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# Violent Conflict and the Road Sector: Points of Interaction



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VIOLENT CONFLICT AND THE ROADS  
SECTOR: POINTS OF INTERACTION



The Transport Research Support program is a joint World Bank/ DFID initiative focusing on emerging issues in the transport sector. Its goal is to generate knowledge in high priority areas of the transport sector and to disseminate to practitioners and decision-makers in developing countries.



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The “Violent Conflict and the Roads Sector” paper was prepared for the World Bank Transport Anchor group (TWITR) in Washington which administers and manages the Transport Research Support Program (TRSP), with financing from DFID, the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom Government. The paper builds on project reviews, interviews, and background studies of challenges and opportunities facing the roads sector in fragile and conflict-affected countries conducted in cooperation with regional transport teams and with partial funding from SDV and OPCFC.

We would like to express our thanks for contributions and advice at different stages of this study from a large number of colleagues inside and outside the World Bank, including: Nilufar Ahmad, George Banjo (peer reviewer), Ian Bannon, Jacques Bure, Greg Ellis, Sarah Goulding, Susanne Holste (peer reviewer), Martin Humphreys, Emmanuel James, Sima Kanaan, Kees Kingma, Marianne Kilpatrick, Antoine Lema (peer reviewer), Alexandre Marc, Tesfamichael Nahusenay, Andy Norton, Asta Olesen, Gylfi Palsson, Nicola Pontara, David Post, Justin Runji, Shonali Sardesai, Fabian Soria, Natalya Stankevich, Ingo Wiederhofer and Jacqueline Dubow, TRSP Coordinator. Comments and suggestions were also provided by 25 participants from the Government of South Sudan and development partners at a workshop in Juba, South Sudan, in June, 2011.





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Roads are vital in the stabilization and reconstruction of a conflict-affected country. These initiatives impact population groups and their relationship with one-another through infrastructure construction and maintenance, through processes of decision-making and participation, and most significantly through their outcomes. The impacts of roads sector initiatives are felt by large sections of the population and can have effects not only on those directly benefitting from the project but on economic growth, resource distribution, governance, and security. These wide-ranging effects can in turn impact conflict and a country's prospects for stability and resilience.

While the roads sector can have profound impacts on societies as well as on conflict, positively and negatively, violent conflict can also affect the way roads sector activities are carried out and whether projects achieve their objectives. In a conflict setting, social relations – including ethnic relations – may have deteriorated, security may be a concern, and governance and political institutions may have weakened. The ability for implementing a roads project may be lower both because of limited government strategy and institutional capacity, and because of weaknesses in the private sector, including its technical capacity to implement initiatives.

This note aims at helping teams understand the interaction between the conflict context and the roads sector. This understanding should help teams adapt project design and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms with the purpose of addressing conflict-related challenges and contributing to sustainable impacts.

The note is based on the premise that all development activities in conflict settings need to be rooted in a good understanding of the context in which they operate. Applying such understanding may help achieve greater development results, and could also help mitigate fallouts of existing conflicts and in certain circumstances help prevent new violence from emerging. Efforts that do not take into account the context in which they operate, are likely to run into obstacles and delays, and may even inadvertently exacerbate social and economic factors that drive violent conflict.

This note is organized in the following way:

- **Section I presents the methodology of the study**, including the selection of cases and sources of information.
- **Section II presents the conflict context**, including a description of some of the main characteristics of these contexts that could have profound implications for development initiatives.
- **Section III discusses the tradeoffs that those working in the roads sector usually need to make** in a conflict context.
- **Section IV looks at key areas of interaction between the roads sector and conflict**, focusing on questions that need to be asked during design and implementation and regarding potential effects of roads sector projects on conflict.
- **Finally, we conclude with some recommendations for those working on the roads sector in transport settings.**



## 1 METHODOLOGY

Findings and recommendations in this note are based on case studies carried out in Afghanistan, Nepal, Kosovo, Yemen and South Sudan. Interviews were also carried out with those involved in the transport sector in Kosovo. These countries were chosen because (i) they are conflict affected (see definition in the next section), (ii) they differ in the type of conflict they have experienced, and (iii) they differ in their current situation. And in all of these contexts, transport sector teams have engaged with the government to try to revitalize the roads sector.

In each country, the study team first looked at the current and past conflict dynamics, using existing literature. This review made it possible to understand the potential points of interaction between the roads sector and conflict dynamics. Second, the main roads sector initiatives in each setting were reviewed, and initiatives most likely to interact with the conflict dynamics were studied in more depth. Finally, lessons learned from each country case study were extracted. The full text of the case studies can be found as separate documents.

Clearly, it would be difficult to generalize based on the findings of five case studies. To complement the lessons emerging from the cases we have related them to main interactions between conflict and development projects more broadly and how these are reflected in the roads sector. We present the findings of this study in a way that we hope allows those working on this sector to be more aware of the interactions between their work and the context in which they operate. While we provide some potential solutions to challenges presented by conflict contexts developed by Bank and other teams, we have tried to summarize them in the form of questions that teams hopefully can adapt and use in their work.

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BOX 1: CASE STUDIES

Country / Context	Cases	Objective
Nepal	Rural Access Improvement and Decentralization Project	To assist residents of participating districts to utilize improved rural transport infrastructure and services and benefit from enhanced access to social services and economic opportunities.
Afghanistan	National Emergency Rural Access Project	To provide year-round access to basic services and facilities in the rural areas of Afghanistan to enhance the well being of the population and promote economic growth in the country
Yemen	Rural Access Project II – Additional Financing	Upgrading and maintaining additional kilometers of roads and increasing institutional support, and effect a minor restructuring of the project by sharpening the project development objectives (PDO) and adjusting the end of project indicators.
Liberia	Emergency Infrastructure Project	To help the government restore selected infrastructure, thereby helping revive the economy and reintegrate the country
Southern Sudan	Emergency Transport and Infrastructure Development Project	To i) rehabilitate and develop critical national and rural feeder roads and transport infrastructure ii) improve critical urban infrastructure in Southern Sudan’s national and state capitals and iii) build capacity for planning, construction, maintenance and management of infrastructure in Southern Sudan.
Kosovo		In Kosovo we didn’t look at a particular project but at how conflict has impacted the transport sector in general.

