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Culture in Post-Crisis Situations: Opportunities for Peacebuilding and Sustainable Recovery

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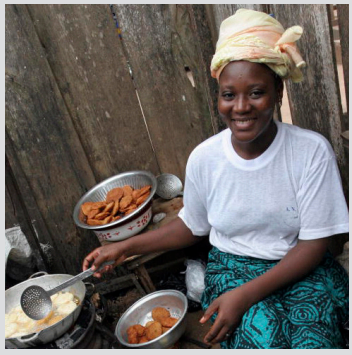

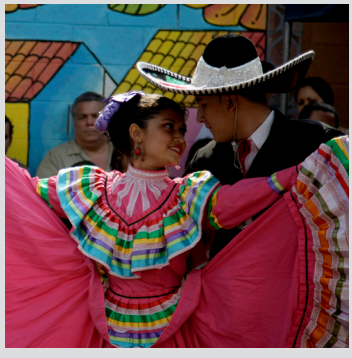

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1 Background, Rationale and Structure

Culture is foundational to development. As articulated by Rao and Walton, and the contributors to the edited volume *Culture and Public Action*[1], culture defines the identities of individuals and social groups, shapes social interactions between individuals and groups, and underpins the workings of formal and informal institutions. When policymakers and development practitioners ignore culture, or only think of culture in its derivative forms of monuments, dance, or music, their policies and interventions are unlikely to be effective. A "culturally informed perspective" (2004:9) is critical to designing policies and interventions that are tailored to the local context, that are locally owned, and that will produce desired development outcomes.

This insight is of particular importance for post-crisis contexts. The number of people affected by disasters around the world continues to rise, and countries face recurrent disasters in contexts of conflict and fragility. The stakes in Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations (hereafter referred to as FCS) are high. According to the 2011 World Development Report (WDR), the average cost of a civil war is equivalent to more than 30 years of GDP growth for a medium-sized developing country (WDR 2011:5-6). On average, a country that experienced major violence between 1981 and 2005 has a poverty rate 21 percent higher than a country that saw no violence during this time period (WDR 2011:5). Moreover, cycles of conflict and violence are difficult to break. 90 percent of the conflicts that have broken out in the 21st century have taken place in countries that have a previous history of conflict (WDR 2011:57). The recent joint World Bank-UN report entitled "Pathways to Peace" includes updated data that signal several worrying trends. In 2016, for example, more countries experienced violent conflict than at any time over the past three decades. Much of the recent violence has targeted urban areas and public spaces, and the civilian death toll due to this kind of violent conflict doubled between 2010 and 2016. Extreme poverty is rising in FCS, and over half of the world's poor are expected to live in FCS by 2030[2].

Kostner and Meutia note that the impact that natural disasters have in FCS are amplified by the underlying weaknesses in FCS' political, economic, and social systems, which are driving conflict and fragility,[3] and exacerbating vicious cycles of conflict, undermining states' and communities' ability to respond to and recover from disasters. Responding and recovering, or coping, which Arnold and de Cosmo refer to broadly as "social resilience," should be of paramount concern to policymakers who are seeking to eliminate extreme poverty, since the poor and the marginalized tend to be most severely impacted by natural disasters and other shocks.[4]

Much of the conflict and violence in many national and sub-national contexts is motivated by are underpinned and sustained by culturally derived factors, such as ethnic, tribal, religious, and ideological differences. The "Pathways to Peace" report notes the proliferation of armed non-state groups that "coalesce around a grievance, an identity, an ideology," (United Nations and World Bank, 2018). Belligerent actors, both state and non-state, actively employ culture to weaken opponents, sometimes seeking to eliminate the cultural symbols and reference points of rival groups. A well-known, widely condemned example of this tactic was the destruction of

the two giant Buddhas in the Bamiyan Valley of Afghanistan by the Afghan Taliban in 2001. A lesser-known, yet highly effective tactic that has been used to cement the Afghan Taliban's position in present-day Afghanistan has been the systematic elimination of local religious and tribal authorities who espouse value systems contrary to those imposed by the Afghan Taliban. Similarly, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria has waged a systematic campaign of destruction against the region's pre-Islamic and medieval Islamic cultural heritage.

While culture can be an effective weapon in waging war, it can also calm tensions and be the source of an alternative, unifying identity. Culture is therefore fundamental to any post-conflict recovery process. Governments, civil society, development institutions and other stakeholders have for decades incorporated culture into peace-building and post-conflict recovery policies and programs, albeit largely in informal and "under the radar" ways. While it has taken a while for culturally-informed approaches to gain traction outside of the domain of economic and social policies, a recent RAND Corporation report on security force assistance in FCS stresses the importance of "ideas, identities, ideology, and history" in shaping security forces in the context of larger nation-building projects.[5] This is a positive, hopeful trend for the future.

In the pages that follow, this paper will present the case for moving culturally-informed approaches from the margins to the forefront of planning and implementation of post-conflict and post-disaster responses, and offer concrete operational guidance for doing so. Section 2 builds on the work of Rao and Walton, Sen, and others to make the case for pursuing a culturally-informed approach in FCS. Section 3 offers guidance for policymakers and operational teams on acquiring and applying a culturally-informed approach in very challenging contexts. Section 4 summarizes several real-world examples in which stakeholders have successfully operationalized a culturally-informed perspective to achieve peace-building and reconstruction objectives. Finally, Section 5 offers some concluding remarks.

2 Key Concepts

Culture and institutions are central to development

Sen, in his contribution to Rao and Walton, defines culture as a constitutive element of people's capabilities and identities (2004:39). Music, literature, architecture and other forms of cultural expression enrich people's lives, form the basis for connections across groups in societies, and motivate behaviors in ways that economic assets or interests alone cannot. Rao and Walton build on Sen's definition by stressing the relational aspect of culture, which they define as:

> ***"the relationships among individuals within groups, among groups, and between ideas and perspectives. Culture is concerned with identity, as aspiration, symbolic exchange, coordination, and structure and practices that serve relational ends, such as ethnicity, ritual, heritage norms, meanings, and beliefs," (2004:4).***

Institutions, commonly defined as "the rules of the game," take both formal and informal forms. Informal institutions include social norms that shape expectations and condition the behaviors of individuals and groups. Formal institutions are codified in rules and laws, and embodied in organizations. Institutions play a key role in decision-making, allocation of resources, service provision, community participation and overall access to political power. Institutions are therefore crucial in determining which groups in society will benefit from the existing political, economic and social systems and which will be excluded.

