

Doing development differently: A peace building perspective

Opportunities to find politically feasible solutions are everywhere; the challenge is searching for them.

There is a growing acknowledgement within the development sector that achieving sustainable development outcomes is highly complex and cannot be isolated from a wide range of differing socioeconomic and political interests¹. As professionals try to sift through the opaque rules of the game, the big global challenges such as conflict, climate change, women's empowerment and improving public services continue to dominate many of our discussions. However, as we create ever more sophisticated narratives to define these challenges, the common theme to searching for politically sustainable solutions remains the same – to reshape the power and influence of one stakeholder over another, and to build their relationships with others.

This article argues that in order to address each development issue requires having a better understanding of relationships between stakeholders and how to build upon them. At the heart of this approach is a shift from focusing on building inclusive and participative programmes with principal stakeholders, to building relationships between a much wider-range of stakeholders and supporting them as they navigate the political context.

Building on conflict mediation literature, this article also presents an innovative framework for evaluating these various relationships that underpin this transformational process. The framework is presented using a visualisation platform and supports professionals in their efforts to develop continual detailed contextual knowledge of the complex dynamics and to facilitate a shared learning journey across relevant stakeholders. This provides professionals with a methodological approach in cultivating a common understanding of the problems, improving their capacity to adapt to the changing context and finding politically feasible, sustainable solutions.

The search to find politically feasible solutions

Currently the [Doing Development Differently](#) (DDD) initiative is leading the debate on dealing with the political challenges of sustainable development. The initiative has led to new approaches for implementing and designing programs, which focus [on solving local problems with a greater consideration of the changing context](#).

The Doing Development Differently Manifesto identifies successful initiatives, which reflect the following common principles²:

- A focus on solving local problems that are defined by people in an on-going process;
- Building legitimacy at all levels and supporting local ownership throughout the process;
- Working through local convenors who can mobilise relevant stakeholders to introduce change;
- Blending design and implementation through rapid cycles of planning, action and reflection;
- Managing risks by making small bets and pursuing activities with promise;
- Fostering real results that are real solutions to real problems, and which build trust, empower people and promote sustainability;

Enforcing each of these principles requires an in depth understanding of relationships between a much wider-range of stakeholders and how to build them. So far there are a growing number of programmes that have tried to work in this way. One of the programs pioneering this approach has been the State Voice and Accountability Initiative (SAVI) in Nigeria. A key innovation of this

¹ Getting real about politics From thinking politically to working differently Alina Rocha Menocal, ODI, March 2014
² <http://doingdevelopmentdifferently.com/the-ddd-manifesto/>

programme was to move away from providing grants to civil society organisations (CSOs) and instead focusing on facilitation, coaching and support. The programme sought to broker relations between CSOs with others (within government at different levels, regional parliaments and the media). SAVI provides a useful example because they adopted politically smart methods of multi-stakeholder facilitation³.

Meanwhile, examples of Markets for the Poor (M4P) programmes have drawn on complexity science to understand the interconnected and interdependent elements of multifaceted systems. These emphasised the need for M4P programmes to provide a facilitative role, based on a strong understanding of how a particular system functions⁴. Using this approach has, in some cases, had a greater impact on addressing technical market failures⁵.

Nonetheless, in spite of both these programmes emphasising the central nature of relationships and the need for better systems to undertake on-going contextual analysis, discussions on how to build these relationships and practical tools to enable professionals to think and work politically have been limited⁶.

Why relationships matter

Research has shown that finding sustainable political solutions requires [exploring the broad distribution of power and interests](#). It is within these power plays that people compete over the control of resources, bargains are struck and formal and informal political settlements are shaped or broken. It is how these relationships play out that lead to divisions and create inequalities within society, increase the marginalisation of women or minority groups, and build mistrust between governments and citizens. In turn, this can lead to the allocation of limited resources away from essential public services, a continual struggle to implement effective systems of governance, and critically, to resentment and violence.

However, whilst these power plays can cause divisions, at the same time it is within these dynamics where alliances can be formed, where power can be challenged, where prejudices can be overcome and sustainable solutions discovered. Therefore, an essential condition for any development intervention should be to analyse these interactions, and explore opportunities for building relationships, between political elite, public officials, citizens, civil society and the private sector.

