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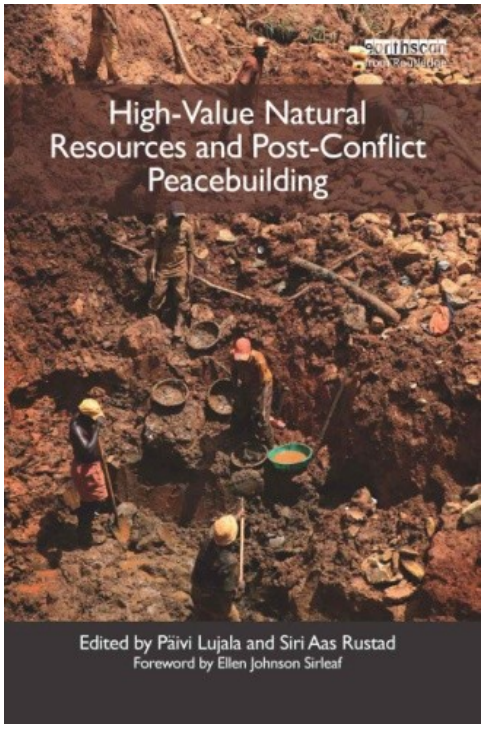

Peace through sustainable forest management in Asia: The USAID Forest Conflict Initiative

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Peace through sustainable forest management in Asia: The USAID Forest Conflict Initiative

Jennifer Wallace and Ken Conca

This chapter examines a multiyear initiative within the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) that was designed to promote greater awareness of forest-related conflict and encourage a more conflict-sensitive approach to natural resource management (NRM). The initiative consisted of two separate projects: the Conflict Timber Project (CTP), which was undertaken in 2002–2003 and was designed to obtain a clearer picture of timber-related conflict and its drivers in Asia and Africa; and Managing Conflict in Asian Forest Communities (MCAFC), which was undertaken between 2003 and 2007 and sought "to analyze the types and causes of forest conflict; identify approaches to reducing conflict; and communicate the seriousness of this problem to governments, the private sector, the donor community, and the US public" (USAID 2007, 1).

Guide to Abbreviations

ANE:	USAID Bureau for Asia and the Near East
ARD:	Associates in Rural Development
CTP:	Conflict Timber Project
DCHA:	USAID Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance
MCAFC:	Managing Conflict in Asian Forest Communities
NRM:	natural resource management
OTI:	USAID Office of Transition Initiatives
RAFT:	Responsible Asia Forestry and Trade program
TFD:	The Forests Dialogue
USAID:	U.S. Agency for International Development

The chapter focuses on the characterization of forest conflict in the CTP and on the practical efforts to address it that were carried out through the MCAFC project. This two-part initiative on "conflict timber" provides a unique opportunity to explore how a bilateral development assistance agency conceptualized the problem of forest conflict; attempted to raise awareness of the issue and promote more conflict-sensitive practice; and identified and engaged with the audiences it had selected to receive its message. The initiative also provides an opportunity to evaluate the effects of greater awareness

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on practice. Finally, a conflict-sensitive approach to NRM has great salience for peacebuilding: many of the sites involved were post-conflict settings, and the more diffuse conflicts associated with forest access and resources are among the quickest ways to undermine a fragile peace.

The chapter has four goals:

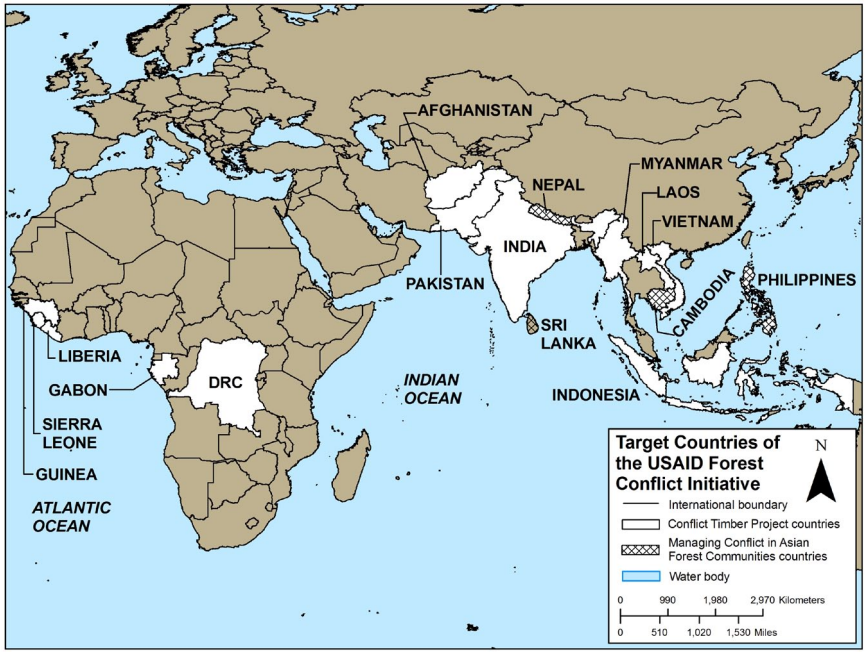
- To identify the assumptions that were reflected in the way the CTP conceptualized forest conflict. The focus here is on identifying aspects of the conceptual framework that are new or innovative when compared with past practice, and on the particular linkages between that framework and NRM in post-conflict settings.
- To trace the linkages between the conceptual and analytic, awareness-raising, and policy-advisory aspects of the initiative. The objective here is to explore how the combination of three factors—the project's conceptual framework, the characteristics of the agency, and the characteristics of the wider stakeholder community—led to a particular pattern of ideational diffusion and policy adoption.
- To ask what lessons can be learned from the difficulties observed in (1) turning the analytical concepts and framework into actionable recommendations at the programmatic level within USAID and (2) spreading the message to stakeholder groups within and outside the agency.
- To draw lessons from this case that can be applied to post-conflict NRM. The focus here is on both the initiative's substantive findings about forest conflict and on institutional lessons that can be gleaned from an effort to raise the profile of a new and cross-cutting issue in the programmatic operations of a bilateral development assistance agency.

The chapter is divided into five major sections: (1) a review of the literature on the relationship between forests, conflict, and peacebuilding; (2) an overview of the origins and goals of the USAID Forest Conflict Initiative; (3) a description of the agenda, goals, and achievements of the CTP; (4) a description of the agenda, goals, and achievements of the MCAFC project; and (5) concluding commentary on the effectiveness and implications of the Forest Conflict Initiative, with particular attention to the future integration of conflict-sensitive NRM into peacebuilding initiatives.[1]

BACKGROUND: CONFLICT, FORESTS, AND PEACEBUILDING

The early literature linking the environment to violent conflict focused on a thread that led from environmental degradation to material scarcity to the exacerbation of social tensions; later work highlighted resource abundance as a potential catalyst for

[1] Some information for this chapter was drawn from interviews with (1) participants in the USAID initiative (USAID staff, consultants, and implementing partners) and (2) individuals who had extensive experience in forestry projects in Southeast Asia. Because of the potential sensitivity of the subject matter, interview subjects were promised anonymity.



conflict.[2] Forests illustrate many of the conflict dynamics posited in the ecoconflict literature, ranging from violent clashes in the wake of accelerated deforestation rates to conflict timber episodes in which forest resources are used to sustain and fund belligerents. But a narrow focus on social responses to perceived scarcity or abundance misses the wide array of conflict dynamics that occur in and around forests—specifically, conflicting claims to the land and its resources; conflict between the different levels of governance that regulate access, use rights, and concessions; and tensions between local practices and the rules, regulatory modes, and development aims of the state.