## 2 THE CONFLICT CONTEXT

This note adopts the view that conflict is a normal phenomenon in all societies, and that manifestations of conflict differ because of the societal factors at play and their dynamics. Violence is one manifestation of conflict, but not the only one. In most countries, conflicts are pursued non-violently in political and social institutions such as parliaments and the media, and are important drivers of social change. In other countries, conflicts at times manifest themselves as violence at varying scale and intensity. Each conflict may be seen as representing a continuum of violent and non-violent manifestations, with escalation into violence or de-escalation from violence driven by different economic, social, institutional and political factors. Violent conflict is political at its core and therefore different from violent crime – although manifestations of major violence often include both aspects.

In poor countries, escalation of conflict is typically driven by factors such as: low opportunity cost for armed rebellion; access to finances from natural resources; young men available as recruits; weak state institutions unable to control either natural resources or revenue, or maintain rule of law and monopoly on the legitimate use of armed force; a governing system that provides access to power and resources to specific identity groups while denying such access to other identity groups. Some of the factors that drive conflict stem from the way social and economic differences are structured in a given society, for example the access by distinct social groups or regions to economic resources and political influence. Factors internal to the country are often influenced by exogenous factors such as neighboring countries' interests in terms of resources or security; at times exogenous factors may be a main driver of the conflict.

The different socioeconomic factors at play in a country *interrelate* and create a certain pattern of conflict. For example, unequal economic opportunities for specific regions and unequal political influence by different ethnic groups are both factors that may affect conflict, and an *overlap* between these two factors for one specific ethnic group in one specific region is likely to create a more combustible situation. Moreover, the existence of a large number of unemployed young men is in itself a factor that seem to correlate with conflict, and this factor would be more dangerous if combined with other factors so that a large number of unemployed young men live in a region with accessible high-value natural resources that can be transformed into financing of violent

action. Factors such as these would often be manipulated by different political interests, sometimes from outside the region in which the factors exist, and ensuing conflicts may take on political meanings which have little to do with some of the underlying factors.

The Bank's client countries experience different types of conflicts; this note, however, is concerned with the ones that already display violence and the ones that are in danger of escalating into violence. Some of the violent conflicts might fit the definition of a civil war but there might also be other, often localized, conflicts – for example between different population groups in a region over issues such as access to renewable resources. It is important to underline that every conflict is unique because of the combination and dynamics of the factors driving escalation, and that the best way of learning about the drivers and dynamics in each case is through conflict analysis or other similar political economy analyses. Many development organizations carry out such analyses. Project teams would find these helpful when considering the guiding questions we have suggested in each of the sections. If no conflict analysis exists for the country, or if it needs to be updated, social development specialists in the country team would be able to help.

With basis in the Correlates of War (COW) project, civil war is typically defined as an armed conflict which results in more than 1,000 combat-related deaths in a country over a year, with a certain level of fatalities on each side, and with the country's government involved on one side of the conflict.

In this note we will consider countries to be 'conflict-affected' when they meet one or more of the following three conditions: 1) they have experienced violent conflict in the past five to ten years; 2) they are currently experiencing violent conflict; and 3) they are perceived as being at risk of violence.

### 3 TRADEOFFS BETWEEN TECHNICAL AND CONFLICT CONSIDERATIONS

Violent conflicts affect the way that projects are carried out, sometimes bringing in opportunities for positive change in the conflict environment, but most often creating significant challenges to the projects. They may also affect project outcomes, including by undermining their ultimate development impact. Violent conflict, however, is also affected by development activities, including those in the roads sector: the way in which projects are implemented as well as their outcomes interact with the socioeconomic and political factors in the country that drive escalation or de-escalation of conflict.

As project teams prepare transport projects in conflict settings they will need to balance a series of considerations, some technical, logistical or administrative that would be demanded by the sector or project, and others *contextual*, demanded by the need to address conflict-related challenges or ensure that activities do not exacerbate conflicts. Among the most common tradeoffs for roads projects in conflict-affected countries are:

- *Rate of return of projects:* a key priority of transport projects would normally be solutions and designs that produce outcomes with high financial returns comparative to the investments, and projects that take place in conflict settings would almost always be more costly than in other settings because of challenges such as insecurity and low government capacity.<sup>2</sup> Considerations that may be demanded from a conflict perspective, for instance giving priorities to roads projects in marginalized areas, are likely to further lower the rate of return. Neglecting such opportunities, however, may risk strengthening rather than weakening factors driving violent conflict in such areas.
- *Speed of preparations and implementation:* in some of the conflict settings the political situation is so precarious that the government needs to quickly demonstrate visible results to be seen as legitimate or to show that a peace agreement is beneficial to the public. Contextual needs such as demand for targeting of specific social groups may go counter to the political need for speedy project delivery. The question to consider is what matters more: a few



months “delay” or the potential fallout of strengthening existing inequalities and perhaps be seen to mostly benefit the government’s power base.

- *Sequencing of implementation*: an immediate “post conflict” priority might be the call for execution of projects that bring visible peace benefits and allow the population to have a sense of return to normality. As a consequence, badly needed institutional capacity building may have to be postponed to allow the implementation of projects that bring visible and immediate benefits, for instance roads that provide access to markets and basic services in areas of key political or economic importance.
- *Consultations and participation*: involvement by representatives of the population in the design and implementation of projects are helpful for many reasons, including for ensuring that design solutions are acceptable, for helping to sustain the results of the activities, and for developing transparent and accountable decision-making. However, such features will add time and cost, and possibly introduce new sets of sensitivities regarding who actually participates and are heard. The question is what the right price to pay for acceptance and support by key beneficiaries would be in a situation of political balancing and insecurity.
- *Focus on insecure areas*: if a transport project only covers secure areas and neglects those affected by violence and insecurity, it may potentially increase inequalities between population groups or regions that caused the conflict, and may escalate the conflict further. However, operating in insecure areas may expose staff and contractors to real risks and add significant cost for their protection. The team needs to consider the potential consequences of either scenario.

If a project aims to improve low volume roads the rate of return analysis is substituted by socio-economic analysis provided that low cost options are chosen (Design and Appraisal of Rural Transport Infrastructure, WTP 496).

Decisions made on these tradeoffs may not only affect whether projects would reach their development objectives, but also the effects a project may have on the conflict. These and other tradeoffs put task teams in situations where they need to weigh potential fallouts from a long series of decisions that need to be made in both design and implementation of the way a project interacts with the conflict context. The next section describes the relationships between roads sector projects and conflict in more detail.