Evidence has shown that [brokering these relationships and discovering common interests are crucial to achieving sustainable development outcomes](#). Programmes that focus on building relationship allow stakeholders to develop a common understanding of the complex development challenges they face, thereby enabling them to negotiate ways forward and find shared solutions that are politically feasible.

Understanding relationships and finding politically feasible solutions

Finding politically feasible solutions is central to peacebuilding and conflict mediation programming. The notion of peacebuilding involves a dynamic process between stakeholders, one where material resources and social capital are exchanged, and shared objectives are negotiated for the purpose of

3 Putting theory into practice: How DFID is doing development differently, Leni Wild, David Booth and Craig Valters, ODI, February 2017

4 Review of Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P) Evaluation Methods and Approaches: Working Paper 41. London: DFID 2013.

5 Booth, D. and Golooba-Mutebi, F. (2015). Reforming the Roads Sector in Uganda: A Six-year Retrospective. Working Paper 424. London: Overseas Development Institute

6 Adaptive programming in practice: shared lessons from the DFID-funded LASER and SAVI programmes, Derbyshire and Donovan, August 2016

building peace. This dynamic process is based on transforming these socioeconomic and political dynamics in a constructive manner so they can support peaceful relationships between conflict parties⁷.

To support this process means first of all considering why stakeholders are behaving in a certain way or adopting conflicting positions. Conflict often emerges from competing interests, lack of communication, or contentious narratives between actors, as well as underlying structural challenges such as cultural, legal and institutional issues⁸. Therefore, each actor will have a diverse set of needs, which will reflect their capacity and willingness to negotiate and interact with other stakeholders⁹.

Despite these differences in motivation, many of these actors' needs and interests will be dependent on one another. Whilst we might identify inequality between actors as a major constraint, no single actor has the capacity to achieve a resolution on its own. International organisations are dependent on local representatives to support their peace agendas. At the same time, national political elites need the support of sub-national elites, who in turn need the backing of local chiefs who receive legitimacy from their constituents to maintain power¹⁰.

From a peacebuilding perspective, finding politically feasible solutions means encouraging stakeholders to become more aware of each other's needs and objectives, and to help clarify misunderstandings¹¹. Building on Ramsbotham's¹² relational conflict theories, an essential condition for any sustainable development intervention should be to develop an iterative process of [brokering these relationships and discovering common interests](#).

To achieve this requires an analysis tool for programme activities which:

1. Reflects the different power imbalances between stakeholders;
2. Analyses the root causes affecting each relevant relationship and;
3. Can be updated on an on-going basis so that assumptions can be tested and the knowledge gained used as a basis to develop a common understanding on how to move forward.

Framework for building relationships and finding politically feasible solutions

By combining political economy analysis, stakeholder mapping, conflict issues and root cause analysis, and then adapting them to a visualisation software, it is possible to devise an analysis framework which can be updated continually as development professionals' appreciation of the changing dynamics evolve. Applying the analysis framework to this visual software means this Stakeholder Relationship Building (SRB) tool can support development professionals to achieve their outcomes.

The framework analyses:

1. Each stakeholder's power, interests and attitudes towards the development outcomes;
2. How relationships between stakeholders are affecting the development outcomes and;
3. How strategies can be designed to build these relationships.

7 Dynamics of Relations between different Actors when Building Peace The Role of Hybridity and Culture, Anna Bernhard, 2013
8 ibid

9 Richmond, Oliver P., "Resistance and the Post-liberal Peace", Millennium: Journal of International Studies, Vol. 38 No.3, 2010, pp. 665-692

¹⁰ Barnett, Michael and Christoph Zürcher, "The Peacebuilder's Contract. How External Statebuilding Reinforces Weak Statehood", Routledge, Security and Governance Series, 2009

11 Mangat, Rupinder, "Reflection as Dialogue: Canadian Soldiers' Experiences of Dialogue with Afghans".

12 Transforming Violent Conflict Radical disagreement, dialogue and survival, Oliver Ramsbotham, 2010

How does the SRB tool work?

This SRB tool has been developed during pilot programmes, which were aimed at finding politically feasible solutions in Pakistan and Malawi. It follows three fundamental steps:

Step 1 – Understanding the context and analysing stakeholders

When conducting an initial context analysis, it is important to understand the perspectives of stakeholders, as these help to identify those with the greatest interest in (or most likely to take an interest in) the project. These include, governing political parties, ethnic groups, local government, village chiefs and businesses. Amongst other things, stakeholder examination helps to establish the strength of the bonds between each of them.

