projects

In collaboration with UNOPS regional and country staff, DIIS will select 2-3 (road) infrastructure projects in each country, including both larger scale projects as well as smaller community-driven ones.
INFRASTRUCTURE IN FCAS

The study will identify challenges to infrastructure planning, delivery, and use by engaging relevant stakeholders at different levels, reviewing project documentation, and conducting interviews in the three countries with donors, UNOPS project staff, engineers/implementers, and beneficiaries/end users (e.g. local authorities, communities).

Methods

In the first step the research team will complete a qualitative desk-top review of project documentation (business cases, descriptions, planning documents, procurement, stakeholder reviews, implementation reports and evaluations). These documents will provide an indication of general objectives, expectations, and anticipation of risks. On the basis of this analysis, which will be carried out with the assistance of UNOPS IMPG and regional staff, the research team will substantiate and revise the interview guide for steps 2 and 3.

In the second step the research team will complete semi-structured interviews in the case study countries with donors, UNOPS staff involved in the project, and the implementing contractors. The research team will draw on the field experience of the actors involved in planning, supervising, and implementing that particular project. The research team will inquire about the interviewee’s understanding of infrastructure, emergent issues in the overall management of the project, inclusion of beneficiaries and other stakeholders, and challenges with regard to the political reverberations of the project (this is informed by the key challenges identified in the “Roads to Peace” workshop report).

The third step consists of semi-structured and informal interviews, focus group interviews with communities and users, around selected infrastructure projects. This step is key due to the assumption that peace outcomes are ultimately about the perceptions and actions of the affected population, not donor evaluations. Here the research team is interested in the expectations and values local users attribute to improved infrastructure. Example questions include:

- How do they assess the success or impact of the infrastructure project?
- How did the project affect their political economy, conflict dynamics, inter-communal, and state-society relations?
- What were their experiences in the short-term in addition to the expected long-term effects? And finally;
- What does the observation data say about the use of the infrastructure assets (who are they used by, in what way, how frequently, for what purpose?)

Timeline

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<tr>
<th>When</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>Who</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 2017</td>
<td>Agreement on field study note; establish focal points with UNOPS field office</td>
<td>Steve</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 2018</td>
<td>Establishing database and sharing of country and project documentation</td>
<td>Steve &amp; focal points</td>
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<tr>
<td>April/May 2018</td>
<td>Scoping missions DRC and Somalia (establish local research teams)</td>
<td>Peer/Jan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep-Nov 2018</td>
<td>Field research, first stage data analysis</td>
<td>Peer/Jan, UNOPS input</td>
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<td>November 2018</td>
<td>Thought piece 1 on initial findings</td>
<td>Peer/Jan/Steve</td>
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<td>December 2018</td>
<td>Event 1: Workshop on initial findings through R2P platform.</td>
<td>Steve</td>
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<tr>
<td>April-May 2019</td>
<td>Field research</td>
<td>Peer/Jan, UNOPS input</td>
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<td>June 2019</td>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>Peer/Jan</td>
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<td>August 2019</td>
<td>Draft Policy brief, peer review</td>
<td>Peer/Jan &amp; reference group</td>
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<td>September 2019</td>
<td>Event 2: Publication of policy brief and presentation of findings</td>
<td>Peer/Jan &amp; UNOPS</td>
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