Culture plays an important role in building and shaping institutions, and it can do so in both positive and negative ways. For example, culture can help explain why formal institutions do not function in accordance with

written laws and procedures. Douglas North (1990:37) notes, "informal constraints [to formal institutions] come from socially transmitted information and are part of the heritage we call 'culture'" (cited in Rao and Walton 2004:13). Additionally, culture and forms of cultural expression can aid institutions in managing competing interests among different groups in society, including creating spaces for inter-group dialogue and opportunities for inter-group social interaction, or establishing education systems that recognize minority languages of instruction or a plurality of historical narratives (Rao and Walton, 2004:364).

Why do culture and institutions matter for FCS?

Insights from Rao, Walton and Sen on how culture shapes institutions and processes of social and economic change have strong resonance in FCS. These authors demonstrate how culturally-informed approaches can catalyze processes of change that result in positive development outcomes, as was seen with an HIV-AIDS intervention among sex workers in Kolkata, India (Jenkins 2004:260). At the same time, they show how policies and interventions that neglect the underlying cultural context can fail, and in some cases even cause harm, as was the case with the international community's response to a famine in southern Sudan in 1998 (Harragin 2004:307). Policymakers and practitioners success in the HIV-AIDS intervention case stemmed from their decision to study the local contexts so that they could understand the cultural logic behind certain community-led decisions and then work with local stakeholders to develop interventions that would be consistent with community members' beliefs and practices. In contrast, the policies and interventions that were pursued in southern Sudan ignored social norms and local realities and were ineffective, bordering on harmful.

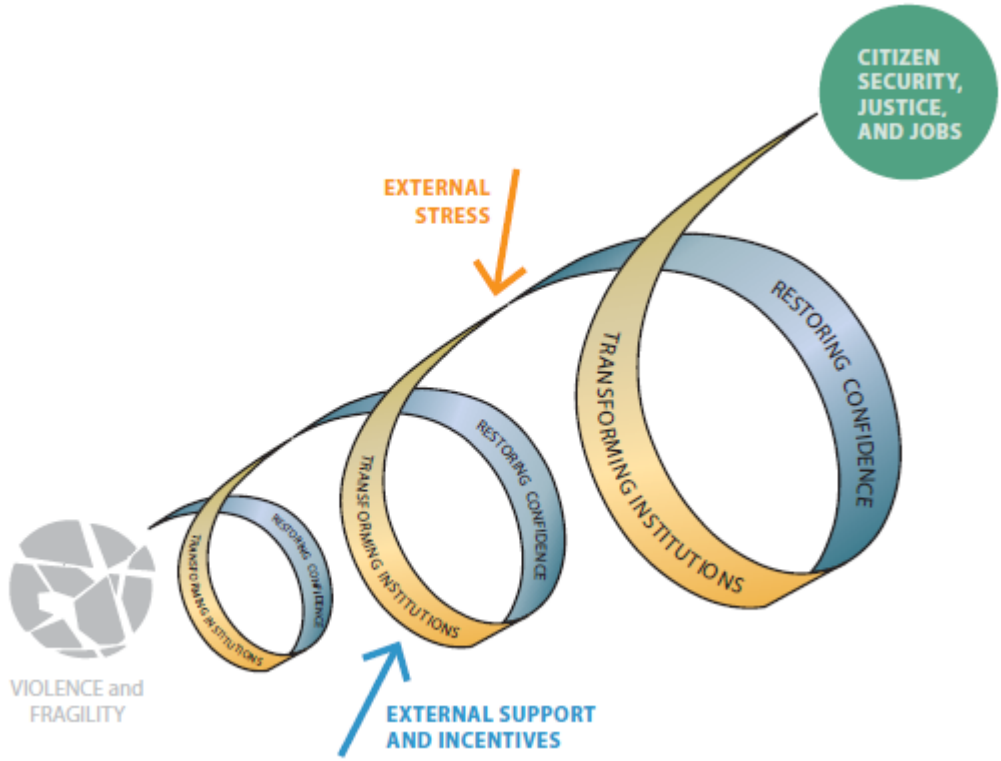
This realization is critical as policy and operational failures in FCS can inadvertently contribute to violence and increase human and economic costs, as well as lay the groundwork for repeated cycles of violence. The WDR 2011 lays out a framework in which security, economic, and political stresses – both internal and external – interact with weak institutions to create vicious cycles of conflict in FCS. Examples of stresses include but are not limited to: legacies of violence and trauma; low income levels; youth unemployment; severe corruption; ethnic, religious, or regional competition; and real or perceived discrimination (see Figure 1 below).[6]

As noted earlier, many of the stresses driving conflict have cultural dimensions. The "Pathways to Peace" report notes that groups' perceptions of inequality, and their perceived exclusion from political power, play a major role in mobilizing violence. Culture affects power relations within a society and is therefore fundamentally linked with the perpetuation of inequality and associated grievances (Rao and Walton 2004:31). The WDR 2011 argues that a society's "immunity" to conflict and violence often hinges on the "social capability for coping with stress embodied in legitimate institutions," (WDR 2011:7). One of the more challenging aspects of recovery and development processes in FCS is building state institutions that are truly legitimate and accountable to the citizenry.

In contexts in which ethnic, religious or regional competition drive conflict, cultural expression can be a unifying force to build shared national identities that cut across ethnic, religious, regional, or class divisions. Building on Sen's point that culture plays a central role in the formation of values, Klamer focuses on the ability of culture to "inspire, express, and symbolize collective memory and identity" (2004:20). Sen further notes that "historical objects, sites, and records can help to offset some of the frictions of confrontational modern politics… [and play a] role in promoting tolerance of diversity in contemporary settings" (2004:42). In Sen's view, collective memory of a shared history can serve to cultivate tolerance and celebrate diversity.