Philippe Le Billon, for example, traces the transition in Cambodia from a classic case of conflict timber, during the civil war, to post-war social conflict rooted in forest exploitation and commodification: in Le Billon's account, elite control of Cambodia's most valuable resource contributed to corruption, political factionalization, and unsustainable economic development (Le Billion 2000). Paul Richards argues that the rebellion staged by Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front, rather than being grounded in mere economic rapaciousness, was a violent social project intended to address both the social exclusion experienced

[2] On the role of resource abundance in conflict, see Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "High-Value Natural Resources, Development, and Conflict: Channels of Causation," in this volume.

by the members of the rebel group and the perceived misappropriation of the country's mineral wealth (Richards 2001). And Yayoi Fujita, Khamla Phanvilay, and Deanna Donovan argue that forests were the target of military attack in Laos during the Indochina War precisely because they provided the cover, resources, and livelihoods critical for survival. Migration during the war led to discord, which persists to this day, between customary landholders and those who laid claim to the land during or after the conflict, and between lowland agricultural villages and migrant villages that depend on forest resources (Fujita, Phanvilay, and Donovan 2007).

Forests are among the socioecological systems that generate social conflict because they have multiple meanings for different stakeholders: for nearby communities, they are sources of livelihood and cultural significance; for global actors, such as international environmental groups or activists, they are critical ecosystems; and in a globalizing world economy, they are potentially commodified resources with growing market value (Conca 2006). Social conflict occurs when one group seeks to impose one of these meanings at the expense of others. The result can vary in intensity, from localized tensions and sporadic episodes of violence to larger-scale and more continuous forms of conflict.

But just as forest-related social dynamics may trigger or sustain conflict, they may do the same for peace. As Adrian Martin and others have pointed out, social interaction involving natural resources inevitably offers opportunities for both conflict and cooperation (Martin 2005). In societies emerging from war or other forms of civil violence, effective forest governance can thus be essential to establishing peace.

Forests are most vulnerable in the early stages of peacebuilding, when other economic activities have yet to recover from the disruption of violent conflict, and government institutions have yet to establish authority. For example, Judy Oglethorpe and colleagues have noted that weakened governing institutions may attempt to jump-start devastated economies by granting concessions for unsustainable exploitation of forest resources, while the private sector simultaneously takes advantage of peace—and of institutional weakness—by moving in and extracting resources illegally. In addition, demands on forests increase during and immediately after war, when agricultural systems have been destroyed or disrupted and local populations, refugees, and internally displaced persons are more dependent on wild plant and animal products (Oglethorpe et al. 2002). Several factors—the increase in demand for forest resources during and after violent conflict, the conflict between the survival and livelihood needs of local actors and the efforts of governing regimes to establish authority, and unclear or contested rights of access—may threaten a fragile peace. The effective management of forests in post-conflict contexts is thus an essential element of peacebuilding strategies.

In sum, simple measures of material abundance or scarcity are likely to be poor predictors of conflict; social interactions involving forests may be a source of both conflict and peaceful cooperation; and forest-related dynamics play out in a variety

of social contexts and at different spatial scales.[3] Although the causes of forest conflict are complex and multidimensional, the extent of the problem is clear. USAID has identified twelve countries in Asia alone that are affected by forest conflict. In Indonesia, for example, between 6.6 and 19.6 million people—as much as 10 percent of the total population—are affected. And in Cambodia, 1.7 million people, or about 12 percent of the population, are affected (USAID 2006b).

THE CONFLICT TIMBER PROJECT

The CTP was undertaken jointly by the USAID Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) and its Bureau for Asia and the Near East (ANE). OTI is part of the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA), one of the functional bureaus at USAID; ANE is one of the agency's geographic bureaus.[4]

Setting the agenda

The idea for the CTP began to take shape in 2001; the first contract in support of the project was agreed to in 2002. Two key developments led to the creation of the CTP. The first was a meeting in which Patrick Alley, a founding director of the advocacy organization Global Witness, briefed USAID administrator Andrew Natsios on a report that Global Witness had just released: *Taylor-Made: The Pivotal Role of Liberia's Forests and Flag of Convenience in Regional Conflict*, which documented links between logging, the arms trade, and regional conflict (Global Witness 2001). This meeting and the report's wider reception among policy makers and activists put conflict timber on the agenda of the USAID administrator. After the meeting, Natsios asked OTI to lead the development of an action plan to address the relationship between logging and conflict; ANE was to provide technical assistance.

In attempting to respond to this directive, OTI and ANE found that there was insufficient information to generate a complete understanding of the problem. As noted in the final report of the CTP:

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[3] For example, Siri Aas Rustad and colleagues (2008) found little statistical support linking forest cover to conflict onset or duration; however, the complexity of the interactions in and around forests might have confounded statistical analysis, producing inconsistent or insignificant results.

[4] In addition to administrative offices, the USAID Washington, D.C., headquarters consists of functional and regional bureaus. The functional bureaus include Legislative and Public Affairs; Global Health; Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade; Foreign Assistance; Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance; and Management. USAID has both regional and local field missions outside of Washington. In 2008, the Bureau for Asia and the Near East was divided into two separate regional bureaus: the Asia Bureau and the Middle East Bureau. The Central Asian republics, which were previously grouped in USAID's Europe and Eurasia Bureau, were relocated to the Asia Bureau.

> While the Action Plan identified illustrative steps the Agency could take to monitor and reduce conflicts over timber, it also noted a general lack of information, and moreover a lack of careful analysis of the nexus between the economic, financial, political, ecological, social and security aspects of conflict timber. In an effort to address these informational and analytical gaps, and as a first step toward developing the foundation for well-targeted and effective programming, the Action Plan called for further analysis of the problem of conflict timber (USAID 2003a, 2).

Thus, the action plan delivered to Natsios in January 2002 called for further research on the issue of conflict timber.

The second development that raised the visibility of forest conflict was the arrival, in 2001, of the ANE senior advisor for NRM, whose role was to support the region's missions in their efforts to address NRM. En route to her post, the advisor heard a number of accounts of violence that was linked to access to forests and other resources, prompting her to ask program officers in the country-level field missions what could be done about forest-conflict linkages. Thus, at the same time that the USAID administrator was raising the profile of conflict timber within the agency, ANE had an internal champion who supported a more active role for the bureau in addressing forest conflict. The interest generated within ANE by the senior advisor for NRM and the administrator's directive to OTI to investigate conflict timber were the key developments that led to ANE's participation, with OTI, in the development of the action plan.

