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Natural resource management (NRM) and peacebuilding in case of Liberia

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to analyze conflicts caused by natural resources and how natural resource management can prevent conflict and contribute to peacebuilding as an example of one of the African countries of Liberia via comparative qualitative research method. As a result, for Liberia, it is possible to use their natural resources to attract investment and promote higher economic development. In conclusion, some recommendations will be made on how to support peacebuilding through an effective NRM.

Keywords: Peacebuilding, Conflict prevention, Liberia, Africa.

Gestión de recursos naturales (MRN) y consolidación de la paz en el caso de Liberia

Resumen

El propósito del estudio es analizar los conflictos causados por los recursos naturales y cómo la gestión de los recursos naturales puede prevenir conflictos y contribuir a la consolidación de la paz como un ejemplo de uno de los países africanos de Liberia a través del método de investigación cualitativa comparativa. Como resultado, para Liberia, es posible utilizar sus recursos naturales para atraer inversiones y promover un mayor desarrollo económico. En

conclusión, se harán algunas recomendaciones sobre cómo apoyar la consolidación de la paz a través de un NRM efectivo.

Palabras clave: Consolidación de la paz, Prevención de conflictos, Liberia, África.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the management of natural resources (such as land, water, forest, diamonds) and its relationship to peacebuilding is one of the most critical challenges facing the developing world, especially African countries. The exploitation of high-value natural resources including oil, gas, and timber has often been cited as a key factor in triggering, escalating or sustainable violent conflict around the globe.

Since the Second World War, there have been roughly 300 major armed conflicts around the world, at least 40% of internal conflicts had a link to natural resources and since 1990 there have been at least 18 violent conflicts fuelled by the exploitation of natural resources. These conflicts consequently have become a potential obstacle to peacebuilding. In such a situation, the role of natural resource management as never before has become one of the main prerequisites for resolving conflict resources. Natural resource management plays a considerable role in conflict prevention and accordingly peacebuilding. BROWN and BLANKENSHIP (2013) argue the effective natural resource management is a form of conflict prevention. By:

Creating structures and rules for managing and sharing natural resources, natural resource management brings order, predictability, and trust to situations where otherwise competition and conflicting interests would be rife (BROWN & BLANKENSHIP, 2013, p. 9).

Well managed resources also have long-term positive benefits on health, the environment and hence peacebuilding through conflict prevention and environmental care (BILLON & FREITAS, 2011).

Taking into account the above, questions such as armed or violent conflicts over natural resources in the context of natural resource management and peacebuilding are important. That is why they will be included in the process of studying issues related to NRM and peacebuilding.

To achieve the goal, firstly, there is a need to identify the links between natural resource management, conflict, and peacebuilding, likewise, the determinants of resource governance in conflict-affected regions. We are motivated by the following question: Does the management of natural resources can contribute to peacebuilding? How can make natural resources work for peacebuilding? Why is the collaboration of natural resources in peacebuilding so difficult? Why do conflicts occur over natural resources? And so on.

Liberia is rich in natural resources such as water, forests, lands, and timber, and they are, tend to, critical to the country's prospects for a peaceful and prosperous future (BROWN & BLANKENSHIP,

2013). Unfortunately, the majority of benefits from these resources have been poorly distributed throughout the country, with most communities relying on themselves to extract benefits. Accordingly, the lack of control overuse of natural resources gradually has led to its degradation and consequently conflicts. Current research shows that, since 1945, at least 40 percent of all intra-state conflicts have had a significant relationship with natural resources. Thus, issues such as exploitation of natural resources, conflicts over natural resources and the lack of management and control those resources have become an impediment to peacebuilding.

In this study, as noted above, we will try to consider the relationship between NRM and peacebuilding through natural resource conflicts.

2. METHODOLOGY

The systematic selection of relevant studies was defined by several inclusion criteria. There were used research conducted by different international organizations and donors (UNEP's Environmental Cooperation for Peacebuilding Programme; World Bank African region, United Nations Development Group, FAO (Food and agriculture organization) of the UN, United Nations Peacebuilding Programmes) particularly in West African countries including Liberia. These areas affected by conflicts were selected based on the availability of natural resources and the recognition that these

resources were identified as complicating factors in local conflicts. Also, there was included research that dealt with the impact of resources on peacebuilding. As our search was mainly based on English-language databases most of the selected literature was in English.

