

Post-Conflict Agriculture

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My lens, biases, and perspective

- Valuing the worldview of farmers and villagers
- Reality of power dynamics and power brokers



Post-Conflict Agriculture

- Agricultural Development and Agricultural Extension has a vital role in stabilizing and rebuilding food production in post-conflict situations. (Kock, Harder, & Saisi, 2010; Bhatia, Goodhand, Atmar, Pain, & Suleman, 2003; USIP, 2012)
- Difficulties facing Agricultural Extension (Cristoplos, 2010; 2004)
 - Decreasing funding
 - marginalized populations
 - assistance in post-conflict situations



Key Terms

- **Agricultural Innovation System** - “network of organizations, enterprises, and individuals focused on bringing new products, new processes, and new forms of organization into economic use, together with the institutions and policies that affect their behavior and performance” (World Bank, 2012, p. 2).
- **Key Farmer** - farmers who have developed influential recovery strategies that rebuild post-conflict community and food production systems. (Scarborough, Killough, Johnson, & Farrington, 1997)
- **Key Player** - The key player is someone who is a vital connecting node within a social network that is “optimally positioned to quickly diffuse information, attitudes, behaviors and/or to quickly receive the same” (Borgatti, 2006, p. 22)
- **Opinion Leader** – “The degree to which an individual is able informally to influence other individual’s attitudes or overt behavior in a desired way with relative frequency” (Rogers, 2003, p. 301).
- **Social Capital** – “Community structure, trust, and family networks” (Dronberger, 2013, p. 30)

Armed Conflict dynamics

- Conflict as the “normal” of the human experience
- Nature dynamics as a guide for human interactions and relationships
- Social points of friction build into grievances that eventually explode into armed conflict
- Localized violent conflict is often how issues are settled (Barron, Diprose, and Woolcock, 2011)

- **Armed Conflict: Disruptive and Recurrent Force to Agricultural Communities** (Collier, 2009; Goodhand, 2006; Rice, 2007)
 - Armed conflict dynamics (Green, 2012; Verwimp, 2007; Marijke, 2009)
 - Conflict as a regular occurrence (Martz, 2010; Brainard, Chollet, & LaFleur, 2007)
 - Types of armed actors (Jorgensen, 2006; Verwimp, 2007)
 - Characteristics of civilian population, institutions, social networks (Justino, 2009)

The Realities of War and Killing

- Improving the effectiveness of wartime killing
- Intermittent warfare that minimizes human loss and resource but perpetuates low level conflict
- Humans adapt to conflict to a point and then there is rapid breakdown in social and individual health if prolonged
- Group conditioning of humans to kill
- Rape as a tool for domination and reward for male combatants
- Are humans basically good or basically evil? Are evil acts done by humans an aberration and/or psychosis?

Spiritual Dynamics of Conflict

- Spiritual or religious beliefs to embolden, protect, and sustain
- Envisioning a different future (creator essence)
- Use of voice and conviction to convince/coerce people to fight
- Excessive alcohol and drugs to lower inhibitions to commit atrocities and to numb the mental and physical pain
- Utilization of these beliefs to serve in the recovery after conflict - absolution

- **Post-Conflict Recovery: Farmer Strategies**

- Planting of drought and conflict resistant crops like cassava (Heltberg & Tarp, 2002)
- Focus upon on farm production versus cash crops (Bozzoli & Bruck (2009)
- Off-farm labor is important (Cramer, Oya, & Sender, 2008)
- Diversified and dispersed livestock herds (Ahmed et. Al, 2001)
- Cultivation of illicit drugs (Transnational Institute & Paung Ku, 2013).