If placed at the center of peacebuilding and recovery in FCS, culture can enhance individuals', groups' and institutions' ability to cope with social change, make decisions, and coordinate effectively among various stakeholders. This, in turn, can lead to outcomes that are perceived to be fair and inclusive. Ultimately, culture can be a

FIGURE 1: WDR 2011 Analytical Framework for "Moving from fragility and violence to institutional resilience in citizen security, justice, and jobs"



shared vocabulary and a shared set of experiences that brings warring parties together, restores their humanity, and acts as a bulwark against political entrepreneurs who have much to gain from promoting and instigating division and violence.[7]

This paper now moves form the *why* to the *how*. The following section offers an operational framework through which policymakers and practitioners can obtain cultural awareness in an FCS, and apply a culturally-informed approach to post-crisis recovery program design and implementation.

3 Opportunities for Culturally-Informed Recovery and Reconstruction

Treating culture as foundational rather than tangential in fragile- and conflict-affected situations – as argued thus far - would represent a significant departure from traditional approaches to post-crisis settings. The most important point of entry is the process through which international community actors engage with national stakeholders to assess reconstruction needs and peacebuilding priorities. This section begins by offering ways to apply the conceptual framework developed above, recognizing that a keen awareness of the range of possibilities for culturally-informed actions will require a fundamental reconceptualization of the tools and processes currently being used. This section goes on to identify strategic shifts in the design of a wide range of interventions, such as local service delivery and education, that are needed to leverage culture for peacebuilding purposes in the near-term and state-building in the longer term.

Post-crisis assessments are the entry point for culturally-informed policies and programs

The starting points and primary vehicles for international support to post-crisis recovery are programs that are framed and defined by post-crisis assessments. The Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) and Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessments (RPBA) are described in detail in Background Paper 3. The purpose here is to help teams avoid omitting culture in their initial assessments, which would result in lost opportunities, or worse, could exacerbate underlying stresses.

A culturally-informed analysis can rely upon a range of methodologies, including socioeconomic assessments, ethnographic investigation, participatory engagement, and ways of discovering the true views and preferences of subordinate groups (Rao and Walton 2004:360-361). A culturally-informed assessment should consider a disaster's and/or a conflict's impact on the following factors:[8]

- *Cultural-historical changes:* including impacts on shared customs, traditions and value systems; changes to language; impacts on religious beliefs and rituals; changes to places of worship and sites/structures of cultural significance; impacts on archeological, historical, and cultural artifacts.
- *Community relations and social institutions:* including changes in social structures and organizations (including those with religious or ritualistic significance); impact on social relations within and between community members and social groups; changes in institutional landscape and community leadership; accompanying effects on cohesion, stability, identity, and provision of services.
- *Socio-psychological experience:* including the effect of trauma (or post-traumatic stress); changes to quality of life and well-being; sense of security and belonging; perceptions of and attitudes about risk and hazard; future aspirations for themselves and their children.
- *Human rights:* changes to personal freedoms and civil liberties; impact on the use of or title to property; democratic and political entitlements.
- *Socioeconomic impacts:* changes in livelihoods and coping strategies; impact on employment for women, men, and youth, especially displaced populations; business opportunities for culture-based industries; demand for skill training.
- *Valuation of cultural goods:* different social classes often value cultural goods in different ways. The propagation of cultural goods that are primarily consumed by the elite may reproduce inequality by reinforcing economic hierarchies with cultural distinctions. Similarly, a monument or a sacred site might invoke intense partisan feelings. It could be a symbol of great importance for those who seek to become dominant while at the same time representing a symbol of oppression for those who cannot hope to achieve such aims (Rao and Walton 2004:21).

A broad range of possibilities (and risk) exist in systems for education and local service delivery

In addition to the above-mentioned themes and issues that should be addressed in post-crisis assessments, teams should not lose sight of the fact that a cultural 'lens' can be applied to any and all interventions in post-crisis reconstruction. The domains of education and local service delivery and governance in particular should receive close attention, because a culturally uninformed perspective could seriously undermine reconciliation and recovery.

BOX 1: Education systems as a means to build peace or stoke conflict

The contributors to this paper have worked in contexts in which education systems were used to promote a peaceful, inclusive national identity in a diverse local or regional context, as well as those that perpetuated narratives of dehumanization of ethnic or regional rivals. The former was carried out by including maps in classrooms and histories in textbooks that acknowledge and stress the contribution and rightful place of minority groups and/or peripheral regions within a broader national identity. Examples of the latter approach include the posting of photographs in classrooms of co-ethnics killed in conflict, and the use of textbooks in which a narrative of victimhood and revenge is passed on.

In education, consideration of the ways in which curriculum and pedagogy can be used to convey values that promote national integration and mutual tolerance, rather than reinforce prejudice and hostility, should be the primary goal in developing investment plans and the content of textbooks, teacher training programs, and curricula to prevent fostering conflict when children are at their most vulnerable. Teams should also consider the language of instruction and the ideological and historical narratives various teaching materials and methods convey.

BOX 2: The complex dynamics of choosing a language of instruction

Choosing the language of instruction for public schools is in many situations a relatively straightforward decision – one or two accepted or Constitutionally-mandated 'national languages' form the foundation for all state activities, including education, with provision for early-year instruction in local 'mother tongue' languages or dialects consistent with prevailing technical good practice on language acquisition and early-year gains in literacy and numeracy. But when a country is new, or becomes newly independent, or is healing from a conflict, decisions on language in textbooks and schools become fraught with symbolism and political import. During the transitional period between East Timor's separation in late 1999 from Indonesia and attainment of independence in May 2002, a complex range of options and goals was at play regarding the role each language should play: Tetum, the mother-tongue, culturally important but of limited global or academic use, and not spoken fluently by many in the diaspora. Portuguese, spoken by most of the older generation and emblematic of the strong support received from Portugal and the Lusophone diaspora during the struggle. Indonesian, the language of the 'enemy' for 24 years but also a primary language for the majority of the new country's young population. English, the language of international business and science? No one language could provide a unifying voice, and so the choice of multiple languages for state business was pragmatic – but choosing Portuguese as the primary language of instruction in elementary classrooms where many teachers and all students were unfamiliar with it not only created practical barriers to learning, it deepened a generational divide by creating a linguistic barrier.