The papers having relationships to peacebuilding, NRM, conflicts over natural resources were read, graded and annotated. Most of the papers contain single case studies. The case of Liberia was most prevalent. Other case studies including Sudan, Sierra Leone Afghanistan, Uganda and so on dealt with discussion in terms of the definition of natural resources, conflicts, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding generally.

3. RESULTS

3.1. The Role Of Natural Resources In Conflicts

In the case of natural resources and conflicts, a large minority of researchers argue that the availability of natural resources creates armed and violent conflicts. Conflicts over natural resources are ubiquitous. People everywhere have competed for the natural resources they need or want to ensure or enhance their livelihoods. As a result, over exploitation of resources predominately renewable natural resources such as water, forests or productive land, led to their degradations and, consequently, conflicts. According to MORTON

(2009) over the past 60 years, at least 40% of internal conflicts had a link to natural resources and since 1990 there have been at least 18 violent conflicts fuelled by the exploitation of natural resources (MORTON, 2009). Below, Table 1 shows, which types of natural resources in different countries of the world create the most violent conflicts

Table 1: Eighteen (18) conflicts since 1990 fuelled by natural resources (MORTON, 2009)

Country	Duration	Resources
Afghanistan	1978-2001	Gems, timber, opium
Angola	1975-2002	Oil, diamonds
Burma	1949-	Timber, tin, gems, opium
Cambodia	1978-1997	Timber, gems
Colombia	1984 -	Oil, gold, coca, timber, emeralds
Congo, Dem. Rep. of	1996-1998, 1998-2003, 2003-2008	Copper, colton, diamonds, gold, cobalt, timber, tin
Congo, Rep. of	1997 -	Oil
Cote d'Ivoire	2002-2007	Diamonds, cocoa, cotton
Indonesia – Aceh	1975-2006	Timber, natural gas
Indonesia, West Papua	1969 -	Copper, gold, timber
Liberia	1989-2003	Timber, diamonds, iron, palm oil, cocoa, coffee, rubber, gold
Nepal	1996-2007	Yarsa gumba (fungus)
PNG – Bougainville	1989-1998	Copper, gold

Peru	1980-1995	Coca
Senegal, Casamance	1982 -	Timber, cashew, nuts
Sierra Leone	1991-2000	Diamonds, cocoa, coffee
Somalia	1991 -	Fish, charcoal
Sudan	1983-2005	Oil

As we can see from this table, the availability of natural resources, indeed, creates conflicts, especially those resources which are the majority.

3.2. The Relationships Between Natural Resource Management And Peacebuilding

NRM increasingly plays a meaningful role in the transition of post-conflict societies to lasting peace. This role is not limited to societies in which conflict is directly fuelled by valuable natural resources, such as timber or diamonds. Unresolved problems associated with land tenure management can lead to increased tensions, and the government's inability to provide key services (water, food, shelter, and other resource-dependent life bases) can destabilize weakened societies that are recovering from conflict.

To address these potential obstacles to peace, effective NRM can provide opportunities for confidence-building measures, “serve as models for effective and equitable governance, and contribute to the

achievement of other peacebuilding goals” (BRUCH, JENSEN, NAKAYAMA, UNRUH, GRUBY, & WOLFARTH, 2011: 58).

The proper management of natural resources (through projects and strategies) can greatly contribute to the consolidation of peace. From a practical point of view, management interventions are designed to strengthen government institutional control over natural resources through reforms - laws, institutions, policies, and practices. Although it is still not clear how important reforms are for the whole world, continuous efforts are being made to understand how and to what extent these administrative interventions constitute the trajectory of peacebuilding (BEEVERS, 2012). The peace building process requires new perspectives and practices: flexible, consultative and cooperative under international organizations, including non-governmental organizations. These new perspectives in peacebuilding “underscore that NRM can help maintain and strengthen peace, while the inability to rationally use natural resources can destabilize a fragile world” (BRUCH ET AL., 2011: 59-60).

3.3. Peace Settlement Agreement To Natural Resources

Initially, the peace agreement was to be the end of the conflict, ending hostilities between state antagonists, after which a new page in history between them could be a turning point. As BRUCH, MUFFET, & NICHOLS (2016) state the majority of conflicts caused by natural resources end by peace agreements rather than an outright military

victory. Indeed, since the middle 1980s, 70% of war conflicts reach negotiated.