After the release of the action plan, ANE and OTI designed the first phase of the USAID Forest Conflict Initiative, the CTP. To implement the CTP, ANE and OTI contracted with Associates in Rural Development (ARD), a consulting firm, which was to carry out a nine-month comprehensive study of conflict timber in Asia and Africa. The project, which was undertaken in two phases, had three stated goals (USAID, 2003a, 3):

- To provide, through preliminary country surveys and follow-up case studies, a descriptive account of conflict over forests.
- "To assess the role of forests in peace processes."
- To identify suitable programmatic responses, both at the field-office level and from Washington, D.C.

During the first phase of the CTP, ARD developed an analytical framework for identifying, understanding, and assessing forest-related conflicts and developed conflict-timber profiles for fifteen countries in Asia and Africa; the profiles were based on information obtained from interviews, the media, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and international agencies. The framework, which emphasized the commodity, market, and governance characteristics of forest conflict, was presented to USAID for internal review. The second phase of the CTP involved in-depth case studies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Indonesia. The final output of the project, which combined the lessons learned from both

phases, was a diagnostic analysis, *Conflict Timber: Dimensions of the Problem in Asia and Africa* (USAID 2003a, 2003b, 2003c).

Conceptualizing forest conflict

The framework developed by ARD had three elements: a two-part definition of forest conflict, an emphasis on the commercial chain of timber production, and country-level case studies. In the two-part definition of forest conflict, Type I conflicts were defined as "conflict financed or sustained through the harvest and sale of timber"; Type II conflicts were defined as "emerging as a result of competition over timber or other forest resources" (USAID 2003a, iii). Examples of Type II conflicts included competition between forest inhabitants and illegal landgrabbers, and between commercial operators and rural populations. Since such competition may be either violent or nonviolent, USAID used an expansive definition that "extends . . . beyond violent confrontation to include situations where people who are dependent on forest resources are restricted from using them to the point of seriously affecting their livelihoods or social structure" (USAID 2006b, 1). In other words, the perspective of forest conflict that emerged from the framework was both differentiated and expansive—differentiated in the sense that it drew a sharp distinction between the two forms of conflict, yet expansive in the sense that it bundled together the two forms for the purpose of raising awareness and promoting conflict-sensitive programming. Both forms of conflict were identified as central to conflict management, and both were in play during the empirical, awareness-raising, and policy-advisory phases of the initiative.

A second key aspect of the framework was an emphasis on the commercial chain of timber production—often referred to in scholarly circles as a "commodity chain" or "supply chain" approach.[5] In contrast to analytical frameworks that stress spatially defined units of analysis (such as countries), the commodity chain approach frames production and trade as a sequential chain consisting of linked nodes. Key nodes in the timber commodity chain include logging, the processing of round logs, the fabrication and assembly of timber products, and the marketing and retail sales of the completed products. Figure 1 illustrates a typical supply chain for wood-based products.

One advantage of the commodity chain approach is that it reveals the connections between local forest-related activities and the larger economic forces that drive at least some of the extractive activity—particularly export-oriented activity. A second advantage is that it sheds light on power relations up and down the chain, highlighting potential points of regulatory intervention. For example, it may be more effective to focus regulatory efforts on the nodes in the supply chain where power is more concentrated (e.g., end users) than on diffuse and geographically

[5] On commodity chains, see Gereffi and Korzeniewicz (1994). In 1998, S. Tjip Walker (1998), who was employed by OTI at the time, wrote a doctoral dissertation that emphasized this approach.

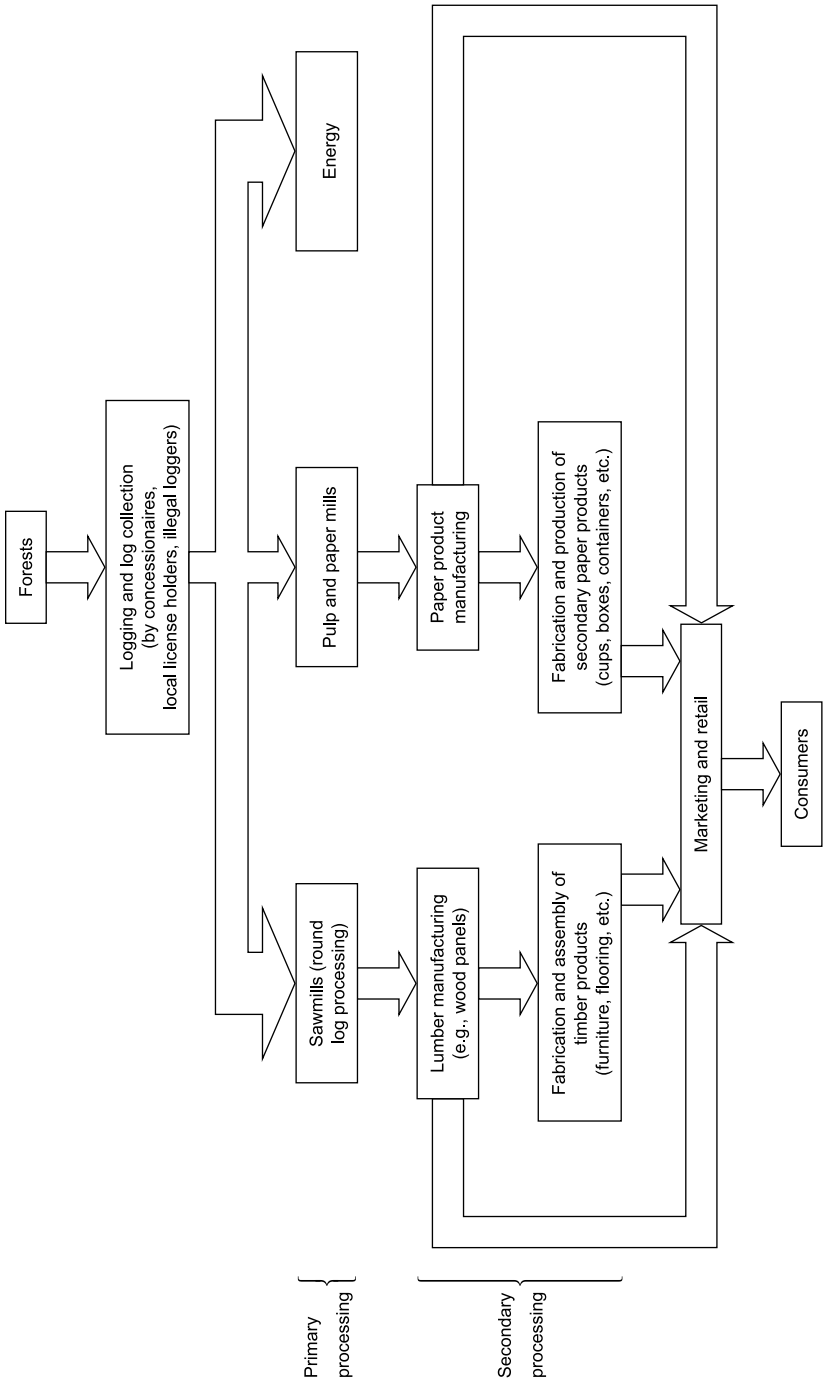

Figure 1. Supply chain for wood-based products

dispersed activities (e.g., illegal logging) that are easily shifted from one location to another. In a global economy, the most powerful nodes of commodity chains may be on the financial side of an industry or in marketing and retailing; they are not necessarily the nodes around which violent conflict coalesces—in this case, logging activities that are undertaken at specific sites.[6] A third and related advantage is that by focusing on material flows and power relations among economic agents, the commodity chain approach can be applied, at least in principle, to both legal and illegal resource extraction.