## 4 INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE ROADS SECTOR AND VIOLENT CONFLICT

Based on review of conflict analyses and other literature in each of the case study countries, we highlight two main sets of issues that relate to the trajectory of conflict across the countries: (i) poverty, especially in terms of limited economic assets and resources among the majority of the population, and unequal access to assets and resources between population groups and between regions, and (ii) governance, especially the manner in which public goods and services are provided and the population's ability to influence this. We highlight two additional aspects that interfere with the way the projects operate in these settings: (iii) the existence of insecurity in the project areas, and (iv) the large presence of different actors involved in the sector. Clearly, the above issues have different significance for different projects depending on whether they are dealing with national highways, or secondary and tertiary roads. How can teams ensure that project activities are sensitive to these contextual challenges in a situation of conflicting demands? This section will describe the interactions and some solutions identified by transport sector teams.

### 4.1 POVERTY, INEQUALITY, AND SOCIETAL DIVISIONS

Countries affected by violent conflict are typically among the poorest in the world going into these situations and usually even poorer when situations eventually stabilize. Economic analyses of civil war have found that the failure of economic development is a key cause of conflict. They have pointed to low per capita income, low rate of growth, and dependence on primary commodity exports as robust explanatory factors in cross-country studies of the risk for violent internal conflict (Collier et al., 2003). Poverty reduction and economic growth are also found to be important for maintaining peace in post-conflict situations. According to Collier *et al.* (2008) post conflict countries that achieve greater rates of growth are less likely to see a return of violence. Hoeffler (2010) presents evidence that “the poorer the country is and the longer economic recovery takes, the higher is the risk to revert to civil war.”

Poverty may also be linked to conflict because of perceived or real inequities. Inequalities that develop between distinct social groups on the basis of their ethnic, social, regional or other characteristics are often underestimated as a

source of armed conflict (Stewart, 2002; Østby, 2007). In fact, Sambanis (2004) has shown that the highest risk of violent conflict occurs in societies where there is an overlap between poverty and ethno-religious cleavages. Vertical economic inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient, on the other hand, shows little association with violent conflict (Sambanis, 2004). Østby (2007), using national survey data from

55 countries, calculated welfare inequalities between ethnic, religious, and regional groups and found that all the measures of inequalities between distinct social groups, and particularly regional inequality, are positively associated with higher risk of conflict outbreak.

The roads sector usually aims to promote economic growth and reduce poverty by connecting people to services and trading centers. This sector also affects poverty and the allocation of resources through employment generation and through the services and goods that are procured for the implementation of infrastructure initiatives. However, in cases where specific population groups or regions benefit disproportionately from investments in roads infrastructure at the expense of other groups, divisions between groups are likely to be exacerbated. In cases where allocation of resources takes place more transparently and equitably, divisions may become less important.

It is difficult to ensure that a roads sector project is not exacerbating differences between groups, especially as these may be indirect effects. It is possible, however, to understand the main points of interaction between the roads sector and poverty reduction and distributional impacts. This understanding would help strategy and policy development as well as decisions regarding project selection and prioritization. Some of the main points of interaction are listed below:

- **ROAD SELECTION/PRIORITIZATION**

During road selection/prioritization, it is possible to consider both the economic impacts of a road as well as the distributional impacts of the project. Understanding both of these and the trade-off between prioritizing one over the other can improve decision-making in a project.

Projects can have differential impacts on different geographic, ethnic, or social groups. Geography is particularly important for the roads sector. It is necessary to note that geography itself can make some regions less developed and isolated, and transport decisions could aggravate or lessen the impact of these imbalances. In Afghanistan, for instance, geography makes many rural areas of the country difficult to reach, yet nearly 80 percent of the population live in rural areas. The isolation of many rural communities is thought to be one of the main reasons for rural poverty, holding back the replacement of poppy seeds with licit rural livelihoods. A potential solution to this isolation is the

implementation of projects such as the National Rural Access Program (NRAP), which creates infrastructure that improves the access of rural people to economic and social opportunities, health services, and education facilities. The NRAP and its predecessor, the National Emergency Employment Program (NEEP), have proven to be successful national priority programs, investing over \$200 million in rural roads; rehabilitating 9,000 km of rural roads; and connecting 3,000 villages to town centers (The World Bank, 2007). Increasing access for these rural areas may help decrease the divide between different parts of Afghanistan, promoting equity and potentially having positive impacts in de-escalating conflict.

Ensuring equitable access of different social and ethnic groups is important in cases where these differences are seen to be among the causes of conflict, as is in the case of Nepal. The case of the Rural Access Improvement and Decentralization Project in Nepal works across the country and has resulted in road construction in the rural areas. The project aim of country-wide coverage has allowed non-rural areas to feel secure and included. Because of this country-wide aim, the project has also ensured that different ethnic groups, castes, and geographic regions are included, also potentially having positive impacts on conflict.

A possibly different result is evident in Kosovo, where decisions in the roads sector may have widened divisions. In Kosovo, majority and minority groups use different methods and routes for transportation. In the aftermath of the 1999 NATO bombing of Kosovo and Serbia, when the government in Belgrade lost control of Kosovo, the divisions between Roma, Serbian, and Albanian populations were most evident. In many cases, Roma and Serbian populations were afraid to use the same transportation methods as the majority Albanian population: their restricted access to areas outside their communities became known as the problem of 'freedom of movement.' To address this problem, NATO peacekeepers built roads connecting minority enclaves to each other, thus making it possible for them to avoid passing through Albanian communities and thus increasing feelings of security in the Serbian population. In the short-run, the minority populations are better connected. The division between majority and minority populations may be exacerbated by these roads, however, since groups of different origins have less need to interact. Currently, minority and majority populations often use the same roads, but rarely use the same means of transport. Segregation in the use of transport is one of the clearest signs of conflict impact on the country.

Depending on the location of roads and the access they provide to different geographic areas and ethnic and social groups, decisions in the road sector may also exacerbate or mitigate existing divisions through trade facilitation outcomes. Population groups that are closer to roads that open up these connections are likely to benefit more, and if these groups already have

advantages (in terms of resources or power) comparative to other groups, divisions could be widened. In the case of projects aiming to increase trade, however, it may be difficult to choose a more equitable distribution of resources over the advantage of opening up markets. In cases where distribution may be considered inequitable, however, it is essential that projects have sound communications strategies and are transparent in the way decisions are made.