Post-crisis recovery programs typically include projects aimed at quickly restoring access to basic infrastructure and services. These often take the form of decentralization programs which result in changes to structures and systems of governance and/or service delivery. At the same time, recovery investments tend to be blind to the delicate balance between form and content within these programs. A program that relies upon a decentralized network of service providers – while still operating under the auspices of a nationally-determined policy framework - is achievable if locally-defined, culturally-informed approaches to service delivery are followed, be it in the appearance of buildings or diversity of uniforms worn by local civil servants. Restoring, or creating anew, a sense of shared identity and dignity through vernacular architecture, imagery, and other forms of cultural expression can be carried out without endangering the integrity of the national standards for what the public service units inside the building deliver.

BOX 3: Designing national currencies

Monetary policy may be the last state function that comes to mind when considering the importance of culture, and yet a nuanced sense of the unifying and bridge-building characteristics of culture was key to two examples. In Timor-Leste, as a small country whose economy was exposed to the risks inherent in oil and gas, a technical decision was made to adopt the US dollar as the national currency at Independence – but the coins minted for the new nation in mid-2002 had deeply symbolic Timorese cultural objects on them, reinforcing cultural sovereignty and providing iconic images tied to national identity and not international finance. Six months earlier, half a world away, a similarly unifying approach was taken in Europe, where the introduction of the Euro included coins with identical "1 Euro" faces on one side and a range of diverse national icons on the other, emblems of the cultural individuality of each member state balanced with the unity of the new currency.

Decentralization and/or local service delivery programs often aim to extend and formalize legal systems, systems of land tenure, and systems that encourage accountability within the bureaucracy in areas in which these functions tend to be governed by informal norms and institutions. In such contexts, teams can identify local, informal mechanisms for identifying and resolving disputes, and adapt and incorporate these mechanisms into projects (e.g. as a form of grievance redress). In contexts where the inclusion of groups such as women or minority groups challenge local norms, teams can reach out to religious leaders and other forms of local authority to seek high-level buy-in and support in convincing other members of the community to follow suit.

These are just a few examples of the ways in which education and local service delivery programs can be designed and adapted for reconciliation and peace-building purposes.

Build in flexibility in operations

Post-crisis assessments are the entry point but not the endpoint in the long-term recovery process. Even the most thorough, high-quality assessments will inevitably fail to detect all issues and grievances. Furthermore, post-crisis contexts are highly dynamic. The reality at the time of the assessment may be radically different six months later. Teams are thus encouraged to put in place programs that are flexible and can respond to evolving local needs, as well as acknowledge and support diverse local cultures. Community-based and community-driven approaches have been shown to be effective, flexible platforms that support post-crisis reconstruction, local service delivery, local economic recovery, and even specialized functions such as promoting the integration of former combatants and displaced persons into host communities (Cliffe et al 2003, Morel, Watanabe, Wrobel 2008, Wong 2012, Arnold and de Cosmo 2015). But there are numerous other examples in which larger-scale, more centrally-planned projects have built in flexibility too.

The Cultural Heritage and Urban Development project in Lebanon, discussed in greater detail in Section 4, is one such example. The rehabilitation of the fishermen's market in Tyre was achieved after the team learned of the local significance of what appeared to be an otherwise unremarkable and dilapidated market. This market was the only space in the city in which fishermen from the Muslim and Christian communities regularly interacted. It was thus of great importance to the local population. Once the project team was aware of the situation, the original plan to demolish and relocate the market was immediately abandoned.

The following sections offer additional cases in which culture was successfully operationalized in FCS.

4 Examples of Culturally-Informed Reconstruction in FCS

This section presents six cases that showcase some of the core approaches through which culturally-informed reconstruction has been undertaken in FCS. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's (GoIRA) National Program for Culture and the Creative Economy best approximate an approach in which culture is central to post-conflict recovery and long-term state building efforts. Distinguishing features of the GoIRA's approach include the lead role played by the Ministry of Finance and key line ministries in financing and overseeing the delivery of the program, and the breadth of the social and economic domains affected, including education, regional trade, the public procurement system, urban planning, and local governance, to name a few.

The case of post-conflict, post-disaster reconstruction in Aceh, Indonesia is similarly noteworthy. In this case, a culturally-informed approach was led by the Government of Indonesia that was operating with the knowledge that inclusion of diverse local cultures and religions (with some prominent exceptions) was central to Indonesian national identity. An awareness of local culture offered ample channels to transmit information about post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction processes that were credible locally, and that could counteract rumors or mis-information circulated by actors who wished to stoke additional conflict. The other four cases demonstrate how culture has been linked to economic revival, as well as used to anchor communication, consultation, and reconciliation processes.

Case 1: The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's National Program for Culture and the Creative Economy and National Solidarity Program (NSP)[9]

In 2016, the National Unity Government established the Afghanistan National Program for Culture and the Creative Economy (NPCE). The program closely adheres to the Government of Afghanistan's National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) for 2017 – 2021, which states in the chapter dedicated to Social Capital and Nation Building that the country must use "its rich cultural heritage to build a national identity and sense of citizenship that rises above local enmities and perceived differences".

The program was established with significant seed funding from the Afghan Government prior to receiving any donor contributions. National ownership of the NPCE is high. The program is governed by a Steering Committee consisting of five Afghan Cabinet Ministers, UNESCO and any donor that is contributing over $1 million per year. The Minister of Finance chairs the Steering Committee. The program, which is managed by UNESCO, supports a series of innovative activities in highly challenging contexts through eight thematic areas:

1. The Right to Culture.

This thematic area supports initiatives and organizations that contribute to Afghanistan's societal and cultural development. In a context of post-war recovery, emphasizing people's right to culture can play a significant role in promoting a positive public discourse, as well as raising the awareness of the broader and critical goals of reconciliation and peace building. This theme links cultural work with the Afghan Government's large range of national initiatives that are working at the community level and with the most marginalized. Examples of activities that fall under the purview of this initiative include integrating IDPs, returnees, and refugees through cultural activities such as refugee theater, young women's creative storytelling on local radio broadcasts, and other activities that can bring re-settlers and host communities together. The program places a special emphasis on gender inclusive activities for youth.