Step 2 – Understanding stakeholder interests and their current power to influence

Once the relevant stakeholders have been identified, the next step is to recognise their power to influence the outcomes of the development programme. Power can be defined as “the capacity to achieve or prevent outcomes”¹³ and can be derived from many sources. This step helps professionals to cast a wider net of the differing sources of power, thereby providing a basis from which to consider new ways of strengthening a limited but already existing power base, with whom a less powerful stakeholder can connect. When analysing more dominant or powerful stakeholders, it is also useful to identify the limits of their power, or where their power becomes vulnerable. Based on the context analysis, each stakeholder is assigned a level of power along the seven different sources of power classified below¹⁴ (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Assigning levels of power

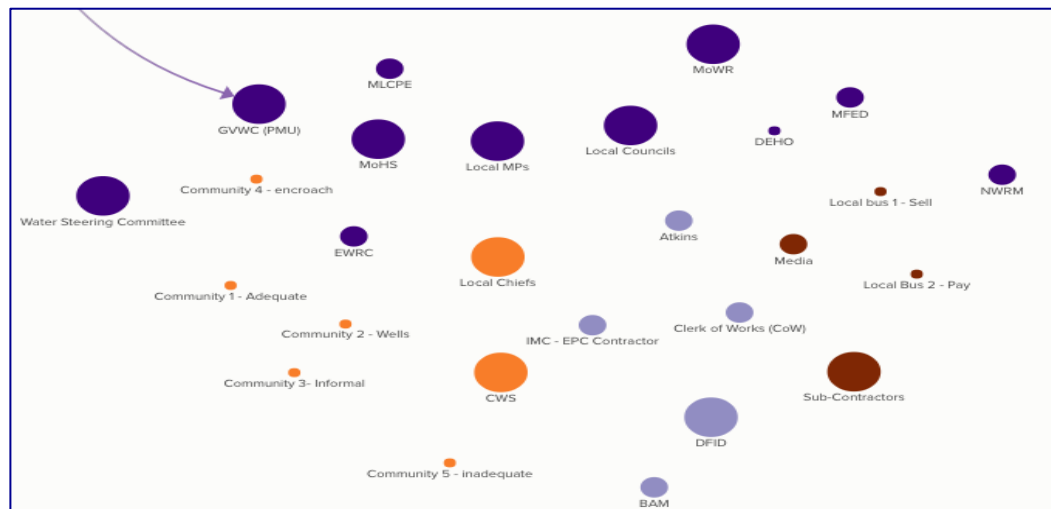
Level of power or influence	Classifying levels of power or influence can be derived from understanding the following sources of power
High Medium Low	Levels of Physical strength: what is their potential for capacity for violence (access to arms and soldiers)?
	Levels of access to material goods: what is their access to natural resources, control over land rights, and access to financial assets?
	Ability to lead: what are their effective leadership qualities, commitment and integrity?
	Levels of socio-economic and political strength: what is their social status, influence over institutions and human resources?
	Levels of cultural strength: what is their ability to reinforce positive cultural roles, and respect for human rights in society?
	Ability to control information: technical capacity, inclusion in meetings, access to economic and political information?
	Ability to coerce: what are their levels of threat, access to and use of media, family or political ties, ability to mobilise direct action?

Once Step 1 and Step 2 have been completed and levels of power have been assigned, Figure 1 below shows a visual representation that provides an illustrative example of the stakeholder analysis.

¹³ Ramirez, R. 1999. Stakeholder analysis and conflict management. In D. Buckles, ed. Cultivating peace: conflict and collaboration in natural resource management. International Development Research Centre and World Bank.

¹⁴ Adapted from Negotiation and mediation techniques for natural resource management by Antonia Engel Benedikt Korf FAO 2005

Figure 1: Screenshot demonstrating different levels of power across a wide range of stakeholders¹⁵



Disclaimer: This is only an illustrative example. Each circle relates to a different stakeholder, with the size and colour relating to the power to influence (the bigger the circle the greater the power) and the type of institution (i.e. here represented are local agencies, CSOs, women’s groups, ministry officials, public workers) respectively.

Step 3 – Analysis of relationships

Once a detailed examination of power has been developed, understanding how that dominance can be harnessed to build relationships requires describing the relationships between stakeholders together with the underlying factors that define these relationships. Traditional stakeholder analysis often describes relationships in terms of stakeholders' positions. The SRB tool differs from many other traditional tools by taking a methodological approach to exploring the structural, as well as proximate factors, that underpin these relations. By focusing on these factors rather than the positions, it makes it easier to develop practical strategies for building agreements.