The commodity chain approach is not without limitations, however.[7] By stressing market relations among profit-driven actors, it may underemphasize political, social, or cultural influences, actors, and relationships. An exclusive focus on the material dimensions of actors' interests may be appropriate for profit-driven actors, but will fail to capture the symbolic or normative significance that a commodity holds for other actors, such as local communities and international activist groups. For example, under the commodity chain approach, an indigenous community or an ethnic minority may simply be viewed as a local group of extractors—a view that potentially oversimplifies conflict dynamics.

As noted earlier, ARD's conceptual framework was based on three analytic categories—commodity characteristics, market characteristics, and governance characteristics—each of which was associated with critical variables that were assumed to shape the propensity for, and the characteristics of, forest-related conflict (see table 1). For example, among commodity characteristics, lootable and more easily concealable products, such as diamonds, are more attractive as a means of financing armed conflict. Similarly, among market characteristics, the larger the number of buyers and sellers, the easier it is to hide individual transactions—which may be useful for actors who extract timber illegally or who wish to hide the source of timber from chain-of-custody monitoring. In addition to suggesting propensity for forest conflict, commodity, market, and governance characteristics suggest points of policy intervention for the prevention or management of forest conflict.

The third element of the analytic framework was a set of country-level case studies. As noted earlier, ARD developed fifteen profiles of countries in Africa and Asia; the goal was to collect data on the commodity chain characteristics and variables shown in table 1 (USAID 2003b, 2003c). Table 2 lists the countries for which profiles were assembled and shows how each country was characterized with regard to the presence of Type I and Type II forest conflict. Notably, all but one of the Africa cases yielded evidence of Type I forest conflict, but little in the way of Type II conflict.[8] The Asia profiles, in contrast, revealed

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[6] See Conca (2001).

[7] For a useful review of the commodity chain literature, see Uddhammar (2006). See also Clancy (1998); Collins (2000); and Raikes, Jensen, and Ponte (2000).

[8] The relative lack of Type II conflict in Africa can perhaps be attributed to the lack of infrastructure for large-scale commercial timber operations, the presence of which drives much of the Type II conflict in Asia.

Table 1. Variables that influence forest conflict

Analytic category	*Key variables*
Commodity characteristics	Importance to livelihoods Accessibility Lootability Weight-to-value ratio Concealability Fungibility
Market characteristics	Level of assured demand Number of buyers and sellers Capital intensity of the production process
Governance characteristics	Accountability Ability to make and enforce the rule of law Level of, and trends in, social welfare Degree of social heterogeneity Presence and strength of civil society groups Presence and scope of tenure issues associated with land or other resources

Source: Adapted from USAID (2003a).

widespread Type II conflict, along with Type I conflict in half of the countries profiled. As discussed later in the chapter, these regional differences led to very different patterns of ideational diffusion, policy adoption, emphasis, and follow-up at the programmatic level.

Table 2 also shows the status of each profiled country with respect to armed conflict between 1989 and 2007. As the table indicates, the fifteen profiled countries are a heterogeneous set when it comes to violent conflict. Several are emerging from conflict and may plausibly be characterized as post-conflict (Cambodia, Indonesia, and Nepal in Asia; Liberia and Sierra Leone in Africa). Others have one or more ongoing armed conflicts of varying degrees of intensity (Afghanistan, Myanmar, India, and Pakistan in Asia; Guinea in Africa). A few fit both categories, in that they are emerging from one armed conflict while other armed conflicts endure (the Philippines in Asia; the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Africa). Finally, a few are classified as conflict-free (Laos and Vietnam in Asia; Gabon in Africa).

In the countries listed in table 2, the variations in the level of forest conflict highlight the complexity of the dynamics surrounding forest conflicts. While in some cases forest conflict does not escalate sufficiently to result in a high number of fatalities, in other cases forests are inextricably linked to violent conflict. As noted earlier, violent conflict can also intensify the extraction of forest resources and undermine the rule of law, indirectly contributing to forest conflict.

The target audience: Field missions

The CTP, the first phase of the forest conflict initiative, was not simply intended to address an information gap that had been identified by OTI and ANE; it was

Table 2. Forest conflict and armed conflict in the countries profiled during the Conflict Timber Project

Asia	*Forest conflict (as of 2003)* Type I	Type II	*Armed conflict since 1989 (as of 2008)*	*Africa*	*Forest conflict (as of 2003)* Type I	Type II	*Armed conflict since 1989 (as of 2008)*
Afghanistan	•	•	War 1989–2001; minor conflict 2003–2004; war since 2005	Democratic Republic of the Congo	•		War 1996–2000; minor conflict 2001 and 2006–2008
Cambodia		•	Minor conflict 1990–1998	Gabon	•		No armed conflict
India		•	Minor conflict on multiple fronts since 1989; intermittent war and minor conflict in Punjab and Kashmir	Guinea		•	Intermittent minor conflict and one-sided violence since 2000
Indonesia	•	•	Minor conflict 1999–2005 (Aceh); intermittent minor conflict 1989–1998 (Timor-Leste); no conflict since 2005	Liberia	•		Minor conflict 2000–2002; war 2003; no conflict since 2003
Laos		•	Minor conflict 1989–1990; no conflict since 1991	Sierra Leone	•		Minor conflict 1991–1997; war 1998–1999; minor conflict 2000; no conflict since 2001
Myanmar	•	•	Minor conflicts on multiple fronts and occasional war since 1989				
Nepal	•	•	Minor conflict 1996–2001; war 2002–2005; minor conflict 2006				
Pakistan		•	Intermittent minor conflict and war on three fronts since 1989				
Philippines	•	•	War late 1980s, early 1990s; minor conflict since 1993; war 2000; minor conflict since 2001 (Mindanao)				
Vietnam		•	No armed conflict				

Sources: USAID (2003a); Gleditsch et al. (2002); Harbom and Wallensteen (2009).

Notes: The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP 2008) defines *armed conflict* as "a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths." *Minor armed conflict* (which appears in the table as "minor conflict") is defined as 25 to 999 battle-related deaths in one year; *war* is defined as 1,000 or more battle-related deaths in one year. *One-sided violence* is "the use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organised group against civilians which results in at least 25 deaths in a year."

also intended to raise consciousness, in USAID country-level field missions, about forest conflict and to promote conflict-sensitive programming. USAID has local missions in twenty-two Asian countries, and the regional field office for ANE is located in Bangkok. While the bureaus in the Washington headquarters are tasked with providing support to the local and regional field missions and making programmatic recommendations, they do not have the authority to allocate resources. As a project initiated at the headquarters offices of OTI and ANE, the CTP therefore had to generate interest and "buy-in" from the country-level field missions; in order for the issues that had been identified in the final CTP report to be addressed, the country-level field missions would first have to be willing to embrace and support the necessary activities.

