



Conference Abstract

Post-Conflict Public Sector Projects: Measuring the Performance of International Interventions to Ensure Effective Peacebuilding

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Abstract

With the closing of the Cold War the world faced several wars and conflicts that devastated countries and regions alike. Experiences and studies showed that post-conflict countries have a 25% chance of returning to either a partial or full-blown war situation (UNDP 2010). This led to the initiation of new approaches to rebuilding war-affected countries – that were spearheaded by either the direct as well as the indirect intervention of international organizations and donor states – whom are considered as "public entrepreneurs".

International entities' involvement in post-conflict countries (PCC) have shifted from simple peacekeeping activities and humanitarian aid projects (in some cases) to direct public sector interventionism (Hillman 2013). Such projects were justified by a consensus that perceives the failure and weakness of public institutions as the (or at least one of the) main source(s) of conflicts (Collier 2009; The World Bank 2012). This is based on a neoliberal approach that views that if the state is rebuilt, public administration were restored, services were provided equally among citizens, and the economy is developed, then there is no reason to return to a state of war. Hence, to ensure a sustainable peace-base and prevent future conflicts, the international community must rebuild public administrations, ensure the delivery of public services, and review their managerial public model to ensure the provision of services to the deprived communities (Brinkerhoff 2007; Chandy 2011; The

World Bank 2011). We can highlight a process of artificial reconstruction of PCCs that is initiated, launched, and financed by international entities, thus, justifying their long-term presence (Ankersen 2008). This is done by intrinsically creating new incentive structures, and by installing public management models capable of collecting and managing public expenditures in a way that is perceived as both efficient and fair by the concerned citizens (Boyce 2007). Thus, such programs and projects gained both legitimacy and credibility both locally internally and by the international community (UN 2012).

However, in recent years, experts have considered the neoliberal post-conflict public sector state-building model as being inefficient, ineffective, insufficient, and inappropriate (given its technical limitations) as each country / region has its own environmental specificities (e.g. socio-cultural, historical, anthropological, political, etc.) which can affect the deployment of the new system as is (Blunt and Turner 2005; Narayan and Petesch 2010). Also, several reconstructed public sectors have failed and many post-conflict countries have returned to a state of war.

The purpose of this paper is to review the success of the post-conflict public sector reconstruction projects that are both initiated and implemented by international entities. In other words, the aim of the study is to review the post-conflict performance indicators (PCPI) applied to public projects. The idea is to assess the quality of implemented projects to support a successful transition and recovery from conflict, as well as to foster sustainable growth, deprivation reduction and the effective use of development assistance. The PCPI is usually based on multiple technical criteria, reference systems as well as a holistic understanding of the concerned environment's security, political economic and social spheres.

A Lebanese study spanning a network of 14 International organizations is explored via semi-structured interviews. The World Bank's PCPI framework was used to provide insight into the overall dynamics of performance management and the elaboration of indicators related to public sector projects in a post-conflict environment while considering contextual, environmental, and operational factors. The research is based on a qualitative empirical data specific to Lebanon in terms of PCPI.

Key findings revolved around four clusters that are focused on the most relevant issues faced by a post-conflict country when going through a reconstruction phase. The Lebanese example highlights several shortcomings when it comes to both project implementation and outcome :

- **Cluster 01 – Economic Management and Structural policies** : Huge failures when it comes to macroeconomic management, non-functioning public administration, failed PPP initiatives, public debt problems (especially when it comes to obtaining regular access to external concessional resources), financial crisis, failed budget administration, and slow incubation of private initiatives and job creation projects, etc.
- **Cluster 02 – Social Inclusion and Human Development** : Non serious capacity building as a heavy reliance on INGOs and international interventionism (in terms

of resources, capacities, skills, competences, etc.) still exists. Also, rural marginalization (lack of development projects), gender inequality, inequitable access to economic and productive resources, etc.

- **Cluster 03 – Governance** : Widespread corruption, failure to deliver public services, lack accountability, absence of transparency, class ruling, conflict of interest, etc.
- **Cluster 04 – Post-Conflict Risk** : Lack of security, terror zones, armed militias presence, microstates, de facto parallel illegal systems of service provision”, skirmishes (internal and external), widespread violence and crime, etc.

Keywords

Post-Conflict Countries, Public Sector, Reconstruction, International Intervention, PCPI, Lebanon

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Conflicts of interest

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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