Adapted from mediation literature¹⁶, five key issues that define a relationship are identified below and is important to explore how this affects the development outcomes (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Describing relationships and their underlying factors

Element	Description
Flows of Information	Relationships that exhibit high levels of trust and collaboration will normally exhibit open communication lines, a desire to promote transparency or a geographical proximity. Meanwhile relationships that are weak and exhibit low levels of trust and collaboration will often exhibit poor flows of information, where stakeholders rarely communicate, speak different languages, have developed prejudices that inhibit effective listening, lack the educational background to communicate on a level playing or simply lack the physical space to conduct meaningful discussions.
Common / Conflicting	Relationships that exhibit high levels of trust and collaboration will often focus on their common interests mutual benefits i.e. desire for peace and security, interest in

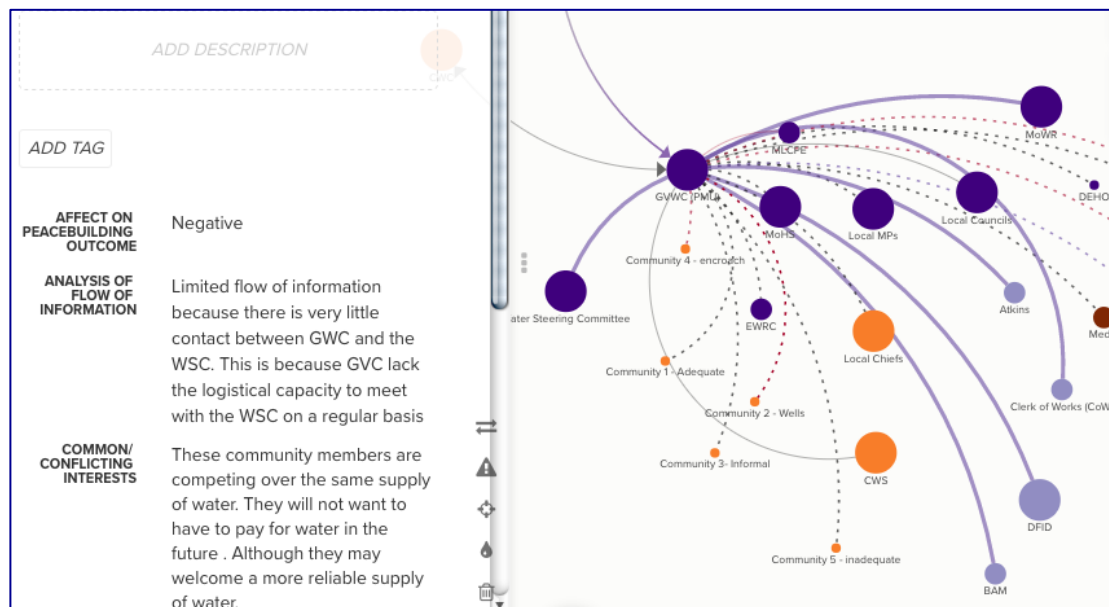
¹⁵ The visualisation platform used to demonstrate this illustrative example is [Kumu](#)

¹⁶ Adapted from: Moore, C. 1996. The mediation process: practical strategies for resolving conflict. Second edition. San Francisco, California, USA, Jossey-Bass; Warner, M. 2001. Complex problems, negotiated solutions: tools to reduce conflict in community development. London, ITDG Publishing.

Interests	economic development. Meanwhile relationships that are weak that exhibit low levels of trust and collaboration will often focus on their conflicting interests and competing goals i.e. access to limited resources or political influence
Common / Conflicting Values	Relationships that exhibit high levels of trust and collaboration will often focus on their common values i.e. respect for human rights, common cultural identity. Meanwhile relationships that are weak that exhibit low levels of trust and collaboration will often exhibit conflicting values i.e. consideration of women's rights, or commitment to transparency.
Contractual constraints	Relationships that exhibit high levels of trust and collaboration will often be built on strong structural foundations i.e. strong forms of governance and institutions, established contractual agreements.
Legal and Regulatory constraints	Meanwhile relationships that are weak, that exhibit low levels of trust and collaboration will often be undermined by conflicting cultural identities, weak forms of governance, patriarchal institutions or inadequate contractual arrangements.
Institutional culture constraints	

Figure 2 below is an illustrative example of how the positive or negative impact of these key issues can be visually presented to give an overall picture of how dynamic relationships can affect development outcomes. The analysis presented on the left hand side for each relationship can be updated continually as the knowledge of these relations improves. This allows for detailed study of each stakeholder to be shared and to develop a common understanding of the problem.