Again, Kosovo provides an example of the impacts of the road sector on trade and on distribution of resources. Because of restrictions of goods and vehicles crossing into Serbia or even into northern Kosovo, a road connecting to Durres, Albania to Kosovo has been prioritized. This increases the links between Kosovar Albanian and ethnic kin in Albania. Although the project is meant to ultimately connect Durres with the rest of Europe through a road passing through Serbia the road currently stops before crossing into Serbia and benefits the mostly Albanian population of Kosovo. However, the impacts of this road are likely to be positive in the long run: the road is likely to support economic growth and trade in Kosovo, and to open up the possibility for Serbia to access the port of Durres in the future. Serbian access to this port is likely to also be an incentive for Serbia to negotiate with Kosovo – a positive conflict impact. This second effect, however, remains hypothetical for the time being. It is also possible that the long-term effects of this road are to decrease the incentives for the Government of Kosovo to negotiate with the Government of Serbia.

- **EMPLOYMENT GENERATION**

Employment generation is important in conflict situations because it helps promote poverty reduction and because it increases the opportunity costs of using violence. Roads sector projects can lead to increased employment of young males who in many cases have a higher predisposition towards violence (Collier, 2009). Because of the large number of jobs created in some roads projects, it is also common for these projects to result in large infusions of cash into local communities, thus helping to recreate local economic demand. Roads sector projects can also serve to reactivate parts of the private sector that could not function with poor infrastructure, indirectly fostering job creation in those businesses. Employment in the roads sector is also a resource that can be distributed equitably or inequitably. In fact, in many communities, one of the clearest benefits of a road construction project is employment, and roads sector jobs are highly sought after. Having participatory and transparent mechanisms for selecting employees are important to avoid perceptions of bias.

In many settings, however, employment generation efforts aim at engaging those groups that could potentially reignite violence. The idea is to increase

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the costs of returning to violence and to provide former fighters an incentive for maintaining peace. Targeting employment generation efforts towards these groups, nevertheless, could also be seen as unfair by those not targeted: in some cases, giving preference to former fighters for jobs is perceived as unduly rewarding individuals for violence. In addition to this, in the long run, providing jobs for ex-combatants can raise the former fighters' expectations about the availability of long-term employment, which can create a rift when these expectations are not met.

Employment generation through road sector projects is in line with the policies established by the International Labour Organization (ILO) regarding post-conflict employment creation (United Nations, 2009). UN guidelines, which were elaborated in consultation with the World Bank and other institutions, establish long and short term employment as strategies to promote peace.

If the road sector project aims at generating employment in conflict-affected regions, it is important to take into consideration these principles. Even though the main objective of the project should not become employment generation, it is still important to consider the positive (or negative) impacts that the project could have on local labor markets

### BOX 2: CONFLICT AND EXPECTATIONS IN SOUTHERN SOUDAN

Contractors working in Southern Sudan reported a number of challenges in relation to tempering expectations. One of the most significant challenges, according to contractors was dealing with expectations that roads would create many high paid jobs. This was especially problematic when unskilled laborers from local communities were hired and had to be replaced because of the quality and amount of their work. Local workers were also extremely dissatisfied when finding out that international counterparts were receiving higher salaries. These unmet expectations led to violence in some instances. In one particular case, a contractor had to ask the Sudan People Liberation Army (SPLA) to restore order.

There is a great deal of information on the effectiveness of the roads sector for creating jobs and to have employment-related poverty reduction outcomes, *when job creation is an objective of the project itself*. In Liberia, for example, a survey conducted for a roads project designed by World Bank and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and executed by UNDP revealed that those who obtained employment through the project were better able to take care of themselves and their families as a result of the wages received. In addition to this, over 70% of those receiving jobs reported that they had better living conditions as a result of the project and that they had invested some of their wages in income generating projects. In Nepal, the Rural Access Improvement and Decentralization Project employed people from lower social and economic strata to be involved in the construction of a 36 km feeder road. As a result, 73 community-based organizations were formed, which employed

as semi-skilled and unskilled laborers about 130,000 local men and women from Dalits and indigenous groups living along this road corridor. In Afghanistan, the NEEP and NERAP have created nearly 13 million labor-days of employment.

There is an obvious tradeoff between the benefits obtained from labor intensive methods, for instance through public works, and requirements in terms of road quality and speed of construction. It may be important to note that roads projects may create little local employment when the speed of construction or the chosen construction method, as in the case of national highways, take precedence and heavy machinery and skilled workers replace labor intensive construction methods. In such cases the construction may be contracted to large specialized firms, often international ones who may bring in foreign workers, due to the technical requirements. In conflict settings, such as Afghanistan, many roads are built for military purpose with construction at greater speed and at higher technical standards than what is common for low volume roads. Asphalt surface is preferred for this purpose because of the need to carry heavy trucks and armor and because mines and IEDs cannot easily be planted in such roads. In some cases task teams may be faced with demands for such high quality roads even if there is little economic rationale in terms of trade etc for such a choice but because of underlying military reasons.

Projects have used different criteria for selecting those obtaining jobs in a roads initiative. In the Nepal roads sector projects, employees are selected by the construction firms, who select people based on qualifications, with priority given to local residents. In Afghanistan, residents of local communities around road construction are hired to carry out works. In Liberia, on the other hand, the roads project targeted groups for employment that could potentially undermine the peace process. These included ex-combatants and returnees from abroad. However, other vulnerable groups (females in particular) were also targeted for participation in employment, thus reducing possible resentments and improving economic opportunities for several stakeholders.

There is less information on the distributional and conflict impacts of employment generated by the roads sector. The cases, however, show that these impacts are important. In Liberia, for example, there is a perception among many non-combatants that giving preference to ex-combatants for employment was unfair. Some ex-combatants also express their lack of satisfaction with the limited length of jobs and the low wages received. In Nepal, however, there seems to be a general level of satisfaction with the way jobs were allocated. Individuals working for these projects were generally vulnerable and there was less competition for employment in roads sector projects, perhaps because of the prevailing wage rates.

- **ACCESS TO LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

Road projects are likely to have direct effects on a series of issues related to land and natural resources that may in turn impact the relationship between population groups. First, land acquisition to allow for road construction is typically a source of much dissatisfaction and social tension in any context and may combine with wider political interests and issues in conflict settings. Governments in fragile and conflict situations may have little will and ability to follow regular legal procedures required by the Bank, resulting in a situation of land acquisition without due process or compensation and often ending in explosive local situations. Neglect of rules may be even stronger in remote areas without opportunities for close supervision. Second, road construction and the expected increase in economic activity are likely to increase the value of land adjacent or close to the roads. This has been known to prompt takeover of land by elite groups and alienate local populations, often playing into wider political conflicts. Third, access to forests and other natural resources following roads construction are likely to have unequal benefits. In some countries businesses involved in logging or mining may be the primary beneficiaries while local inhabitants lose out and may be further marginalized. While projects have been mitigating the immediate fallouts of situations such as the ones above, the wider long-term consequences are likely to require further political economy and social analyses.

