

BOX 8.2 *Adapting community-level program design to country context: Afghanistan, Burundi, Cambodia, Colombia, Indonesia, Nepal, and Rwanda*

The basic elements of community-based programs for violence prevention and recovery are simple and can be adapted to a broad range of country contexts. All community programs under state auspices consist, essentially, of a community decision-making mechanism to decide on priorities and the provision of funds and technical help to implement them. Within this model there is a great deal of variance that can be adapted to different types of stresses and institutional capacities, as well as to different opportunities for transition. Three important sources of variance are in how community decision-making is done, who controls the funds, and where programs sit within government.

Different stresses and institutional capacities and accountability affect community decision-making. In many violent areas, preexisting community councils are either destroyed or were already discredited. A critical first step is to reestablish credible participatory forms of representation. In Burundi, for example, a local NGO organized elections for representative community development committees in the participating communes that cut across ethnic divides. Similarly, Afghanistan's National Solidarity Program began with village-wide elections for a community development council. But Indonesia's programs for the conflict-affected areas of Aceh, Kalimantan, Maluku, and Sulawesi did not include holding new community elections. Community councils were largely intact, and national laws already provided for local, democratic village elections. Indonesia also experimented with separating grants to Muslim and Christian villages to minimize intercommunal tensions, but eventually used common funds and councils to bridge divides between these communities.

Different institutional challenges also affect who manages the funds. Programs must weigh the trade-offs between a first objective of building trust with the risks of money going missing and the elite capture of resources. Different approaches to program design to fit context include the following:

- In Indonesia, where local capacity was fairly strong, subdistrict councils established financial management units that are routinely audited but have full responsibility for all aspects of financial performance.
- In Burundi, lack of progress in overall decentralization and difficulties in monitoring funds through community structures meant that responsibility for managing the funds remained with the NGO partners. In Rwanda, by contrast, greater space for change after the genocide meant the councils could from the start be integrated into the government's decentralization plans.
- In Afghanistan's National Solidarity Program, NGOs also took on the initial responsibility for managing the funds while councils were trained in bookkeeping, but within a year, block grants were being transferred directly to the councils.
- In Colombia, where the primary institutional challenges were to bring the state closer to communities and overcome distrust between security and civilian government agencies, funds are held by individual government ministries, but approvals for activities are made by multisectoral teams in consultation with communities.
- In Nepal, community programs show the full range of design options, with some programs giving primary responsibility for fund oversight to partner NGOs, to their large-scale village school program, where community school committees are the legal owners of school facilities and can use government funds to hire and train their staff.
- In Cambodia's Seila program, councils were launched under UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) auspices and then moved into the government's newly formed commune structure.

The type of transition moment and governance environment also affects how community decision-making structures align with the formal government administration. Many countries emerging from conflict will also be undergoing major constitutional and administrative reforms, just as the early-response community programs are being launched. There may be tensions between national and local governance and power-holders at the center and the community. In Afghanistan, where center-periphery issues are a key driver of conflict, and where warlords are a continuing threat to stability, community-driven development (CDD) programs must be sensitive to national-local dynamics. Afghanistan's Community Development Councils, though constituted under a 2007 vice presidential bylaw, are still under review for formal integration into the national administrative structure.

In other settings of either prolonged crisis or in authoritarian systems, CDD programs can be designed to sustain human capital and offer an avenue for local-level debate in the absence of national-level progress. CDD programs designed in environments with more limited space for change may rely more heavily on nongovernmental delivery of services, employing local workers for skill building and focusing on "neutral," nonpolitical issues in community debates.

Source: Guggenheim 2011.