What mechanisms build these linkages? Enabling and involving full-time authors and artists in cash-for-work-programs, supporting culture-related awards and industries, staging artistic biennials, nurturing young prom-

ising artists, promoting mobile libraries, supporting local cultural initiatives, and underwriting participation in international arts events are just some of the activities that fall under the umbrella of this thematic area.

2. Improved higher education for culture and creative industries

A major challenge in ensuring the improvement and continuity of long-term strategies for cultural heritage and creative industries in Afghanistan is the current lack of national experts. This absence results in a gap between the national ambition of reviving the central role of culture in Afghan society, and the practical reality of a country whose institutions, after forty years of near-constant conflict, are incapable of realizing such a desire. To fill this gap, a more systematic and structured investment targeting needed competencies is required.

This program assists the Ministry of Higher Education and institutions of higher education by providing expert input on curricula; staging seminars, workshops and masterclasses; and by supporting other activities empowering higher education.

3. The Afghanistan Translation Movement

Despite significant investments in education by multiple donor agencies as well as the government, translation has been overlooked, and university students' ability to access the classics of literature and science is limited. Translations into Dari or Pashto of university textbooks are rare or non-existent. Not only does the lack of national language texts and other books impair learning, but it discriminates against the poor who are even less likely to have been able to study in non-local languages. If the country is to build a strong, inclusive national identity, it must make textbooks and other learning tools accessible to all of its citizens. The Afghanistan Translation Movement initiative will support the other thematic areas of the NPCE, including the "right to culture" and to the improvement of the quality of higher education.

4. Legal Framework and Policies for Culture, Creative Industries and the Protection of Cultural Heritage

The National Culture Program supports the Afghan Government by providing informed advocacy and a collaboration of experts who can introduce policy changes that can encourage the development of Afghanistan's creative industries and the protection of the country's Cultural Heritage. Policy support is currently being given to:

- The Ministry of Commerce to advance policies for regional agreements and the Ministry of Finance and the Afghanistan Customs Department to facilitate exports stemming from the creative economy;
- The National Procurement Agency to consider a procurement system that would favor the purchase of Afghan-made creative objects (i.e. furnishing government offices with Afghan-made carpets);
- The Ministry of Urban Development to update its policies and operational procedures to include plans to obtain and use public funds to protect heritage sites that are located in cities;
- The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum to include social and heritage impact assessments in its contracts with mining companies. A percentage of the revenue generated from these contracts is intended to be set aside to contribute to surveys and preventive protection plans for the potentially affected cultural heritage areas;
- The infrastructure development ministries to make social and heritage impact assessments mandatory at the planning phase of large-scale infrastructure projects;
- The creation of municipal departments of Cultural Heritage and Architecture and the transfer of the management and maintenance of provincial cultural properties to these municipalities.

5. Safeguarding the cultural heritage of Afghanistan

The built heritage of Afghanistan is widely recognized as a worthy cultural asset, representing the visible manifestation of a long history at the crossroads of diverse civilizations. While efforts have been made to preserve some of the more prominent monuments in the country, cultural sites are still regarded as isolated and exceptional occurrences. They are not a part of the day-to-day life of a rapidly changing Afghan society. The idea that tangible heritage is something that came before and should therefore be left alone impedes the idea of "using it" to engender a sense of ownership among local communities. It also inhibits its potential as a tool for social integration and economic development.

The goal of this theme is to foster the notion that their heritage is an important part of their local identity and that its preservation is not an obstacle to development. Starting with historical cities, where controlling change can generate immediate benefits for local communities, the program is helping to develop urban management plans that offer urban communities the opportunity to realize immediate and long-term benefits.

6. Architecture for public spaces

Partly stemming from the large movement of people displaced by the conflict, and partly reflecting Asia-wide demographic trends towards urbanization, Afghan cities are experiencing explosive growth that is rarely accompanied by urban planning. Instead, because of the ongoing conflict, the prevalence of criminal activities, and the ongoing risk of continued violence, urban development tends to be characterized by very short-term housing investments, high levels of psycho-social stress among urban citizens, and a severe shortage of safe public spaces.

The NPCE strives to support better practices by state and local authorities in the field of architecture and urban planning with an emphasis on public spaces. The goal is to improve the management of existing spaces by a) endowing them with social and public relevance and b) promoting better contemporary architecture. The means to achieve this are: raising awareness and building the capacity of government and local actors, as well that of up-and-coming professionals in the engineering, architecture and urban planning departments in Afghanistan's universities; encouraging and supporting the organization of design and architecture competitions within the public procurement process; making known, through traditional and social media, examples of good practices in rehabilitation and new construction projects; and finally, leading by example by supporting high profile public projects, such as the Bamiyan Public Park project (ongoing), the Bamiyan Cultural Center project (ongoing), the Bamiyan Archaeological Park (pending funding) and the rehabilitation and transformation of heritage buildings into socio-cultural sites in the Old City of Herat and other provincial capitals.

7. The Afghanistan Cultural Centers Network.

In this thematic area and in the next, where the development of networks is key, the NPCE seeks to bridge the gap between "policy" and "project" that often arises in development work in the area of culture. For example, important policy changes often fail to "trickle down" to the local level where their impact is intended to be felt. At the same time, the positive and negative effects of project-level initiatives, which are by nature short- or medium-term, tend to remain on the local level, rather than moving up the chain to those who are in charge of policy, which means that important lessons learned are often lost rather than incorporated into future projects.

This thematic area pursues the development of cultural centers across the country that can serve as creative hubs for artists, intellectuals, teachers and creators. With a view to exchanging new ideas and initiatives, these hubs are developing into a thriving support network for travelling exhibitions; for regional, national or cross-border festivals; and for the exchange of artifacts between museums. The Bamiyan Cultural Center, located in

the central highlands of one of the country's largest national minorities, is already functioning as a creative hub in the region.

8. The Afghanistan Creative Cities Network

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the international community in September 2015, highlights culture and creativity as key levers for sustainable urban development. The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN), launched in 2004, fosters international cooperation between cities committed to investing in creativity as a means to sustainable urban development, social inclusion, and a rich cultural life.