- **ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES FOR GOODS AND SERVICES**

Roads projects also affect the distribution of resources in a conflict context through the procurement of goods and services. Often roads projects are some of the largest development initiatives, and a large number of companies and individuals compete in procurement processes. Much like in the case of road prioritization and employment generation, however, goods and services are a resource that can benefit one group or another.

There is less information on the distribution of resources through procurement of goods and services in a roads sector project. Task teams have less control over this distribution of resources, since procurement mechanisms do not make it possible to take these impacts into account. Perhaps because of this, fairness and transparency in procurement processes are essential. All groups need to understand the basics of procurement processes so that there is no perception of unequal or biased distribution of contracts.

Understanding the impacts of roads projects on distribution of resources and the effects that this can have on conflict is essential to making the right decisions when faced with tradeoffs during project prioritization and implementation.



BOX 3: QUESTIONS FOR ROAD SECTOR

**Roads sector teams may find it useful to consider the following questions:**

- 1.** Do the policies, strategies and infrastructure promoted by the roads sector consider the existing divisions between groups? Does the roads sector address the needs of the different groups (ethnic, gender, region, etc.)? Would there be real or perceived gains by specific groups if these policies, strategies and infrastructure were in place? Would these gains make relations between groups better or more equitable? How can policies, strategies and infrastructure design be formulated to make relations between groups better or more equitable?
- 2.** In what ways would the project affect access to and control of resources such as land, trade routes, and natural resources across population groups? What would be likely outcomes of such access on the relationship between groups?
- 3.** Will the roads project generate employment? Who will decide who will obtain employment? What mechanisms can be put in place to ensure both short term benefits (in terms of employing those that could reignite violence) and long term benefits (in terms of equity in employment benefits, management of expectations)? Is there competition for roads sector employment? If so, what mechanisms are in place to ensure that jobs are distributed fairly?
- 4.** Are there communications strategies in place that can make the process for decision-making regarding prioritization of initiatives and job allocation transparent?
- 5.** Will procurement of goods and services result in a specific social, ethnic, or geographically defined group benefitting more than other groups? Are there mechanisms to ensure that those interested in providing these services have adequate information and capacity to bid for these services? Is the process perceived as fair and transparent?

## 4.2 GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The 2007 World Bank Governance and Anti-corruption Strategy (GAC) defines governance as the manner in which public officials and institutions acquire and exercise the authority to shape public policy and provide public goods and services. The way governance is exercised in conflict-affected countries is crucial for the roads sector in two major ways: as the *manner* in which public policy is developed and public goods and services delivered; and as a key *determinant* of violent conflict. In the following we will look at both aspects.

Weak governance institutions can increase risk of violence. The research emphasizing that poverty, especially the level, growth and structure of a country's income, is the most significant correlate of violent conflict (Collier et al. 2003) has been complemented by some focus on the role of governance. For instance, Fearon and Laitin (2003) use low income as a proxy for a *weak state*, which they see as unable to effectively control its territory. *Institutions* are the focus of other studies with findings that "indicate that lack of secure property rights and enforcement of the law is a fundamental cause of civil war" and pointing to the quality of institutions in explaining this (Djankov, Simeon, and Marta Reynal-Querol, 2007). The literature has shown that civil war is less likely in democracies and autocracies than in "anocracies" or semi-democracies; studies also show that *democracies* granting full political rights are less likely than autocracies to experience major violence (Bodea, Christina, and Ibrahim A. Elbadawi, 2007).

Divisions can translate into biased or ineffective institutions. In many conflict-affected contexts, divisions and inequalities present in a society manifest themselves in the way governance is exercised. The state's ability to develop sound policy and provide high quality goods and services in an equitable manner can be negatively affected by a number of factors related to the conflict situation, including low capacity, particularistic interests, frequent changes in government, ineffective decision-making and prioritization, and isolation from the country's civil society and citizenry. Such weaknesses are important for the roads sector in different ways, though especially in developing sector strategies and policies for the country: in some circumstances the weaknesses may paralyze the development of any meaningful strategy thus leaving the planning, production, and servicing of roads infrastructure to fragmented, ad-hoc and often erratic decisions. In other circumstances governance weaknesses may lead to the development of a sector strategy that benefits certain population groups or regions at the cost of others. This scenario in particular may play into existing divisions and thus function to escalate conflicts. Moreover, unequal provision of goods and

services across the population may undermine government legitimacy in parts of the population.

Weak legitimacy is a key governance problem in conflict settings. For example in Afghanistan, while violence has been driven by a combination of factors, the weak legitimacy of the central government has played a major role: its authority challenged by minority ethnic groups as well as many of the regions outside Kabul, and its legitimacy undermined by the inability to control the security of the country as well as by an entrenched system of corruption and patronage. In Liberia, state legitimacy was challenged from the beginning and further compromised during the civil war with both government and rebels extracting mineral and natural resources and committing atrocities against civilians and with the system of “town chiefs” controlling the rural communities challenged by young people in particular (Richards and others, 2005). In Nepal, low quality of services, especially in rural areas, has reduced the legitimacy of government in the eyes of citizens. Legitimacy has also been affected by the limited access that the average Nepalese citizen has had to a government that has been dominated by traditional elites (Gersony, 2003, Brown 1996 in Deraniyagala, 2005).

Bank initiatives in the roads sector are greatly affected by but also have significant effects on governance issues in conflict settings. Some of the main interactions gleaned from the cases in the study and other roads projects are described below:

- **THE ROADS SECTOR INDIRECTLY IMPACTS GOVERNMENT LEGITIMACY.** A well designed roads project can increase the legitimacy of government in the eyes of beneficiaries. In Liberia, for example, perceptions that the government was not rebuilding the infrastructure quickly enough was thought to weaken government legitimacy. Quick and effective implementation of the Bank-assisted Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project and the Emergency Infrastructure Project was therefore essential, along with an information campaign that adequately described the scope of the projects. A similar challenge existed in South Sudan: the government’s goals in emphasizing the reconstruction of the transport sector were to show warring parties the benefits of peace, connect communities that were previously isolated because of mined roads, facilitate the return of IDPs, improve access for security forces and create employment.
- **ROADS SECTOR PROJECTS CAN IMPROVE LOCAL LEVEL DECISION-MAKING:** Local level and community involvement in decision-making may help overcome fallout of poor governance if they include a wide variety of stakeholders in project design,

implementation and monitoring. For demand-side governance activities to mitigate risks related to conflict, it is important to ensure that the stakeholders involved are representative of local populations. If those selected to represent local interests also represent a side to a conflict, the process may be compromised. It is also essential that those selected to be part of such processes include a cross-section of the communities in terms of poverty, ethnicity and other characteristics, and also are not simply political allies of the government. Consultations on transport projects that will cover wider areas should deliberately include population groups and regions that are underserved by public investments and are marginalized from social and economic development.

