

Mat-2.4177 Seminar on Case Studies in Operations Research

Supporting planning and monitoring of conflict resolution with assessments about stakeholder relationships

Project plan 26.2.2013

Client: Crisis Management Initiative

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1. Background

1.1. Peacebuilding and global conflict

Peacebuilding is defined as the actions and policies aiming to prevent an outbreak, recurrence, or continuation of an armed conflict. These actions and policies can include a wide range of long and short-term programmes and mechanisms tailored for the particular conflict. In order to create the necessary conditions for sustained peace and stability, the actors building peace grant long term support for the "establishment of, viable political and socio-economic and cultural institutions capable of addressing the proximate and root causes of conflicts". [1]

"One fifth of humanity lives in countries amidst significant violence, political conflict, insecurity and societal fragility" [2]. It has been concluded that only very little progress can be achieved during violent conflicts. In fact a single conflict may account to losing development gains worth the past thirty years. Thus countries affected by conflicts are less likely to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) set by the UN. The MDGs provide milestones for global and national development to be reached in 2015, and have been widely adopted to guide development efforts. [2]

The importance of peace and security for sustainable development has been acknowledged internationally and been adopted in broader development frameworks. The recent Post-2015 UN Development Agenda view on sustainable development is presented in the figure 1. In this framework sustainable development builds on four mutually reinforcing pillars: inclusive economic development, environmental sustainability, inclusive social development, and positive peace and security. The pillars are integrated together by the adoption of human-right based practices within the pillars. [2]

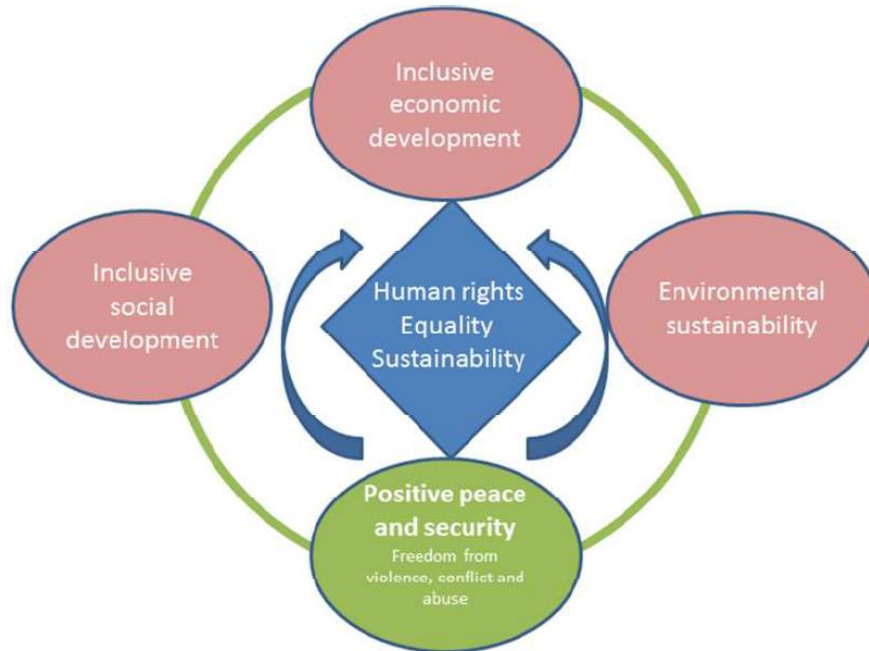


Figure 1: The four mutually reinforcing pillars of a sustainable development in any country. These pillars are integrated together by mainstreaming of human rights based approaches within the pillars. CMI contributes to the sustainable development by its three sub-programmes that promote positive peace and security. [2]

1.2. Crisis Management Initiative

The Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) is a Finnish independent and internationally recognized non-profit organization that has since its foundation in 2000 worked to resolve conflicts and build sustainable peace. CMI contributes to the international sustainable development process by engaging in activities described by its three sub-programmes that promote positive peace and security in conflict areas through peace mediation. Peace mediation activities are specific peacebuilding actions that aim to bring together and facilitate two or more participants of the conflict to negotiate on the non-violent solutions of the conflict. [2]

The three sub-programmes of CMI include: Mediation and Dialogue, Mediation Support, and Support to States and Societies in Conflict Prevention and Resolution. Mediation and Dialogue focuses on CMI direct engagement with the conflict parties as a third-party facilitator providing an opportunity for dialogue, negotiation, and search for mutually acceptable solutions for ending the conflict. In Mediation Support, CMI supports other third-party mediators through long-term capacity building efforts, such as trainings, and operational support. In the third sub-programme CMI supports groups and individuals participating in the conflict to design and implement policies and practices that are relevant to conflict prevention or resolution in their own countries.