THE MCAFC PROJECT

Following the publication of the final report, in 2003, which brought the CTP to an end, DCHA and ANE continued to cooperate, to a limited extent, on the forest conflict issue.[9] But ANE also launched (and solely supported) the more comprehensive Managing Conflict in Asian Forest Communities project. The impetus for this project came primarily from the ANE senior advisor for NRM; there was no similar spin-off in the Africa bureau. The MCAFC project was designed to achieve four primary objectives:

- Identifying categories, causes, and patterns of community-level conflict over forests and water.[10]
- Developing approaches to monitoring and managing these conflicts.
- Recommending mechanisms for building these approaches into USAID country-level programming or into the work of partner organizations.
- Communicating the nature and magnitude of natural resource conflict to host-country governments, other donor organizations, NGOs, and the U.S. public and private sectors, particularly wood-based industries (ARD 2006).

The MCAFC project was carried out from August 2003 to February 2007. Working directly with USAID missions in Cambodia, Nepal, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka, project staff sought to obtain more detailed information about forest conflict than had been possible under the CTP, and also to raise the visibility of the forest conflict issue among a broader audience. The original objectives of the CTP—raising awareness, within the Washington headquarters and at the

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[9] In 2005, the DCHA Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation; the USAID Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade; and ANE jointly produced a tool kit on forests and conflict; it was one in a series of tool kits designed to assist development agencies in addressing the risk factors that contribute to violent conflict (USAID 2005).

[10] Because of the potential for deforestation to cause absolute decline in water supplies and exacerbate conflict, the MCAFC project adopted a holistic approach to NRM that included land, water, and forest resources.

field-mission level, of forest conflict and encouraging the missions to engage in conflict-sensitive programming—gave way to the goal of reaching actors outside the agency, who were viewed as having greater potential to influence activities on the ground. This wider audience included the international donor community, national and international NGOs and civil society groups, and the defense and private sectors. In practice, the MCAFC project consisted of three components—community stakeholder workshops, forums designed to engage international actors, and communications outreach. Over the life of the project, the emphasis shifted in the direction of widening and internationalizing the audience, in order to bring additional actors into efforts to address forest conflict; this shift required greater focus on the forums and communications outreach.

Early MCAFC efforts focused on generating localized information on forest conflict and establishing partnerships at the community level. In 2004, two country assessments were conducted: a comprehensive assessment of forest conflict in Cambodia and a focused assessment of conflicts over natural resources in Sri Lanka, at the watershed level (this assessment was more limited because of ongoing conflict). The Cambodia assessment was followed by a local stakeholder workshop, "Community-Level Impacts of Forest and Land Conflicts in Mondulkiri," which was held in the provincial capital of Sen Monorom and hosted by the USAID Cambodia field office. The workshop included seventy-seven people from indigenous communities, local government, and national and local NGOs. For USAID, one of the most important achievements of the workshop was the presence of thirty-nine members of indigenous communities, who traveled from remote areas to participate in the dialogue and to learn about their rights to land and forest resources under Cambodian law (USAID 2007). After the workshop, the MCAFC project financially supported the work of two Cambodian NGOs that helped forest communities defend their forest use rights—and manage conflicts with encroachers and those with competing claims to the land—by raising awareness of laws, collaborating with local authorities, and engaging in participatory land use planning that included all stakeholders.

In the same month as the Cambodia workshop, a similar workshop was held in the Philippines, in collaboration with the USAID Philippines field office and with strong support from the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The workshop included seventy-five participants from the national and local government, NGOs, donors, the private sector, and other experts. Participants identified areas that were under threat from natural resource conflicts and came up with a list of priority actions, such as resolving discrepancies in policies and developing dispute resolution mechanisms. With respect to the workshop, the MCAFC final report noted that

> a leader of an upland farmer federation said this was the first time they were able to discuss and share their experiences with such a diverse audience. He believed that previous development projects failed because they did not identify conflict over natural resources as a critical issue (USAID 2007, 50).

USAID sources have credited the success of both workshops as much to the participatory nature of the project planning phase, which engaged multiple stakeholders, as to the workshops themselves.

In the wake of the in-country workshops, USAID and its implementing partners undertook initiatives designed to bring forest conflict to the attention of a wider international audience. In November 2005, the World Wildlife Fund, in coordination with USAID, hosted a meeting in Washington, D.C., on forest conflict in Asia that was attended by participants from some fifteen environmental, conflict-resolution, and humanitarian-relief NGOs, along with USAID staff (Pendzich 2005). The goals of the meeting were (1) to assess "the impacts related to forest conflict that are of concern to the three major NGO sectors"; (2) to identify "some broad, preferably synchronized actions that can be taken by government, donors, NGOs and industry to reduce and manage forest conflict"; and (3) to help frame the agenda for a subsequent USAID stakeholder workshop with a wider array of participants (Pendzich 2005, 1–2). The attendees discussed the impact of conflict on the environment and key issues that contribute to environmental conflict; they also analyzed current approaches to generate a list of lessons learned. One of the most important observations made at the meeting was that NGOs, which are active primarily at the community level, have the potential to raise awareness among policy makers and thereby facilitate integrated programming that recognizes the interface between conflict and the environment (Pendzich 2005).[11]

In December 2005, USAID and The Forests Dialogue (TFD) jointly sponsored a multi-stakeholder meeting in Washington, D.C. TFD is a forum that brings together owners of private forests and representatives from forest product businesses and environmental- and social-advocacy NGOs. This meeting brought together U.S. government officials and leaders from intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, and the timber industry; the goal was to build partnerships through which each set of actors, in their own spheres of activity, could reduce forest conflict.

Another key outreach event, held in Brussels in February 2006, was a meeting entitled "Security, Development and Forest Conflict: A Forum for Action." Supported by the Center for International Forestry Research, the European Tropical Forest Research Network, the Netherlands Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the UK Department for International Development, and USAID, the meeting was designed to extend the dialogue about forest conflict into Europe and to reach out more directly to the defense and security community.

The Brussels meeting was unique among MCAFC activities in that its primary focus was to bring together various members of the donor community; the sixty participants included national security officials from the United States and several European countries, as well as representatives from the diplomatic corps, foreign-aid agencies, and environment- and security-oriented NGOs. Like other awareness-raising events, the meeting highlighted the governance and commodity

[11] See also USAID (2007).

chain aspects of forest conflict, but it also focused on two key objectives: (1) integrating NRM into the broader security agenda (specifically by incorporating natural resource conflict into the work of UN security and peacebuilding institutions) and (2) promoting better coordination between diplomatic, development, and defense organizations' efforts to address forest conflict.

At the same time that the MCAFC project was reaching out more broadly to the donor community and generating awareness among security and development officials in Washington, the project was expanding its activities in Asia. A third detailed assessment, carried out in Nepal in 2005 in conjunction with the USAID field mission, led to programmatic recommendations focused on forest conflict in that country.

