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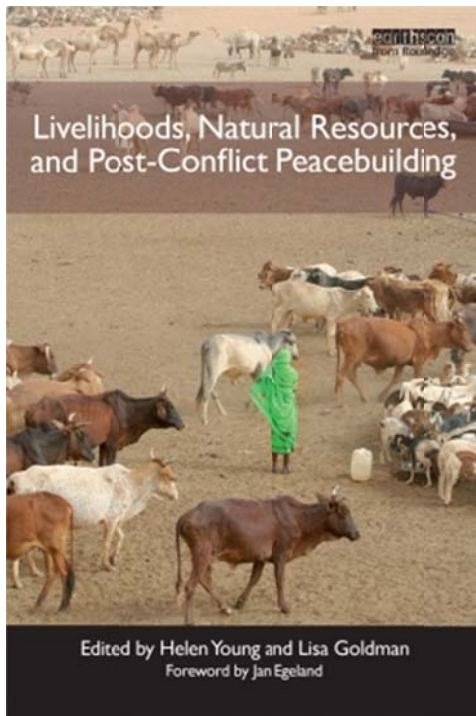
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### Part 1: Natural Resources, Livelihoods, and Conflict: Reflections on Peacebuilding

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# **PART 1**

## **Natural resources, livelihoods, and conflict: Reflections on peacebuilding**



# Introduction

A livelihood can be defined as “the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living”; a sustainable livelihood is one that “can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets” without damaging the natural resource base (Scoones 1998, 5). Livelihoods are profoundly affected by conflict. Not only does conflict often destroy the natural resources and infrastructure on which many livelihoods depend, but it also displaces significant portions of the population and undermines the institutions that are critical to a formal economy—including those of law, governance, trade, and finance. For example, when local tenure systems governing access to land, water, or pastures break down, the resulting conflicts over natural resource access or use may become violent.

Loss of livelihoods can also prolong conflict: individuals seeking survival, restitution, or revenge may join armed or criminal groups, or engage in illicit livelihoods linked to the conflict economy. Conflict-affected populations have little choice but to adapt their livelihood strategies to the realities of armed conflict: for example, they may avoid areas where there are landmines—and thereby lose access to resources essential to livelihoods—or they may participate in unregulated (and often illegal) artisanal mining. Finally, conflict-affected populations may participate in unsustainable or otherwise problematic exploitation of the natural resource base, or may turn to livelihoods that fuel ongoing conflict—by, for example, growing opium poppy (as in Afghanistan); growing coca (as in Colombia); or engaging in looting (as in Sudan and Bosnia) (USAID 2005).

Incorporating livelihood initiatives into peacebuilding can restore equitable access to crucial natural resources, rebuild communities, forge cooperation, and support peace consolidation. By the same token, failure to address the lack of viable livelihood opportunities can contribute to protracted or recurring conflict. Part 1 of this book explores the role of livelihoods in conflict and peacebuilding, both from a theoretical perspective and through experiences from Afghanistan, East Africa, Indonesia, and Cambodia.

Livelihoods are often central to social identity—and social identity, in turn, can affect post-conflict peacebuilding, particularly where social identity has played a critical role in the conflict. Nevertheless, the connections between social identity, natural resources, and peacebuilding are too often ignored. In “Social Identity, Natural Resources, and Peacebuilding,” Arthur Green examines these connections, and addresses the symbolic role of natural resources in racial, ethnic, and social tensions. From a constructivist perspective, to which Green subscribes, identity is a social construct, and therefore subject to change. Whereas current approaches to identity-based conflict tend to focus on establishing territorial boundaries or dividing resources between social groups, Green argues for more creative solutions, such as reframing social identities in ways designed to prevent

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conflict recurrence, increase recognition of the social value of livelihoods, and strengthen group rights.

The role that natural resources play in racial, ethnic, and social tensions between and among groups is a recurring theme throughout Green's chapter. Social identity as an element of natural resource-based conflicts and post-conflict peacebuilding emerges as an important theme in several other chapters as well, including "Resolving Natural Resource Conflicts to Help Prevent War: A Case from Afghanistan," Liz Alden Wily's analysis of conflict between Pashtun nomads and settled Hazara communities in Afghanistan's central highlands. Similarly, in "Swords into Plowshares? Accessing Natural Resources and Securing Agricultural Livelihoods in Rural Afghanistan," Alan Roe notes that conflict over access to natural resources—particularly water for irrigation—has increased tension and led to violence between villages of different ethnicities and historical alliances.

Roe's chapter also explores the importance of addressing rural livelihoods during the peacebuilding process. Although conflict and violent insurgency tend to be concentrated in remote, rural areas where livelihoods rely primarily on agricultural production, current agricultural policies focus on the river valleys, where high-value agricultural exports flourish and there is ready access both to irrigation resources and regional markets. To promote long-term political stability, Roe recommends implementing agricultural policies that improve livelihood security by addressing the needs of the rural poor. This would include recognizing the comparative advantages of diverse types of agricultural systems (such as semi-irrigated highland farming, rainfed farming, and nomadic pastoralism), and supporting investment in these various practices.