- **Farmer Participation: Essential Component of Effective Post-conflict recovery**
 - Focus upon empowering local organizations to engage in post-conflict recovery (MacGinty & Richmond, 2013)
 - Encouragement of “active citizenship” (Green, 2012, p. 451)
 - Difficulties in engaging farmers in a true participatory manner (Malual , 2008; Christoplos, 2010)
 - Important to reconnect agricultural networks (Erskine & Nesbitt; 2009)
 - Agricultural innovation among marginalized farmers should be encouraged (Snapp & Pound, 2008)

Theories about conflict

Key Player Theory (Borgatti, 2006)

Innovation brokers or catalytic agents (World Bank, 2012, p. 46)

Dual Concern Theory (Blake and Mouton, 1964) – personal gain vs. relationship gain

Disaster Literature

- Consensus Crisis Reactions (Coach & Kroll-Smith, 1994; Drabek, 1986)
- Corrosive Community Reactions (Freudenberg & Jones, 1991)
- Resilience and Vulnerability (Mayunga, 2007)

Conflict Management Theory (Hamad, 2005) – five conflict management approaches. “Smoothing”



Dynamics of conflict and control in Shan State, Myanmar

Shan State

- Myanmar – long standing conflict(Rieffel, 2013
- Opium production(UNODC, 2011).
- Lessor developed country (UNCTAD, 2011).
- High economic vulnerability ranking (UNCTAD, 2011).
- High corruption levels(Rogers, 2011
- Post – conflict or intermittent low level conflict? (Barron, Diprose, & Woolcock, 2011 & Nojumi, Mazurana, & Stites, 2009).



Asia Pacific University (CartoGIS Maps Online – ANU). (2005)

Dynamics

- Interaction between “Heartland and Hinterlands (Christoplos, 2017)” or lowland and uplands.
- Conflict Resistant Agriculture
- Swidden Agriculture in the mountainous regions of mainland Southeast Asia
- Many layers to armed conflict situations
 - Myanmar, Philippines



Theme 1: Armed Conflict is always with us

- Everyone had experienced battles
- The younger people learned conflict coping activities from their parents.

“I think it’s just normal and very simple for us to recognize the battle since, we, the villagers here have so many experiences of the battles” (middle age farmer).



Theme 2: Forest is our Refuge



- The forest was the predominant place of refuge.
- The forest provided wild foods they could gather and eat while hiding.
- *“Some people escaped and ran to the safe place [Forest]. Some are arrested and forced to be a porter to carry things” (middle age farmer).*

Theme 3: Fear of the government and militias mitigated by familial networks

- Use of family and personal networks were the main strategy in which farmers coped with and managed the risk inherent in the face of intermittent conflict
- *“Villagers or farmers are always afraid of not only the ethnic troops but also the military government” (young Farmer).*
- *“So, the villagers, they need to struggle between armed groups and the military. Both sides are ready to fight at any time” (middle age farmer).*
- *“Yes, it depended on the personal social activities. I know some of the guys from the military. I asked help from them for the safety of the villagers. Moreover I organized and arranged the situation of the villagers for when not to go and hide or when to hide” (older farmer).*



Theme 4: Loss of animals and seedstock

- Difficulty in recovering from armed conflict and battles because of the loss of animals, grain seeds, and legume seeds.
- This theme speaks to the destruction of the physical resource base that the farmers relied upon.
- Inability to attend to timely tending, preparation, and harvesting of field crops.
- *“Almost all the animals died by bombs. Some were killed by the soldier for food. Moreover, the soldiers destroyed all [farmers’] their stored food”* (middle age farmer).
- *“As they run to the forest, they could not take care of their farm, their animals, and their corn fields, so their lands were destroyed by their animals and or wild animals from the forest”* (middle age farmer).

Theme 5: The markets are gone



- Armed conflict can result in farmers losing their cash crops or excess grain they intended to market.
- Market prices became unstable.
- Labor opportunities at large agricultural plantations disappeared.
- *“When the battle took place, the prices for everything was very low. And the villagers sell all their prosperity to the businessmen like Chinese businessmen”* (older farmer).
- Farm to market transport disappeared.
- *“Because of the transportation, it’s very difficult for the trader. Most of the traders they can’t go into these areas”* (middle age farmer).
- *“Business men that live very far away from those areas where battles took place will not come back to trade”* (middle age farmer).