Finally, throughout the project, substantial emphasis was placed on developing and implementing a communications strategy. The three major elements of the strategy were the following:

- Reports and brochures to disseminate the information that had been collected during the assessments and to highlight the issue of forest conflict.
- Presentations at meetings of key partners, such as international NGOs and donor agencies.
- A web site that made project output available to policy makers, academics, and the general public.[12]

As a follow-on to the meeting sponsored by TFD and USAID, the Environmental Change and Security Program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, in Washington, D.C., hosted a public panel discussion in December 2005. USAID also produced a film on forest conflict in Cambodia that was shown to a number of audiences; in 2007, it was among the films selected for the Washington, D.C., Environmental Film Festival. In 2007, the final year of the project, three additional outreach activities were undertaken: a second special event was held at the Wilson Center, to present the project's key findings; a video was produced in the Khmer language to foster discussion among Cambodian audiences about reducing conflict and improving livelihoods; and ARD produced the final report on the MCAFC project, which highlighted the many dimensions of forest conflict and the project's major accomplishments.[13]

The forest conflict framework

The framework developed for the CTP, the first phase of the USAID Forest Conflict Initiative, included important conceptual innovations that shaped adoption by key actors in the subsequent MCAFC project. First was the identification, under

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[12] See www.forestconflict.com.

[13] The data are available on the project web site (www.ardinc.com/us/projects/asia-managing-conflict-in-asian-forest-communities.html).

the broader rubric of forest conflict, of two very different types of conflict (Type I and Type II). In addition to helping to raise the profile of Type II conflict at a time when Type I was the principal focus of media attention, the two-part definition of forest conflict had implications for conflict management. In the realm of post-conflict NRM, the international community had been much more successful at creating frameworks to address Type I conflict than at helping war-torn societies manage Type II conflict.

A second innovative aspect of the framework was the way in which it linked different levels of analysis. Previous work undertaken by bilateral or multilateral aid agencies tended to apply what one interview subject referred to as either top-down or bottom-up frameworks for understanding forest conflict. In a top-down framework, the links between timber commodity extraction and violent conflict are analyzed from a global perspective. A bottom-up approach, in contrast, stresses local land-tenure disputes and other clashes between competing user groups, but not necessarily the transnational markets within which some parties' interests are embedded.

As an example of the top-down approach, one interview subject referred to a 2005 report that was undertaken by Adelphi Research for the USAID Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (USAID 2005). The report, billed as a tool kit for managing forest conflict, identifies key issues, including the role of timber sales in financing conflict, the use of forests as safe havens by parties in conflict, and low-level violent conflict over logging. But because the tool kit recommendations are applicable only to the global scale rather than to local conditions, they are limited to general policy measures stressing democratic participation, sustainable management, land rights, and effective governance. The top-down approach is useful in framing a problem, raising awareness, and helping to identify strategic priorities. But it has limited utility as a programmatic guide. During interviews with the authors, consultants to USAID on the Forest Conflict Initiative indicated that they understood that their task was to move beyond a general, top-down framework and connect local conditions to broader systemic forces, particularly in international timber markets.

Third, despite the limitations of the commodity chain perspective, the USAID framework allowed a more nuanced approach to the problem because it linked the global trade in forest products to conflicts that had previously been regarded as purely local. One interview subject contrasted the USAID approach with that of the World Bank—which, he said, viewed forest conflict solely as a governance issue. The same interviewee noted that the private sector, as well, tended to focus narrowly on the illegal logging aspect of forest conflict. Because the USAID framework both deepens and enlarges the definition of forest conflict, and thereby expands potential approaches to conflict management, it is an improvement on previous models used by key players.

By highlighting certain social relations and causal mechanisms at the expense of others, analytical frameworks influence what researchers "see"—and therefore what they recommend. The three sections that follow consider the effects of the USAID framework on the Forest Conflict Initiative.

The definition of forest conflict

The definition of forest conflict adopted as part of the project framework reflected the need to draw attention to localized, endemic Type II conflict. "Hitching a ride" with the higher-profile Type I conflict did garner significant attention for Type II conflict. But given the lack of documented connections between Type I and Type II, the quest for more conflict-sensitive USAID initiatives could go only so far. Without strong evidence that Type II conflict, when left unaddressed, created conditions for Type I conflict, the project findings gave field missions no incentive to manage Type II situations in order to forestall Type I problems. As one USAID staffer noted, the empirical evidence is simply lacking: longitudinal studies would be needed to document how Type II evolves into Type I, but no one has undertaken this type of study. Another USAID staffer not connected to the initiative suggested that from a conflict management perspective, the distinction between Type I and Type II was not particularly relevant; the key question was whether *any* form of conflict attained such scope or intensity that the agency felt obliged to respond programmatically.

The commodity chain approach

As noted earlier, the commodity chain approach, by emphasizing production, consumption, and governance relations up and down the supply chain, focuses attention on certain actors and interests at the expense of others. For example, one interview subject with extensive experience in community forestry noted that community-based NRM tends to be organized at the hamlet level—a level of social aggregation substantially below even the most localized state-based governance. NRM activities at this level—or conflicts that occur when such systems clash with wider-scale state actions—may not be captured in a commodity chain framework.

A second disadvantage of the commodity chain approach is its limited ability to situate conflicts that are specific to a given node in the supply chain, or that occur between different nodes, within a larger context of violent conflict. Thus, the evidence generated by the USAID framework revealed few or no explicit linkages between Type I and Type II conflict—implying that, from a management perspective, they are largely separable problems. In the absence of an analysis that takes into account both the local aspects of the conflict and the larger international context, it is difficult to establish the relationship, in a particular instance of forest conflict, between conflict that is caused by opportunism and conflict that is caused by grievances or deprivation.

The analytic categories

Of the three sets of characteristics used to assess the propensity for forest conflict—commodity characteristics, market characteristics, and governance

characteristics—the first two function not as variables but as constants, because they are difficult to manipulate within the short time horizons available to key stakeholders. Commodity characteristics are largely determined by the nature of forest resources, and market characteristics are not easily influenced at the level of USAID programming, particularly during projects with short life cycles. As a result, the third set—governance characteristics—moved to center stage, as is evident in the 2003 CTP final report, which lists four "key interrelated characteristics" as common to episodes of timber conflict. All four relate to governance:

- "There is a direct and strong link between conflict timber and poor, inequitable systems of governance."
- "Governments are almost always complicit in conflict timber activities."
- "Loose financial oversight generates incentives for powerful individual actors (military, police, politicians) to engage in conflict timber activities."
- "Ambiguous land/resource tenure promotes struggles over timber" (USAID 2003a, iii–iv).

Essentially, the framework construes forest conflict management as a matter of regulating market activity—which translates, in turn, into a focus on the legality of extractive activities and the legal framework governing property rights and forest access.

Laws, rule-making processes, property rights regimes, and oversight mechanisms thus emerge as the key levers for forest conflict management. This approach is somewhat limited, however, because it is not always simple to separate what is legal from what is illegal. The same activities may be legal in one national context and illegal in a neighboring country. For example, encroachment by settlers or extractive industries may cause conflicts with local populations, regardless of whether access is authorized under national law. Similarly, changes in the law can render previously illegal activities legal, or vice versa. Nor does the law have universally legitimate authority: many communities with long-standing ties to forests question the legitimacy of the state's forestry laws (USAID 2003a).