BOX 4: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS

Community Development Councils can promote local ownership as well as conflict resolution

National Solidarity Program (NSP) in Afghanistan: The National Solidarity Program is an extensive initiative reaching over 29,000 villages in Afghanistan with an investment of over \$1 billion. It is one of the most successful experiences of community driven development in conflict affected countries. With such an impressive record, it is worthwhile to look into the factors that allowed this program to be widely accepted in the country. Through the Community Development Councils (CDC), the local communities have chosen to use approximately 20% of the resources for roads sector projects (on average), which has translated so far in roughly 10,000 projects in total.

The Community Development Councils (CDC) were established through a democratic process, where at least 40% of eligible voters need to cast their vote. To avoid elite capture, there is no candidacy or electioneering in the process. CDCs are composed of equal number of men and women, and serve as representative institutions of their village. As such, they are the pivotal point between government authorities and local population. CDCs' main functions include selection of projects, identification of future development needs and how resources will be allocated. In several cases, CDCs have also played a new role within the community as conflict mediators. The perception of being a representative, impartial and transparent institution has led the CDCs to play a role in solving local conflicts related to land and water, family disputes, and youth fights and political discrimination.

The NSP experience has shown that a conflict and culturally sensitive approach, together with local participation and transparency can help to achieve a general acceptance and ownership of an initiative through local population. This has allowed the NSP to construct 550 Km of secondary roads and 17,545 Km tertiary roads through the implementation of 6,967 road sub projects in 6,276 communities within 306 districts of Afghanistan so far. These sub projects directly benefit more than 7.4 million people. The road sub projects have created some 4.5 million labor days which has increased the income of families as well as enhanced the ownership of those communities of the projects.

Source: Sakhi, F. (2010)

- **Transport sector initiatives can reach the local level through community-driven development:** Building on decades of experience with 'participatory community development' by non-governmental organizations, the Bank has over the last decade promoted the use of 'community-driven development' (CDD) as a way to strengthen local level initiative, capacity and governance, and provide much needed goods and services at the local level, including transport infrastructure such as rural or tertiary roads. A number of studies, including by the Bank, have found CDD approaches to be particularly well suited to the challenges of conflict situations: they are often able to provide benefits across the population relatively fast, they may help strengthen the resiliency of local communities, and the implementation can be flexible and avoid high-value targets for armed groups, including expensive machinery. The Burundi Road Sector Development Project (RSDP) included an innovative community-based road maintenance component. Recognizing that ethnic discrimination and disputes over land were important facets of the conflict, the project created a community based road maintenance program as a way to improve security, improve social cohesion, create cash jobs in the rural economy, and enhance the sustainability of road investments. As such, following participatory consultations with local leaders and other stakeholders, associations were formed to conduct routine maintenance work on 10 kilometer long stretches of road.
- **Transparency and information can dispel misconceptions:** Conflict settings are often ripe with rumors and perceptions of who may benefit and who may lose from roads projects. Misconceptions can play into wider political issues, increase tensions and escalate conflicts. Bank-assisted projects increasingly support measures to strengthen transparency, for instance to have government at different levels publicize budgets and citizens to monitor expenditures. At the local level, projects such as the India Rural Roads have experimented with displaying values of contracts by using symbols in the form of the number of gravel trucks, bags of cement, etc to help community monitoring. In conflict settings, projects should prioritize active communications of their objective and scope, criteria for selection of roads to be supported, implementation plan, contract awards, and other essential information that can be misconceived.

## BOX 5: BETTER GOVERNANCE THROUGH SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

## Better governance through social accountability

Social accountability mechanisms can promote good governance in the roads sector: In the Protection of Basic Services Project (PBS) in Ethiopia, which includes support to rural roads in addition to health, education and agriculture, a sub-program is devoted to social accountability. Unlike the other PBS sub-programs, which are implemented by the government, this is managed by an independent, non-governmental entity and implemented by civil society organizations (CSOs). The sub-program is applying tools such as “community score cards”, “citizens’ report cards” and “participatory budgeting” as bases for interface meetings between service providers and service recipients which conclude with agreed action plans to improve services. An independent evaluation of the first phase of this initiative has found that in addition to direct organizational benefits to the participants, use of the social accountability tools has indeed helped improve the quality of services provided by the government. The impact of this initiative is being further enhanced by linking it closely with a “supply-side” Financial Transparency and Accountability sub-program within PBS, implemented by the government at federal, regional and district levels, that has developed and rolled out tools, guidance and training programs for budget literacy and financial transparency, and trained government staff in the use of these tools.

Source: IPE Global (2010)

- **The Governance and Accountability Action Plan (GAAP) should address constraints arising from the conflict setting:** GAAPs are required in many transport sector initiatives, and have the aim of ensuring the project is run in a transparent, accountable, and participatory manner. Adapting the GAAP to a conflict context involves looking at the points of interaction between governance issues and conflict and strengthening the governance structures that can address the constraints. This can mean: looking at where corruption and violence are linked and strengthening mechanisms to control corruption; developing inclusive participation mechanisms for communities that create community buy-in in a project and strengthen project security; creating mechanisms for procurement that minimize risks to contractors; understanding the relationship between project stakeholders and conflict, and creating mechanisms to include different points of view. RAIDP in Nepal has attempted to strengthen accountability by reducing corruption such as collusion of contractors, inconsistent payment of contractor employees, and apparent unofficial sub-contracting of works to under-qualified companies, and by eliminating extortion when contractors are asked to contribute to armed groups or are threatened.

While Bank teams assisting design and implementation of programs in conflict-affected countries may have little direct ability to influence the larger

governance aspects that affect conflicts in these countries, program effectiveness would clearly benefit from understanding the role these aspects play and what role the programs play in the larger political context.