Theme 6: Big Agribusiness/Government military/Insurgent militia's control land and employment

- Large agribusiness and the government military controlled much of the best agricultural land.
- Land prices driven up by large agribusiness.
- All farmers expressed frustration at not having access to land.
- Positive view toward employment on the large agribusiness farms.
 - Cash; learning new farming techniques; increased opportunity to trade with Chinese companies.
- *“The difficulty came around 1990, the military combined people into one region and then they [farmers] have to leave their farm lands, their forest areas.....this depended on the conflicts. So, the military wanted to cut out the area between military and armed groups. This is the strategy. After that, many lands were abandoned. So, many companies and many wealthy people take this land for company fields. This is the one reason for landless families” (older farmer).*

Theme 7: Prolonged conflict causes movement to safe areas and neighboring countries

- Difficulty of maintaining productive farms when there was reoccurring conflict.
- There was also difficulty in finding an outlet for productive employment for young people – young men and women leaving northern Shan State for Thailand, Singapore, or China.
 - *“We migrated one place to another in search of food and tried crops like rice and corn. But nothing was implemented as the villagers were afraid of war”* (young farmer).
 - *“So, because of the civil war, they left their home, their farmland like that; they left everything”* (older farmer).
 - *“It’s a big problem for them. So they become migrant workers and daily workers. It’s the life of the --- (ethnic people) who live all around this area”* (young farmer).

Theme 8: Rebuilding food production

- Villagers rebuilt food production by:
 - Finding ways to raise animals again.
 - Finding seed to start planting again. Traditional planting varieties were often not available so farmers begin planting hybrid seeds sold by agribusiness companies.
 - Trying new methods if they had credit or help from NGOs.
 - Preserving the resource base.
 - Involving themselves in useful social structures.
 - More market interaction.
- *“For example, if this village was destroyed by conflict, the other villages would help and look after the villagers from this village by supplying seeds and some food to eat”* (middle age farmer).
- *“CP Company and other companies like them lent them seeds and fertilizers. After harvesting they have to pay back the company with double interest”* (younger farmer).



Theme 8: Rebuilding food production - 2

Reluctance to grow long-term crops unless they have more secure access to land like their home gardens.

- *“they [farmers] are not so sure about their land; for example, when shall they have to flee? So they don’t dare plant fruit trees or long term plants”* (middle age farmer).
- *“Some villagers don’t want to use the fertilizers from China. Because of the quality and it can destroy the soil after three to five years”* (middle age farmer).
- Beneficial agricultural extension social structures can provide help to farmers in rebuilding food production, like Farmer Field School (Swanson & Rajalathi, 2011).
- *“Before the farmer field’s school program, in the village they have a lot of landless farmers, landless families. After farmer field’s school, they conduct and they cooperate with community leader or farmers’ leader. And after that, they gained access to farm land. That’s why some landless farmers, some landless families, they became the owners of small lands”* (younger farmer).

A conflict affected farmer in northern Shan State.....

- Focuses upon any avenue open to preserving life.
- Rebuilds even if it means moving to the city or working as a day labor.
- Is wary of armed conflict because everything their parents experienced with armed conflict has been their experience also.
- Is cautious about forming new partnerships.
- Feels helpless at times in adjusting to the rapid change that is occurring.
- Tempers each gain with the realization that at any time, armed conflict could break out again.
- Could once again be reduced to fleeing with their family into the forest.



Recovery experience



1. Armed Conflict is always with us
2. Forest is our refuge
3. Fear of the government and militias mitigated by familial networks
4. Loss of animals and seed stock
5. The market is gone
6. Big Agribusiness/Government Military/Insurgent Militia's control land and employment
7. Prolonged conflict causes movement to safe areas and neighboring countries
8. Rebuilding food production

Refugee / IDP Camps as the start for recovery

- First - acute food needs, safety, shelter, sanitation
- Shifting from acute emergency relief to working to solve chronic agricultural development issues.
- Begin grouping and agricultural activities within the camp in preparation for return or relocation.
- “*Opportunity ladders*” (Christoplos, Longley, & Slaymaker, 2004, p. 29).

Theme 8: Rebuilding food production

- Innovators and early adopters of hybrid corn production within their sub group; laggards within the country wide group of farmers— Rogers (2003)
 - Hybrid Corn yields are quite low compared to resource rich farmers.
- Value of Decentralized Systems (Rogers, 2003)
- Corn trader and seed and fertilizer dealer is the key player or opinion leader concerning agricultural innovation (Rogers, 2003; Borgatti, 2006)
- Marginalized farmers are becoming more cosmopolitan (Rogers, 2003).
- Indications of resilience among opinion leaders within the population



Theme 8: Rebuilding food production - 2



Implications

- The transition to growing hybrid corn by marginalized farmers provides the quickest route for cash income but has negative effects that must be considered
 - Costs associated with increased agrochemical purchase and application for optimum growth.
 - Loss of traditional heirloom varieties.
- Approaches to encourage an effective decentralized diffusion system that values indigenous knowledge systems of the farmers should be encouraged.