DASGUPTA (2016) examined two large databases of peace agreements — the Transitional Justice Peace Agreements and the United Nations Peacemaker database while, HAYSOM & KANE (2009) state that peace agreements often have clear provisions for the management and control of [natural resources] between national and provincial governments, since 1945, about 800 peace agreements have been discovered, less than 15 % address terms related to natural resources (BLUNDELL & HARWELL, 2016), and for most of the 10 agreements aimed at managing natural resources, the implementation was at best minimal (HAYSOM & KANE, 2009; DASGUPTA, 2016). If to be precise, BRUCH ET AL. (2016) analyzing the current status of the peace agreements presents the following: of the 94 peace agreements, 51 referred to natural resource. Of these 51 agreements, 21 had specific provisions that had substantial instructions on natural resource management, revenue sharing, ownership, and economic, or non-economic use of the resource. The other 22 agreements were only declaratory texts without any clear instructions. Table 2 summarises the frequency with which the reviewed peace agreements addressed various natural resources and aspects of natural resources.

Table 2: Summary of peace agreements with natural resource-related provisions (BRUCH ET AL., 2016, p. 78)

	Number
Agreements reviewed	94
Agreements referring to natural resources	51
With specific provisions	29
With declaratory text	22

Resource management	36
Resource ownership	32
Revenue sharing	12
Provisions address only economic aspects	25
Provisions address economic aspects and environmental protection	9
Provisions address economic aspects and boundaries	5
Provisions address economic aspects and restitution	4
Provisions address economic aspects and compensation	4
Provisions address economic aspects and power-sharing	3
Provisions address economic aspects and restoration of infrastructure and cultural heritage	2
Provisions address economic aspects and confidence building	1
With provisions related to land	39
With provisions related to water and fisheries	11
With provisions related to natural resources in general	6
With provisions related to lootable resources (such as coltan, diamonds, and gold)	5
With provisions related to energy, gas, oil, and uranium	4

From this table, it follows that land and water are the most frequently mentioned natural resources. This can be explained by the fact that these resources perform different functions in the community, "supporting economic, socio-economic, cultural and military objectives" (BRUCH ET AL., 2016, p. 77).

3.4. The Relationship Between Nrm And Peacebuilding Through Conflicts In Case Of Liberia

The history of Liberia demonstrates that post-conflict transition is one of a complex and long-term process that requires time, resources

and continued commitment. As war conflicts in this country led not only to the disintegration of state institutions but also to devastating consequences for the population. These tragedies were the basis for regional destabilization, which were ever in the West African region including Liberia.

Thus, NRM, in particular, involves both risks and opportunities. However, for Liberia, it is possible to use their natural resources to attract investment and promote higher economic development. On the other hand, there is an increased risk of political and social instability caused by improper management of natural resources (YOUSUF, 2014, BEEVERS, 2012). The misuse of natural resources, as we can see, often leads to conflicts and other negative consequences. In this evaluation, natural resource management performs as a balancer of resources to eliminate conflicts and build peace.

4. CONCLUSION

This thesis has considered the relationship among the NRM and peacebuilding through conflicts over natural resources in the post-conflict period. It was found that the NRM can have a strong link to peacebuilding only when natural resources have specific natural and geographical characteristics and when special political, social and economic situations occur in the country.

Some examples have shown that if the actions of peacekeepers are supported by the work of international organizations, UN commissions, NGOs and civil society, even the difficult task of creating peace after conflicts with natural resources can be attained.

The decision on how to manage the state's natural resources by HAYSOM & KANE (2009) has recently become one of the most complex and controversial parts of the peace agreement. This is especially true when natural resources make up a significant share of national income or when the geographical distribution of natural resources overlaps existing ethnic or religious divisions. Most African countries including Liberia - are exactly those countries in which minerals such as timber, forest, diamonds, and water make up the bulk of the national income. Therefore, NRM and its improvement to control natural resource use are vitally important. Improving NRM, in turn, can contribute to long-term peacebuilding.

The key activity of these organizations is to prevent conflicts over natural resources and create sustainable peace in high-value natural resource countries.

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