The emphasis on governance—and hence, on legality—has reinforced the view, among some of the USAID-targeted stakeholders, that forest conflict is essentially a problem of illegality. But this approach may fail to adequately address conflicts that arise when legal practice does not reflect the interests of those with traditional or cultural claims, or those who must access forest resources to meet subsistence needs. New standards developed by the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry, with the assistance of USAID, recognize the limits of a narrow legal perspective: under these standards, which were adopted in 2009, the legality of timber concessions is determined, in part, by local community and stakeholder participation and consistency with customary law (Ministry of Forestry 2009).

Adoption by key actors

Although the initial objective of the Forest Conflict Initiative was to raise awareness, among individual USAID missions, of the importance of integrating conflict-sensitive NRM into agency programming, the first phase of the project made it clear that the issue was on a far greater scale than any one mission could address. Given the complex ways that forest conflict was embedded in timber markets, national development plans, and conservation initiatives, and the many levels on which rule making and institution building occurred, it was imperative for the project to raise awareness among a larger and heterogeneous audience.

This realization led to a conscious expansion of the target audience to include four key constituencies:

- Governmental actors in Asia, who were responsible for national forest management policies.
- NGOs that served as the implementing partners for an array of USAID programs in forestry and biodiversity.
- The international donor community, which was in a position to determine whether the issue would receive higher priority in foreign assistance.
- Private-sector actors, who occupied positions of power in international commodity chains for forest products.

The in-country workshops and stakeholder meetings in Washington, D.C., and Brussels were key forums in which the project findings were disseminated among a broader set of actors at the international level.

In particular, the framework developed during the CTP and the subsequent country assessments highlighted the need to engage the private sector. This effort was made easier by recent data demonstrating that illegally harvested timber, much of it tied to violent conflict, was undercutting the market share of major players in international timber markets to a much greater extent than had previously been realized.[14]

A new target: The private sector

Attempting to engage and influence private-sector actors in the region's timber and wood-processing sectors created particular challenges for a bilateral donor agency such as USAID. As noted earlier in the chapter, regulating market activity is challenging because of the short time horizons of the projects. Moreover, some interview subjects regarded such efforts as being outside USAID's mandate,

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[14] At the USAID's December 2005 workshop, in Washington, in which one of the authors of this chapter participated, several participants stressed the influence of new analyses of the market impacts of illegal timber.

although this was a contested position. One way the agency sought to reach out to the private sector was by providing financial support to the Responsible Asia Forestry and Trade program (RAFT), which had been developed by the Nature Conservancy. RAFT was an outgrowth of the Global Development Alliance to Promote Forest Certification and Combat Illegal Logging in Indonesia (which had also been sponsored by USAID), through which NGOs such as The Nature Conservancy and the World Wildlife Fund partnered with private-sector timber firms in Indonesia to promote sustainable forest management.

RAFT's goal is to build on the initial success of the alliance in Indonesia by expanding it to a regional scale. RAFT engages NGOs, governments, and the private sector in an effort to do the following:

> Increase regional timber trade from legal sources. . . . Improve sustainability of forest management on the ground. . . . Strengthen regional cooperation on forest management and trade . . . [and] Contribute towards climate change abatement by reducing CO_2 emissions from forest loss and degradation and enhancing regional capacity for sustainable forest management through the emerging international REDD framework (USAID 2006a, 2).

RAFT works with private-sector timber firms to help facilitate compliance with the standards of sustainable and legal logging practice. How RAFT addresses each country in the region depends on its place in the global supply chain—which suggests that the CTP's commodity chain emphasis could translate into policy implementation. In source countries, such as Indonesia, RAFT provides assistance with forest management, whereas in wood-processing countries, such as Vietnam and China, RAFT focuses on establishing and implementing policies to reduce imports from uncertified timber sources. In smaller countries, such as Laos and Cambodia, which have less developed timber industries, RAFT focuses on improving community management through technical assistance and training, rather than on an industrial regulatory model that requires the development and implementation of import policy. By focusing on "pressure points," RAFT has succeeded in changing the behavior of land managers who are influenced by the commercial and regulatory environment.

The military: A missed target?

Although there was no consensus on this point, some interview subjects (both inside and outside USAID) felt that the military may have been underemphasized as a target audience. Apart from the Brussels meeting, there is little evidence that attempts were made to actively bring the defense sector into the process.

Engaging the national military in efforts to address forest conflict is a complex and context-specific undertaking. Some interview subjects suggested that because of its direct contact with local military organizations, the U.S. military could, through cooperative activities, contribute to peacebuilding. Interview

subjects stressed the importance of context, however. When a country is using timber to finance conflict—as was the case, for example, in Indonesia under Suharto—engaging the military in that country may be essential in order to break the timber-conflict link, and military-to-military contacts could conceivably play a role in doing so. But where the sale of timber is an illegal, renegade activity, the interests of military forces may be at odds with the peacebuilding effort because the military itself is engaged in logging for self-financing, or is providing access and protection to private loggers. One interview subject with many years of experience in the region dismissed the importance of the military-to-military channel, arguing that it was not central in cases where local military forces were not involved, and unworkable in cases where they were.

The original target: Country-level missions

The original intent of the USAID Forest Conflict Initiative—to persuade country-level USAID missions to address forest conflict in their programming—appears to have had mixed results. Conversations with USAID staff and observers of the agency's forest-related activities yielded a set of variables that seemed to influence policy adoption at the mission level and that are worthy of more targeted field research:

- *Relevance to the mission's current programming.* Mission staff were more likely to be receptive if the implementing partners of the Forest Conflict Initiative could contribute to the mission's existing program objectives or provide evidence and attention that would support current post-conflict programming. In Cambodia, for example, mission staff reportedly did not view the objectives of the Forest Conflict Initiative as fitting closely with the mission's priorities, whereas mission staff in Nepal viewed the project as providing further corroboration of their perspective on conflict dynamics in the country, and as a means of generating visibility in Washington.
- *Availability of resources.* Where mission activities related to forest conflict were supported by funds from Washington, the project was not viewed as competing with the mission's own activities, funding, or goals; this helped to generate support.
- *The perspectives of staff on the connections between forests and conflict, and on the tractability of forest conflict.* In some instances, where forest conflict stemmed from competing pressures generated by economic development, poor governance, and local subsistence needs, mission staff viewed the problems as complex and endemic processes that they could not directly address. Moreover, the direct connections between these conflicts and violent conflict were not always readily apparent, which increased the mission staff's perception that the project's objectives were outside of the scope of post-conflict programming. In some instances, the implementing partners had to actively sell the Forest Conflict Initiative as a strategic opportunity for the missions.