Afghan cities have diverse and unique cultural qualities that have the potential to flourish with the help of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) inter-cultural dialogue with foreign cities. With the support of a pilot project for this program, Bamiyan became the first city from Afghanistan, indeed from Central Asia, to be admitted to the UCCN in 2015, as the City of Crafts and Folk Arts. Bamiyan is now using cultural creativity as a key component of its development. The success of this program should serve to encourage other Afghan cities to join the Network.

Case 2: Government-led, Culturally-Informed Reconstruction and Recovery in Post-Conflict, Post-tsunami Aceh, Indonesia

The armed conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Government of Indonesia that raged from roughly 1977 to 2005 led to 15,000 deaths and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians. The 2005 Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding ended the violent conflict between GAM and the GoI (World Bank 2016b:97-99), and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami led to an influx of $6 billion in support of humanitarian relief and reconstruction. The post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction and recovery efforts thus unfolded in parallel in the province.

Underlying stresses driving conflict and fragility:

- *Subnational conflicts with a regional or ethnic identity marker.* According to Aspinall (2005), identity was an important driver of the conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), which fought for self-determination of an Acehnese 'nation,' and the Government of Indonesia (GoI). However, Aceh, like Indonesia, is multiethnic, with ethnic Acehnese constituting around 70 percent of the population. Indonesian national identity is at its core multi-ethnic and inclusive, and thus there was a willingness on the part of the Indonesian state to incorporate Aceh while respecting local culture.
- *Disputes over the use of oil and gas revenues between the center and the periphery.* Most of the revenues from the province's large oil and gas sector were accrued by the central government rather than by the local populace. This, coupled with the fact that their local environment was negatively impacted by the oil and gas extraction, led the inhabitants of Aceh to feel that they were not only being excluded from benefiting from the province's sizable natural resource base but their environment was being exploited as well.
- *Inequities in the use of reconstruction funds could spur divisions and tensions.* A 2009 multi-stakeholder review of post-conflict programming in Aceh found that former combatant reintegration and peace-building programs had been largely divorced from the tsunami reconstruction and general development efforts. Funds to support post-tsunami reconstruction were over twenty times as large as government and donor peace-building funds,[10] and some highly conflict-affected districts in the province missed out, thereby leading to regional inequalities.

Culturally-informed interventions:

The Government of Indonesia, with support from the international community, implemented a $6 billion post-

disaster and post-conflict reconstruction effort in a highly sensitive context. Transparency and community engagement in the reconstruction process were critical to mitigating tensions and ensuring the success of the overall effort. Aceh's diverse and vibrant local cultures provided ample channels through which to engage the population and transmit information about the post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction processes. Given that these channels were embedded in their respective local contexts, they represented credible voices that could counteract rumors or disinformation aimed at stirring up conflict.

A culturally-informed approach had broad support from the GoI, which, as mentioned earlier, valued "unity in diversity" as a core component of Indonesian national identity. The World Bank and other development partners supported the Government of Indonesia in its communication and outreach efforts through a range of culturally-informed interventions implemented by a variety of partners in the UN system and civil society (Sim 2006). These included, but are not limited to, the following:

1. *Publishing a bi-weekly newspaper (Ceureumen)* to inform local community members about aid and reconstruction policies and programs as well as their rights and entitlements. The World Bank, with support from the Decentralization Support Facility (DSF), gathered a team of local journalists, and journalism training was provided to communication students in Aceh who then contributed stories to the paper. This program enhanced the capacity of local journalists and helped fill the void between the aid community and its beneficiaries. The newspaper monitored the progress of reconstruction and peace building and promoted accountability in the use of aid money, while ensuring harmonization and coordination among the different development actors and government agencies in an effort to avoid duplication.

2. *Developing community theater* by collaborating with local theater groups to develop and perform new plays intended to facilitate the discussion of issues related to Aceh's reconstruction and peace-building. These groups were given training in "Forum Theater" and support from a small grant. The plays were performed at refugee shelters as well as the Banda Aceh Cultural Park. Many dialogues were spoken in the native language (Aceh) and triggered interactions between the actors and the audience during the play: local audiences enthusiastically commented and conversed with the actors.

3. *Creating peace diaries:* former combatants participated in weekly creative writing and photography workshops and exhibited their work in Banda Aceh. Funded by the World Bank and the DSF, and implemented by the local non-governmental organization (NGO) Aceh Cultural Institute, this initiative used returned ex-combatants' publicly displayed photography and creative writing to generate productive discussion between the ex-combatants and those among whom they were re-integrating. In addition to establishing clear reintegration policies and setting up efficient financial assistance and housing programs, it also became necessary to create informal channels through which ex-combatants and the receiving communities could voice their needs and communicate their concerns so that potential conflicts could be identified and prevented in advance.

4. *Youth radio:* From 2008 to 2009, the NGO Search for Common Ground Indonesia implemented the Aceh Youth Radio Project, which was funded by the UK Department for International Development and administered by the World Bank (Search for Common Ground 2009). The project established a large network of people from different communities and backgrounds throughout Aceh by engaging youth in creating their own programming and discussion forums. It served as an innovative platform for expressing youth views and issues, which helped overcome cultural stereotypes and fostered greater collaboration between youth, their communities, and other relevant stakeholders.

Other culturally-informed initiatives included a series of radio dramas performed by an Acehnese comedian group: each episode featured a theme related to the Memorandum of Understanding and peace process. The International Organization for Migration funded an Acehnese storyteller to perform plays related to the peace

process across the province as well as a series of "Peace Concerts" to publicize and build optimism around the peace agreement.

Case 3: Urban Heritage Revitalization: Lebanon

Underlying stresses driving conflict and fragility:

- *Vicious cycle of fragility and violence*. Due to civil war (1975-90) and sectarian violence, Lebanon was marked by widespread destruction of infrastructure and a climate of instability (WDR 2011:160). City infrastructures fell into disrepair and local populations struggled to make a decent living.
- *Poverty and unemployment.* Years of conflict harmed GDP growth, pushing tens of thousands of Lebanese into poverty and doubling the unemployment rate (mostly affecting unskilled youth) (FCV 2016:79).
- *Weak institutional capacity for public service provision.* Long-term violence and conflict also depressed government revenue collection while simultaneously increasing expenditure due to the surge in demand for public services. This resulted in the decline of access to, and quality of, service delivery, which required additional spending for stabilization. Also, because of tenuous inclusion arrangements, corruption, and sectarian competition, little public confidence existed in the state and its institutions to deliver basic services.
- *Pressure from external political shocks.* As part of cross-border conflict spillovers and regional political involvement, Lebanon has been hosting millions of Syrian refugees at the expense of their already stressed national systems and public finances.