Box 6: USEFUL QUESTIONS

The following questions may be useful for teams when considering these issues:

1. Is the authority of the government accepted as legitimate by different population groups across the country?
2. Does the government rely on this project for fulfilling promises made to specific groups in the country? What would be the effect if these promises were not fulfilled? Is the government biased (or seen to be) in favor of particular population groups or regions?
3. Is corruption within government institutions (seen to be) a big problem? What are the wider political consequences of corruption?
4. Does the country have a transport sector strategy developed in consultation with a cross-section of the society, including marginalized populations and regions? Is the strategy seen as being fair and inclusive?
5. What are the opportunities for involving local community members in design, implementation, maintenance and monitoring of transport programs at the local levels? What mechanisms would ensure participation by groups with different socioeconomic, ethnic, clan, caste, etc. characteristics?
6. What type of communication/information strategy would be put in place to ensure that different stakeholder voices are taken into account (in consultations, feedback, and understanding/response to decisions made by implementing agencies)?

### 4.3 SECURITY CONSTRAINTS

One of the main characteristics of conflict settings is a lack of security and a large amount of available weapons. Security constraints impact the conflict directly and indirectly, along with the operations of a project. The roads sector, because of its scope and reach, multiple types of initiatives affecting macro and micro levels in urban and rural settings, is among the sectors most affected by security constraints.

Insecurity can severely hamper the implementation of roads sector projects. Sometimes staff of development organizations cannot visit project sites because of insecurity, or they have to visit sites while facing high risks. Because of security constraints, there is often a lack of information about the needs of people living in conflict contexts – this lack of information makes it more difficult to make decisions about development well after security is no longer an issue. Security constraints are often an issue even in a post-peace

settlement situation: violence often continues at differing level of intensity and development projects operating in these situations may face significant risks. For example, communities in South Sudan were frustrated when the project could not clear mines from areas outside of the road being built. Tension arose because community members assumed that the entire area leading up to the road was de-mined when in fact de-mining only occurred in the immediate area where construction was occurring. This misunderstanding led to casualties as community members tried to approach the road through areas that had not been demined.

Development initiatives may be specific targets of violence. There is a common misperception that development work is not political. Previous sections, however, have shown that development work can become resources that increase or decrease tensions between groups and that can boost or reduce government legitimacy. In some cases, roads being constructed may have military purposes. Because of these effects, several violent groups see development initiatives, including transport infrastructure works as legitimate targets. Attacks on transport infrastructure sometimes aim to demonstrate rebel group strength in disrupting the economy, destroying infrastructure equipment, and creating fear among the population. Rebel groups have another incentive to target roads as they recognize that roads will improve access, enabling the government to connect isolated groups to development benefits and for government security forces to reach rebel groups more easily. On the other hand, just like roads bring tangible benefits to governments; better roads could also work in the favor of rebel groups. These groups would enjoy easier access to isolated villages as well as to natural resources used to finance their activities, and would incur lower costs in conducting and sustaining operations due to a developed road system (Zhukov 2010).

It is important to note that there are rarely best practices in addressing security issues, and it is essential to take tradeoffs into. The cases we have looked at have addressed risks to project staff, contractors and other stakeholders in different ways:

- **Addressing security constraints directly:** The fear of threats and killing of staff (contractors and employees) involved in road construction is a genuine concern. In some cases, staff employed by a project may be victims of extortion or kidnapping, causing delays or even stoppage of work. In Nepal, for example, a government-employed engineer was killed in the Terai region, highlighting the risks involved in working in areas affected by violence. Addressing such risks indirectly is not easy, especially because violent groups rarely are open to negotiation. Options for addressing security risks directly include hiring of armed security contractors and the use of armored vehicles and other equipment. While security for operations



will increase operation costs, it sometimes makes projects able to operate in otherwise inaccessible areas.

Hiring security personnel to mitigate security risks can present several other problems, however. First, it may be important to note that in highly insecure settings individuals are often perceived to be part of a side in the conflict. This perception may exist even if individuals themselves do not see themselves as part of a side or group. Choosing who to engage as security personnel can therefore be difficult. Many believe that hiring security personnel actually makes the project or organization more directly involved in the conflict and thus may make it a more legitimate target in the eyes of those perpetrating violence. Humanitarian aid groups, for example, often avoid the use of security personnel to avoid this perception.

- **Prioritizing secure areas:** An environment of deteriorating security or a situation when contractors have become targets for violence may make it impossible for the project to operate in certain areas. In these situations, the project should be able to adjust its scope and coverage. For example, as part of the transport project in Nepal, security risk assessments of specific districts are conducted regularly and geographic targeting changed when security deteriorates. Prioritizing secure areas, however, has the potential to increase inequalities that may have been causes of conflict. This risk is greater in places where inequality is geographic: if particular social or economic groups are left out of project implementation, divisions between these groups and those that were included in the project are likely to deepen.
- **Addressing intimidation and extortion:** Violence is often directly related to procurement, such as when contractors are extorted or intimidated. In Nepal, for example, the bidding process for road works is dangerous for contractors in some areas of the country: contractors are intimidated and extorted when bidding for certain profitable contracts. This risk sometimes decreases the number of bidders for certain works, and potentially decreases the overall quality of the infrastructure. E-bidding processes have been introduced as a solution to allow contractors to submit bids while decreasing the risk of intimidation and extortion. Introducing complaint mechanisms for contractors can also help to reduce these risks.
- **Engagement with local communities:** One of the most effective strategies for the security of the project is the inclusion of local communities in the project. For this, a vital task is the consultation process and a communication strategy that boosts transparency. By going beyond information provision into an active engagement of the

communities, their sense of ownership is strengthened. This has shown to encourage local people to provide information on changing security risks as well as provide protection of infrastructure and staff to the best of their abilities. In the long run, beyond the conflict, this engagement will also increase the sustainability of the project.

It is important for teams to recognize how insecurity jeopardizes the design and implementation of a project, to put mitigation measures in place and to seriously consider tradeoffs of decisions.

**BOX 7: SPECIFIC QUESTIONS RELATED TO SECURITY**

In this context, specific questions related to security in the country and areas covered by the project need to be examined:

- 1.** What kind of security threats are there in the areas of project implementation? Is it likely that the project would be a direct target?
- 2.** Would it be possible to easily access areas covered by the project? If not, what mechanisms can be put in place to make the areas accessible? If a project site becomes inaccessible, would the repercussions of halting the project mid-way be acceptable?
- 3.** Does the risk of violence against users of the infrastructure figure in the planning and design? How would outcomes and objectives be reached if such risks exist? What alternative design solutions are considered for that purpose?
- 4.** What would be the longer-term impacts on inequalities between population groups and between regions, and potentially on conflict, if insecure areas are not included by the project?
- 5.** What mechanisms can be put in place to make bidding safe and to prevent corruption from funding violence?