In many post-conflict situations, the unregulated exploitation of natural resources associated with the conflict economy extends into the post-conflict period, devastating traditional resource-based livelihoods. In "Forest Resources in Cambodia's Transition to Peace: Lessons for Peacebuilding," Srey Chanthy and Jim Schweithelm consider the long-term effects of Cambodia's civil war on forest communities, as well as the long-term effects of the unregulated timber harvesting that occurred in the wake of the conflict. Because regulatory capacity is essential to protect the rights and livelihoods of forest communities, Srey and Schweithelm recommend an immediate post-conflict focus on rebuilding the capacity of environmental and resource-related institutions as a means of promoting lasting peace and ensuring sustainable management of the natural resource base.

Similar challenges confront forest-dependent communities in post-conflict situations around the world, particularly those in remote rural regions that depend on the equitable and sustainable management of natural resources. In "Post-Tsunami Aceh: Successful Peacemaking, Uncertain Peacebuilding," Michael Renner explores the history of the conflict in Aceh, highlighting the policies of the national government that excluded the province from the economic benefits and livelihood opportunities associated with the region's natural wealth, particularly in the forest sector, and ultimately led to a thirty-year conflict and attempted

secession. Although a 2005 memorandum of understanding (MOU) formally ended the conflict and granted Aceh 70 percent of all revenues from its natural resources, translating natural resource rights into tangible benefits for poor Acehnese remains a challenge. Many former combatants remain unemployed, and poverty rates in Aceh are high; these factors, along with persistent economic instability, threaten both peacebuilding (because the reintegration of former combatants is critical to preventing recurring violence) and environmental sustainability (because many former combatants have turned to illegal logging as an alternative livelihood).

In situations where conflict-affected communities rely on natural resources for livelihood security, peacebuilding solutions must address the livelihood needs of poor and vulnerable populations and ensure the equitable distribution of development assistance. In “Manufacturing Peace in ‘No Man’s Land’: Livestock and Access to Natural Resources in the Karimojong Cluster of Kenya and Uganda,” Jeremy Lind analyzes the traditions of natural resource use by pastoralists in the Karimojong Cluster, a region spanning the remote borderlands of northwestern Kenya and northeastern Uganda. Livestock raiding and banditry are common throughout the region, creating a violent and insecure environment that threatens the livelihoods of pastoralists. Moreover, postcolonial development initiatives have severely limited livelihood opportunities in the region. Noting that economic development could help reduce conflict, as long as such development is consistent with cultural norms and practices, Lind argues that peacebuilding must focus on poor and vulnerable populations, addressing structural inequality and underdevelopment in rural areas while creating and supporting sustainable livelihoods.

Inequality in development assistance and peacebuilding efforts can also affect rights of access to natural resources, including farmland. Land access is essential, for example, to the livelihoods of various ethnic groups in Afghanistan—where, largely as the result of inequitable access to pastureland and the government’s failure to recognize customary land rights, competition between the Hazara tribes and Pashtun nomads (known as Kuchis) has been a source of recurring violence for generations, creating a roadblock to peace consolidation. In “Resolving Natural Resource Conflicts to Help Prevent War: A Case from Afghanistan,” Liz Alden Wily explores innovative efforts to address the persistent conflict between agropastoralist and pastoralist ethnic groups in the central highlands. To resolve land-based conflict and promote lasting peace, Alden Wily recommends establishing a framework that would allocate each group sufficient rights of access to maintain livelihoods. Ultimately, Alden Wily suggests that the best means of resolving conflicts over landownership and access rights is through local mediation designed to lead to community-specific agreements. The success of such efforts will depend, however, on establishing trust among the participants, and confidence that the negotiations will yield an equitable solution that supports local livelihoods.

The six chapters in part 1 demonstrate a strong correlation between livelihood creation, natural resources, and peacebuilding. Taken together, they offer

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a number of overarching lessons for livelihood interventions in post-conflict situations. Because livelihoods contribute to a sense of social identity and community purpose at the same time that they provide income-generating opportunities, creating and supporting sustainable livelihoods during and immediately after conflict is critical to fostering and maintaining peace. It is therefore essential for the international community to support transnational, national, and local efforts to rebuild and strengthen natural resource management during the post-conflict period, both to promote the recovery of natural resource-based livelihoods for all affected groups and to help prevent overexploitation of resources. Most important, the post-conflict period offers tremendous opportunities to develop and implement innovative peacebuilding initiatives that will promote sustainable livelihoods and support the consolidation of peace.

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