Culturally-informed Interventions:

Since 2003, the World Bank Group, the Government of Italy, and the Government of France have jointly supported the Cultural Heritage and Urban Development Project (CHUD), promoted by the Government of Lebanon (World Bank 2016a). The project contributed to the country's economic growth and community cohesion by regenerating five historic cities – Tripoli, Byblos, Baalbek, Saida, and Tyre – dotted with historic, cultural heritage assets. This strategic intervention in the name of cultural and urban development included structural restoration of historic buildings, as well as restoration of archeological sites and monuments (Italian Agency for Development Cooperation 2016). Parts of each city have been successfully rehabilitated which has helped to create jobs and build more inclusive communities.

In the coastal town Tyre, for instance, the project revitalized a centuries-old historic harbor by widening and extending the old docks, repairing the fuel station, and building a new dock, warehouse, and fish market. The project prompted local community members to talk about their needs and restored life to the port and its surrounding historic neighborhoods – particularly the fishing trade.

Historic streets have also been rehabilitated. And a new square and a large formal marketplace for vegetable, clothing, and meat vendors offer renovated venues for community gatherings and exchanges. Reviving the dynamic between the city, the port, and the community, the project created public spaces for residents to live and enjoy. Cafes and boutique hotels have also been built overlooking the port. These business initiatives have created new jobs and economic opportunities for the local community, and, perhaps more importantly, they have engendered a renewed confidence and trust in the community's future viability.

The CHUD project also financed the conservation of the Roman temple of Bacchus in the town of Baalbeck. In the summer of 2016, the temple hosted the 60th International Festival of Baalbeck, attracting large numbers of visitors from throughout the country and beyond. Conservation works undertaken by the project provided much-needed employment to local inhabitants; 70 percent of the workforce is comprised of Syrian refugees.

In Byblos, the municipality and Byblos Bank created a Christmas village featuring local NGOs in the center of Via Romana, another historic site rehabilitated by the project. The market sold local products and provided information about the NGOs, and even allowed visitors to donate to humanitarian causes via SMS.

Case 4: Culture as a source of reconciliation and recovery: Timor Leste

Underlying stresses driving conflict and fragility:

- *Vicious cycle of conflict and fragility.* In the wake of Portuguese withdrawal from Timor Leste in 1974, conflict broke out between the Revolutionary Front for Liberation of East Timor (FRETILIN) and the pro-Portugal, more conservative União Democrática Timorense (UDT) (Brookings 2014). The 24-year occupation by Indonesia from 1975 to 1999 was characterized by a range of human rights violations and forced population movements. Following the UN supervised referendum on independence in August 1999, Timor-Leste suffered widespread violence and destruction of its infrastructure and collapse of state services. In 2005-06, another wave of renewed political and communal conflict and gang-based violence took place (WDR 2011: 266).
- *Uneven and inequitable economic development and asset distribution.* This pattern exacerbated latent tensions between communities ("easterners" and "westerners") regarding access to land and property.
- *Weak institutions and damaged infrastructure.* The withdrawal of Indonesia in 1999 was accompanied by widespread violence, which destroyed an estimated 70 percent of the country's buildings and infrastructure. Timor-Leste faced serious health problems, a destroyed infrastructure, and virtually no trained personnel. Post-ballot violence resulted in limited delivery of social services and severe capacity constraints.
- *Displacement and poverty.* Conflict and violence in Timor Leste internally displaced many people, which also exacerbated poverty issues.

Culturally-informed Interventions:

A $22.5 million Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project, financed by International Development Association (IDA), was implemented from 2000 to 2003. The project developed a strong cultural heritage program that encouraged reconciliation and nation building. The project was composed of three parts: a) $19.5 million in block grants to conduct community building for communal assets (such as a community market and buildings); b) $1 million for a civil society support fund; and 3) $2 million for cultural heritage restoration, with input from villagers including women and vulnerable groups (World Bank 2000).

The cultural program encompassed core activities including: (a) a small grants program managed by a non-profit Timorese cultural heritage trust, drawn from civil society, which financed community-based cultural development programs in weaving, theater, music, and sports; and (b) the development of a national heritage and performance center in the former national museum that is managed by UNESCO. The center contained a vocational school, rotating displays, and a series of gallery and performance spaces, which will prominently feature traditional women's crafts. Since the original site housed Indonesian secret police interrogations, the restoration project was a highly symbolic act that supported collective reconciliation with past injustices.

Villagers also participated in an NGO-led oral history program and the production of a community archives. Stories about past and present females of notable import were also researched and recorded in stories, plays, and songs.

Case 5: Role of museums in support of promoting awareness of the value of ethnic and religious diversity: Côte d'Ivoire

Underlying stresses driving conflict and fragility:

- *Armed conflict and criminal gangs.* With a previous history of civil war in Côte d'Ivoire, armed conflict has raged since September 2002 and has led to the temporary partition of the country. Militant groups or criminal gangs have been mobilized during past political contests and elections.
- *Displacement and trauma*. People in conflict-affected counties experienced displacement, loss of contact with family members and friends, imprisonment, and humiliation.
- *Socioeconomic inequalities and religious tensions.* Decades of socioeconomic inequalities persisted between north and south, which exacerbated internal conflict. The rebels' Charte du Nord expressed the economic grievances of northerners as well as their resentment over insufficient state recognition of Islam (WDR 2011:82).
- *Youth issues.* Young people who became rebels or gang members had similar backgrounds – they were unemployed, idle, and lacking in self-esteem.

Culturally-informed Interventions:

National cultural heritage was contested in both rebel-occupied zones and those under government control. The Museum of Civilizations has facilitated post-war coexistence and reconciliation by promoting ethnographical and archeological exhibitions, in both the capital and regional museums, which strive to raise awareness about the country's ethnic and religious diversity. The museum prioritizes exhibitions and outreach activities that raise awareness about the country's rich diversity and political and economic unity as well as focus on preserving the unity and uniqueness of the Ivorian nation (Zagbayou 2007).