Figure 2: Screenshot demonstrating different relationships with the analysis of a relationship on the left hand column¹⁷



Disclaimer: This is only an illustrative example.

¹⁷ The visualisation platform used to demonstrate this illustrative example is [Kumu](#)

Finding politically feasible sustainable solutions

So far steps 1-3 of the SRB tool can support development professionals to recognise which relationships need to be established and why, and the root challenges which undermine each relationship. However, there still remains the question of how to build these relationships, promote collaboration and accelerate positive change.

Bringing together stakeholders will require a process of iterative problem solving, stepwise learning, brokering and discovering common interests in order for each stakeholder to fully comprehend the complex development challenges they face.

The SRB tool enables development professionals to:

- a. Identify the issues underlying relationships,
- b. Embark on a process of learning which can broker these relationships,
- c. Highlights the common interests, and
- d. Provides a platform to develop a common understanding of the problem and opportunities to negotiate ways forward.

Based on the Overseas Development Institute suggestions for a future agenda for development professionals to embed DDD in their programs¹⁸, the SRB tool can support in the following ways:

1. **Taking a more strategic approach to delivery and results:** Shifting focus on individual programmes to understanding how programmes can work together to achieve shared objectives. This requires focusing the planning, approval, monitoring and evaluation more on the country's or regional strategies and portfolios, and less on individual programmes.

Using the SRB tool, development professionals can develop a big picture analysis of the specific causes, the people and their interests, institutional issues and regulatory framework that are undermining the development objectives. These perceptions can also be shared across a wider range of stakeholders, including suppliers as well as local organisations, in order to develop a common understanding of the problems. With this common understanding of the problem it also becomes easier to develop common strategies for how to move forward as well as designing programmes that are able to build these relationships. This, in turn should provide a framework for coordinating, planning, monitoring and evaluating programmes both as national and regional level.

2. **Move towards more 'adaptation by design':** To do adaptive programming well requires an approach that includes a results framework, which, not only sets clear objectives, but can also build around testing and learning.

The SRB tool provides development professionals with a framework around which relationships can be built in order to achieve certain development outcomes. This then allows these professionals to design programme activities with which to build these relationships, whilst continually learning about context, stakeholder interests and how relationships are affecting development outcomes. As this understanding of the context evolves, strategies to build relationships, such as identifying specific stakeholders to broker relationships or overcome conflicting interests, can be explored.

¹⁸ Putting theory into practice: How DFID is doing development differently, Leni Wild, David Booth and Craig Valters, ODI, February 2017

3. **Streamline procurement to manage uncertainty:** This requires having a greater consideration for the real risks that cause uncertainty in the operating environments.

The SRB tool provides the procurement team with a more detailed understanding of the practical challenges facing development professionals in meeting their objectives. As a result the teams, along with technical staff, can assess the levels of risk more accurately. For example, if the major issues undermining a relationship are conflicting values or a particular law, these challenges can take a longer time to overcome as well as presenting a greater challenge, and hence more risk.

4. **Find new ways to support locally led problem solving:** This requires aid to recognise its role as a facilitator in unblocking the change process and supporting reform coalitions or networks to achieve positive change.

The SRB tool provides development professionals with a methodological approach to identifying the relevant members of society, including those less visible stakeholders, who would be most valuable to the development process. The ability for the tool to share different perspective also means that local stakeholders can improve their understanding of the context. This will help them to fill in their gaps in the knowledge of the development challenges they face, and furthermore, improve their ability to navigate the political context and develop their own strategic interventions.

Conclusion

As the DDD approach begins to gain more traction amongst leading development professionals, new forms of innovative tools and methods are required to continue building this momentum. This Stakeholder Relationship Building (SRB) tool is aimed at supporting development professionals to improve their understanding of these complexities of development and its changing nature. Looking through a relationship lens provides programmes with the foundations to search for a common understanding of the underlying problems so they can each other to find politically feasible, sustainable solutions.