#### 4.4 CONSIDERING THE ROLES AND ACTIVITIES OF MULTIPLE ACTORS

In conflict contexts, each actor/organization is likely to be seen as supporting a certain point of view or side in a conflict. This is true of all actors, including those that aim to be neutral (including donors, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector). Because of this, in conflict settings, it is important to clearly understand both the actual and perceived roles of partners and beneficiaries of a project and to include measures in the design of projects that minimize the perceived gains/losses of different actors..

Perceived support for a specific side of the conflict can cause certain parts of the population to be excluded from benefits. Conflict contexts are often polarized, and individuals and communities often prefer to work with agencies that support “their” side of the conflict. Resources going to partners are often direct benefits to specific population groups. Even transparent procurement and partner selection processes may lead to over or under-representation of partners with background in different population groups. Initiatives that aim at improving the situation of people regardless of their perspective of role in a conflict should consider this, and aim to signal, through the choice of partners and project activities, that the project is inclusive and benefitting across population groups.

The effectiveness of partners and contractors also impacts project results and perceptions. Work carried out by partners and contractors has implications for perceptions of Bank-assisted activities even when not directly linked with or funded by the Bank. A partner/contractor that is not able to deliver on commitments in other projects will likely also be perceived negatively when engaged in other activities in the same community. Partners/contractors engaged in political activities outside their project activities are also likely to be perceived as biased in project implementation. All of this points to the importance of selecting partners that have a solid record of effective implementation and working across communities/groups.

The effectiveness of coordination with other actors can also impact project results. In conflict settings, the work of different donors, organizations, and even government institutions is often not adequately coordinated, and often lacking clear roles and division of labor. In the immediate “post-conflict” situation, the UN has the mandate to play a leading role in donor and aid coordination. However, this mandate can be subject to a series of limitations derived from political and economic interests and individual donor agendas. Duplication is a major problem in this type of situation. Even when there is an effort at coordination, reconciling priorities and operating mechanisms is difficult. Priorities are often established in foreign capitals, far away from the realities of the field. Different donors/organizations often have limited ability to change decisions once these are made and funding is allocated. Coordination on the ground has limited impacts when priorities cannot be easily changed by those in the field.

In some cases, lack of coordination even results in organizations working at cross purposes. This clearly reduces development impacts, and can reduce the credibility of the implementing organization/government agency. If this results in a lack of credibility of a government agency, this also has implications for reduced government legitimacy, which in turn increases conflict risks.

Several of the cases we have examined chose partners and implemented coordination mechanisms purposefully to maximize development impacts and to reduce the impacts of the conflict context on the particular initiative.

- In Afghanistan, the National Solidarity Project – a community-driven development initiative that often assists communities in building local transport infrastructure – engages a wide variety of local and international organizations in facilitating the process of community engagement. These organizations are selected competitively, based on their knowledge and experience working in specific regions and on the cost of their services. The project, however, is clearly labeled as a Government initiative, contributing to the legitimacy of the state.
- In Liberia, different donors contribute to different parts of the roads network. The lack of transport master plans, however, makes it difficult for the government to ensure coordination of activities and maximize results.
- Partner selection for rural roads projects in Nepal aims at increasing access of project activities to otherwise unreachable areas. Before the peace agreement, this meant that local NGOs were selected in Maoist controlled areas that could access local communities and engage them in project implementation. This is thought to have opened up access to new areas for project implementation, fostering inclusion and equity.

The following questions may be useful when considering the choice of partners in a conflict setting:

- 1.** What roles do the project's different partners and contractors play in the conflict? How are their roles perceived by others, especially the general public?
- 2.** Are the main population groups (based on their social, ethnic and regional background) under- or over-represented among the project's main partners and contractors?
- 3.** Do the backgrounds and roles of partners and contractors help or constrain the project achieve its outcomes? What is the potential impact of their background and roles on the conflict?

## 5 CONCLUSION

The review of the country cases has shown that there is a clear need to consider the interaction between roads sector initiatives and key aspects of the conflict in order to maximize development impacts and minimize potential negative impacts of projects on the conflict situation.

When preparing a project in a country that has either experienced violent conflict in the last decade, or is perceived as unstable, teams should begin by assessing the current status of the conflict. Assessing issues such as social and political relations, access to resources, income distribution, access to political influence, will allow the teams to foresee the positive or negative impact of a specific road project on conflict, and the effects that a potential or existing conflict could have on the road project. But it is also important to monitor and update security indicators as an ongoing activity throughout project preparation and implementation. In a conflict setting, the traditional monitoring activities take on a much more important role, as they must provide enough information for quick decisions that need to be taken under continuously changing conditions. This will allow the project to adapt quickly to a changing situation.

In addition to, for instance, ensuring that the projects have equitable benefits across regions and population groups, teams are likely to be concerned about the lack of security of project staff and contractors in certain areas, and the effects of this on quality of implementation and monitoring. The project may also be concerned about potentially excluding certain areas because of security risks.

While there is no easy solution to many of these concerns, teams may want to look at the experience in Nepal where the project has been monitoring the security situation in each district on an ongoing basis, and based on the reviews and the timing of project activities, the method of engagement in each place was adjusted to community-based approaches if security or implementation risks were deemed as being very high. Total withdrawal would take place only as a last resort. The project also had measures in its Governance and Accountability Action Plan (GAAP) to reduce risks to project staff and contractors, and to further involve local communities. Moreover, the project addressed the above concerns by strengthening social accountability

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mechanisms, including enhanced grievance mechanisms, increased independent monitoring, and improved communication in communities. Finally, mechanisms were put in place to ensure that people of different ethnic and socio-economic groups, and different castes were well represented in project activities.

Teams working on the roads sector in conflict settings face huge challenges, some of which we have tried to describe in this note. By promoting a stronger focus on the interaction between their projects and the conflict context, we may have added another set of complicating issues, but take comfort in our experience that most teams see the benefits of this focus and already engage on the issues. We have tried to bring lessons together and to distill these into a series of questions that we believe will be helpful when teams' consider these issues. This note is accompanied by a series of briefs that aim to illustrate the interaction between the context and project in different conflict-affected countries and suggest indicators that may be helpful in monitoring this interaction.

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