Recommendations

- It is important to quantify the effect of agrochemicals upon farmers livelihoods and farming systems.
- Practitioners should consider working with innovative marginalized farmers to develop baskets of agricultural choices for farmers to incorporate into their farming systems.
- The use of farmer field schools and farmer self-help groups should be considered to improve the opportunities for equitable agricultural development.
- Help farmer self-help groups develop agricultural products for local and regional markets.

Intermittent low level conflict

- Original issues have not been settled to each groups satisfaction
- Human energy to continue fighting has not been expended
- Buffer Zones that change and morph
- Low trust of outsiders
- Scrubbing of external indicators of ethnic or religious identity
- Escape strategies are developed and maintained just in case



Continued acts of resistance

- Self imposed isolation and/or feigned low competence
- Local conflicts and power struggles using outside authority figures as victims
- Using family and clan networks to preserve resources and prevent government appropriation
- Gauging the threshold level of resistance and not escalating conflict past that point



Working with Farmers in Shan State, Myanmar

- Understand where current Government agricultural policy and investment is occurring and plan accordingly
- Work with existing farmers groups or re-formed groups and surviving institutions.
- Mapping the effective agricultural and social structure with “bridging” partners and continue that process throughout the project.
- Assist farmers in “seeping up” to meet government representatives
- Learn where the gaps are in the production system and fill those
- Tailor services and technical needs to meet farmer group needs

Key Development Principles



- Develop project plans with just enough detail to get going and be ready to adapt to positive “outliers.”
- *“Process of deliberation vs. importing outside blue prints”* (Evans, 2004, p. 31)
- Develop guiding principles with staff and use these as evaluation metrics.
- “Fail small” - Initiate small scale on-farm and farmer field experiments and together with partners evaluate and adapt from lessons learned
- Plan for long term projects (10 + years)
- Exit strategy is to have joint partnership in another location

Working with Farmers in conflict-affected areas



- Build respect for the community and individuals through seeking to understand
 - Don't dwell on their lack of resources or them as victims.
 - Do grieve with them and listen to how they are recovering and seek to meet them there.
- Respect their dignity by seeing if development efforts can assist them in an equitable manner
- Fill the gaps

Oklahoma – Native American Tribal Nations

- The past – disenfranchisement
 - Choctaw Nation – farming, hunting, and gathering
 - Pawnee – Plains based hunters
- Reclaiming and rebuilding food sovereignty
- Bridging within existing tribal, state, and federal structures and managing potential conflict areas between tribal members and between tribal and non tribal citizens
- Protecting seed resources and gifting of produce

Trends

- Large Agribusiness Corporations
- Increasing government distrust of NGO's & targeting of local and international NGO's
- Continued ethnic and religious efforts at self rule
- Continued reliance upon spiritual and religious belief
- Desire for safe and healthy food
- Westernized Elite are more like other westernized elite then lower classes in their ethnicity



How Can Practitioners Respond to these trends?

- Engage owners of corporations in ways that alleviate negative effects of large scale plantation agriculture
- Organizational and personal self-reflection
- Be a peacemaker in words but also in action by encouraging different conflict groups to work side by side
- Understand and acknowledge the spiritual aspect of continued conflict, recovery, and healing processes
- Work with farmers to preserve production so they can compete for value in the marketplace
- Listen to language, radio, social media that the common people are listening to.

Being Peace makers in post-conflict areas

- Authenticity
- Developing deep relationships with local people and triangulate information and stories.
- Listen closely to the grievance stories and find ways to “grieve with those who grieve.”
- Decide on ethical and relationship boundaries
- Development is a political act so be aware of what power structures are being affected by development activities
- Helping mediate grievances in ways that are less violent (Barron, Diprose, and Woolcock, 2011)

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