Outreach and educational activities were intended to encourage dialogue among Ivorians and to foster acceptance, especially during the conflict. Different ethnic communities were invited to introduce their culture to visitors through traditional foods, songs, and dances. The museum sponsored cultural and educational activities for children from diverse sociocultural backgrounds during their summer vacations. It also hosted public lectures and debates for adults, especially during Museum Week, by inviting scholars and NGOs to discuss themes related to the conflict and inter-ethnic alliances.

Due to the museum's outreach efforts, it has noted an uptick in visits by Muslim communities and organizations to exhibitions and working sessions devoted to introducing Islamic heritage to non-Muslim Ivorians. Museums can successfully contribute to post-war national reconciliation by enabling communities to connect with each other over discussions concerning cultural similarities rather than dissimilarities. Such exhibition and outreach activities have the ability to serve as a powerful reminder of the ability of "different" peoples to coexist peacefully.

Case 6: Culture as source of economic recovery and inter-group interaction: El Salvador

Underlying stresses driving conflict and fragility:

- *Extensive displacement.* El Salvador's civil war (1980–92) caused a massive displacement of people – approximately 1 million people (20% of the country's population) – both internally and in the form of emigration abroad.
- *Political conflict and socioeconomic challenges.* Rebel groups contested for state power, while oppressive

work relations and unemployment were a key motive for rebellion and insurgency. The conflict in El Salvador ended in a military stalemate with no clear victor.

- *Widespread gang-related violence and organized crime.* Drug trafficking through the Central American drug corridor grew exponentially and became a major driver of crime and violence (WDR 2011:54). In addition to experiencing high crime and homicide rates, El Salvador also suffered the effects of the massive repatriation of suspected gang members and illegal immigrants from the United States.
- *Lack of trust in institutions.* Drug trafficking led to corruption in the criminal justice system, tarnishing the image of state institutions. The resulting lack of trust in institutions encouraged citizens to take the law into their own hands (FCV 2016:105). The widespread violence uprooted women's lives and livelihoods, and in some cases women themselves became combatants.

Culturally-informed Interventions:

The peace agreement signed in 1992 addressed recovery and economic, political, and social development. Citizens have carried out most of the recovery work, with necessary conditions created by the Government of El Salvador and supported by international organizations. With the return of many emigrants and the repopulation of villages, many of which had been completely abandoned, efforts have been made to revive the country's tangible and intangible cultural heritage. As a result of national and international initiatives, customs and crafts that had been abandoned prior to the war have been revived, and a Special Law for the Protection of Cultural Heritage was approved in 1993 (Sermeno 2007).

The Government of El Salvador, the Spanish Co-operation Agency, UNESCO, the Catholic Church, and the National Council for Arts and Culture (CONCULTURA) joined forces to support postwar restoration. For instance, in the town of Suchitoto, an education project – supported by the Spanish Co-operation Agency and CONCULTURA – supported the training of craftsmen and craftswomen in wooden crafts, ironwork, and plaster work for architectural decoration and restoration.

The municipality of Guatajiagua has a tradition of producing black pottery of various kinds, made mostly by women. A project designed to preserve the craft heritage received support from the National Direction of Cultural Heritage of CONCULTURA, the local government, and the Museo de Oriente (Museum of the East). This project facilitated the distribution of black pottery and ceramic products throughout the country while also creating export opportunities.

Throughout the country, nearly 200 cultural houses were created in an effort to recover cultural expressions, such as dances and rituals. This has helped integrate different social groups. Traditional festivals and cultural events were revived to preserve religious traditions, and to market various crafts from the region.

These cultural projects helped recover the local heritage and enhance the standard of living by diminishing the postwar trauma, and restoring local people's social interactions and self-esteem. In many parts of the country, indigenous populations have gone to great lengths in the postwar period to interact with new neighbors with the help of revived local traditions and daily activities.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

This paper argues that culture is foundational to development through its constitutive role in forming identities, shaping interactions between individuals and groups, and influencing how institutions function. As noted by the UN World Bank, and others, conflicts are increasingly driven by culturally-determined factors of identity and ideology. While culture can be weaponized, it can also be used to calm, unify, re-humanize the other, and overcome stresses that drive conflict. Treating culture as residual to the reconstruction and recovery processes

runs the risk of overlooking opportunities to support reconciliation and peacebuilding; local concerns, preferences, and norms that may undermine program delivery; and, in the worst case, implementing programs that inadvertently exacerbate conflict. Culture should therefore be central to post-crisis reconstruction and recovery programs.

This paper offers some basic guidance on how to operationalize culture as a central, and not a peripheral, part of the design and implementation of post-crises recovery programs. It does so by suggesting culturally-relevant issues to consider during post-crisis needs assessments; by suggesting sectors that require special attention given their conflict-mitigating and inducing potential; and by reinforcing the need for flexibility in program design and implementation. This paper concludes by offering six cases that illustrate culturally-informed approaches in action in FCS. The case of Afghanistan and Aceh, Indonesia, illustrate recovery programs in which culture figures prominently. The cases of Lebanon, Timor Leste, Cote d'Ivoire, and El Salvador show how culture can be used for more instrumental purposes in support of economic revival, as well as to anchor communication, consultation, and reconciliation processes.

An exhaustive literature review was beyond the scope of this paper, and cases were selected purposefully to illustrate the form and substance of culturally-informed approaches in action. Despite the limitations in scope and methodology, it is hoped that the arguments in this paper are useful for national governments as well as actors in the UN, World Bank and other institutions that are scaling-up interventions in FCS. The teams working on operationalizing the prevention agenda in FCS, as framed in the UN-World Bank "Pathways to Peace" report, will hopefully draw from the ideas herein.

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[7] The author is grateful to Scott Guggenheim for articulating this concept.

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[9] Case 1 was drafted by Sara Noshadi, Head, National Program for Culture & Creative Economy (NPCE), UNESCO.

[10] World Bank calculations estimate that funding for post-conflict and reintegration work has totaled US$ 366 million to date, compared with around US$ 7 billion for post-tsunami reconstruction.

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