- *Ties and tensions between USAID headquarters in Washington and the mission*. In a few cases, mission staff experienced a disconnect between mission-level programming and the programming priorities generated by the Washington headquarters; when mission staff felt that they were being told what to do by people who were not engaged in the day-to-day realities of the situation, they were sometimes resistant. Although the USAID organizational structure makes such tensions inevitable, several factors here—including the complexity of forest-conflict linkages, the variability of conditions within and across the forests of the region, and a similar variability in the dynamics of violent conflicts and peace processes—combined to make the tensions between headquarters and the field missions a particular challenge.
- *Timing*. In some cases, the extent of policy adoption or the nature of the response at the mission level was simply a matter of personalities and timing. Changes in mission staff affected the level of interest in programming that integrated a more conflict-sensitive approach to NRM, as did internal personnel constraints and opportunities presented by a change in the local political situation, which could bring new actors or interests to the fore. For example, one interview subject with project experience in many countries in the region suggested that political transitions provide leverage for efforts to enact change, citing Indonesia as an example of a place where the USAID initiative may have had an easier time gaining traction when the political situation was in flux.

CONCLUSIONS: EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPLICATIONS

The expansion, transformation, and implementation of the USAID Forest Conflict Initiative lead to some observations about the effectiveness of the project. These observations, in turn, suggest some broader lessons on the integration of conflict-sensitive NRM into peacebuilding.

The effectiveness of the Forest Conflict Initiative in Asia

Overall, the effectiveness of the USAID Forest Conflict Initiative was mixed. Several important achievements emerged from the CTP and the MCAFC project:

- USAID developed a heightened awareness of forest conflict.
- An analytic framework was developed that combined local factors with wider systemic influences—which increased awareness of the more pervasive, but less attention-grabbing, Type II forest conflicts.
- In a few countries in the region, national workshops brought together representatives from government, NGOs, and local communities.
- Links were forged between a variety of international stakeholder groups.

These achievements led, in turn, to a more explicit recognition of forest conflict in mission-level programming in Asia, and to the integration of local-level conflict resolution into environmental agendas in the region.

The initiative also shed light on key variables that seem to shape the integration of issues such as forest conflict into field-level USAID operations (and perhaps bilateral donor agency operations more generally): relevance, resources, staff perspectives, tensions between missions and headquarters, and timing. In this particular case, these variables often interacted in ways that limited full understanding and appreciation of the message about the need for a conflict-sensitive approach to NRM. As a result, at least with regard to forests, conflict-sensitive NRM has yet to be fully integrated into USAID peacebuilding strategies (whether they are labeled explicitly as such or not).

Another limitation on the impact of the initiative came from the tendency of key international constituencies to "hear what they want to hear" when confronted with a complex problem such as forest conflict. For some private sector actors, the issue quickly became a matter of certifying that timber extraction was legal and "sustainable" (variously defined). For others, such as local NGOs, dealing with forest conflict was a matter of empowering communities to more effectively report information about abuses, as a means of catalyzing supportive advocacy. Still others emphasized empowering local communities through the reform of property rights and rules of access. While each of these approaches may play a key role in the challenge of managing forest conflict, the centrality of conflict management can be lost in the application of narrower strategies that reflect the familiar objectives of industry, or environmentalists, or aid agencies.

The initiative's analytic framework also influenced its effectiveness. On the one hand, two characteristics of the framework—the links between localized conflicts and global commodity chains, and the inclusion of both Type I and Type II conflicts—made it possible to consider the problem more comprehensively and to bring together constituencies that had not previously engaged in dialogue on forest conflict. For example, it was through the initiative that NGOs dealing with forest conservation; humanitarian aid to war-torn societies; and conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and reconciliation were brought together to discuss forest conflict. Similarly, by highlighting the market implications of illicit timber extraction, the commodity chain approach helped to mobilize legitimate commercial actors to engage in broader discussions of the problem.

On the other hand, the commodity chain approach and the key variables on which it focused (commodity, market, and governance characteristics) clearly pushed the effects of the initiative in specific directions. Because both commodity and market characteristics were essentially constants, policy conversations converged on the common ground of governance—which, although it is a crucial element of conflict-sensitive forest management, fails to address a number of issues. What happens, for example, when Type II conflict is played out at the hamlet or village level, outside the state's reach? What happens when unsustainable and

unjust timber extraction are, within the prevailing governance patterns, entirely legal? How do governance strategies for Type I conflict, which stress legalization, regulation, and certification, affect Type II conflicts, which often exist not because of the absence of governance but because some stakeholders resist or reject the legitimacy of state-based rules?

Finally, the number and variety of actors that USAID was trying to engage forced the initiative to balance two objectives: generating mission-level programming guidelines within USAID and catalyzing action among key actors in the larger environment within which the agency operates. Essentially, the initiative reached the water's edge of two important, but very different, accomplishments: creating the sort of detailed operational tool kit that would be useful at the mission level, and creating a sustained stakeholder network that could keep attention focused on forest conflict within the wider political context of agency activities.

Implications for post-conflict peacebuilding

The USAID Forest Conflict Initiative was not framed explicitly as post-conflict peacebuilding. Nevertheless, the agency's experience yields some important lessons for this volume. Many of the countries on which the initiative focused are emerging from protracted violent conflict. The data generated by the initiative provide the closest look, to date, at the dynamics of forest conflict in those settings and have yielded a number of insights, a few of which stand out.[15]

First, Type II conflicts—which involve competing uses of forests; contested understandings of what rules, claims, and practices are legitimate; and differing capacities, among actors, to press their claims under existing governance mechanisms—are pervasive in Asia. Nevertheless, among some actors that the initiative tried to (or could have tried to) engage, the absence or indirectness of connections between Type II and Type I conflict reduced the salience of forest conflict in general. In the post-conflict setting, however, it is precisely through the more diffuse Type II conflicts that poor forest governance is most likely to derail peacebuilding.

Second, the data generated by the initiative revealed the pervasive presence of state-based actors in both Type I and Type II conflicts, the often ambiguous character of tenure systems and rules of access, and the varying degrees of legitimacy that local actors ascribe to state-based rule systems. This combination of conditions raises some profound questions about the meaning of such staple concepts of peacebuilding as "the rule of law" and "good governance," particularly in the context of forest management. As the analysis has shown, better governance may not be a sufficient solution when the state is complicit in the exploitation of forests and national legal codes conflict with traditional local practices. Effective solutions must therefore take into account the various stakeholders and levels of government involved in the conflict.

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[15] Available in the final reports and on the forest conflict web site (www.forestconflict.com).

Another set of lessons derives from the empirical picture of an initiative, conducted inside a bilateral aid agency, which sought to raise the salience of forest conflict for a range of actors both inside and outside the agency. To improve conditions on the ground, it is essential to understand the obstacles to adoption of integrated post-conflict programming. If attention to NRM is central to peacebuilding, then the capacity of bilateral donors to promote greater conflict sensitivity in NRM, as well as greater NRM sensitivity in post-conflict settings, is certainly one key to establishing a sustainable peace.

Finally, a wider theme stands out. Although the framework used by the initiative succeeded in bringing key stakeholders to the table, it became clear that the more nuanced framework that would be needed to move beyond awareness to sustained action at any particular node in the commodity chain was lacking. Hence, a dilemma: without a unifying narrative, it is impossible to assemble the requisite cast of players to address a problem as complex and multilayered as forest conflict. But that same unifying narrative risks narrowing the focus to core concepts—timber, commodity chains, governance—that are of limited value for understanding and managing forest resources, and the conflicts that surround them, in a post-conflict setting.

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