The focus of this project is in the context of the Mediation and Dialogue sub-programme and in planning the program's activities and monitoring their outcomes. CMI has developed a Sphere framework, introduced in figure 2, to analyse the position of different actors related to the peace process and CMI's ability to influence them. The sphere of control consists of the CMI team working at the conflict site, their partners, and the participants of the CMI facilitated workshops and negotiations. In the workshops and negotiations, CMI can directly influence the activities between participants in order to increase trust and engagement between

participants, and to generate and refine ideas and solutions to ending the conflict. The sphere of influence consists mainly of the close constituencies of the workshop participants. CMI has no direct control over how, where, and if the participants and people close to them communicate with each other and the other parties of the conflict. However the actions taken in the sphere of influence are important to CMI as they have an impact in the CMI led processes, and the objective of the mediation process is to increase trust, engagement, and generation of solutions among the conflict parties to ultimately help them reach the goal of signing a peace agreement. The sphere of interest then includes the groups and individuals that are related to the peace process but who are not directly influenced by workshop participants or CMI.

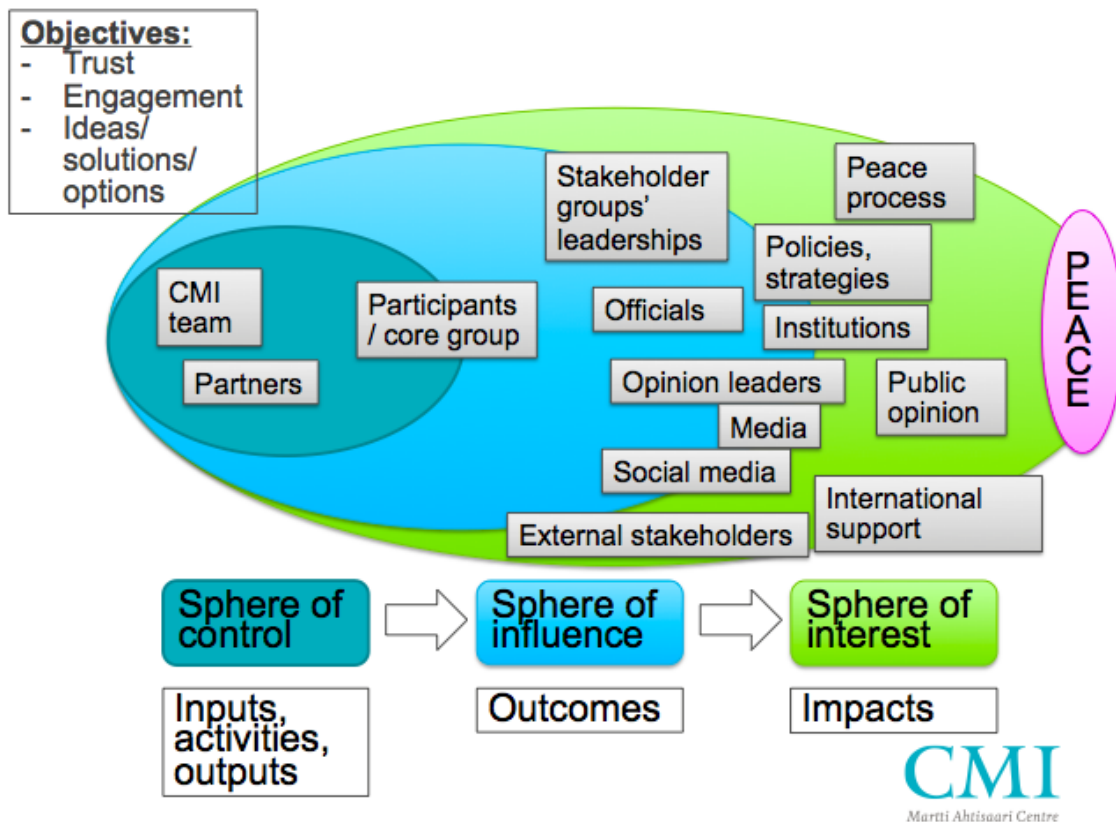


Figure 2: Sphere framework developed by CMI. The focus of our analysis lies in the ways CMI can measure the outcomes in the sphere of influence. [3]

Our project focuses on the measurement of the characteristics of the relationships between conflict stakeholders represented in the CMI led workshops and negotiations. Therefore we study the sphere of influence. Trust and communication between different conflict stakeholders in conflict resolution is a top priority. They closely relate to the other objectives of the mediation process as increasing trust also increases commitment and engagement of participants, and together with discussion opportunities increases the chance of identifying mutually acceptable ideas and solutions. Measuring the development of trust and discussion capabilities between conflict parties is however a topic not well understood. Improvements in assessing the influence of mediation activities on trust and discussion capabilities would help a peace mediator to better understand the phenomenon and thus to more efficiently plan its mediation actions leading to better outcomes of the mediation process.

2. Research questions and expected results

This project aims at answering the following research questions:

1. How to collect and use expert judgments to measure the relationship between two conflict stakeholders in the following dimensions: trust, communication capacity, degree of communication, respect, possibility to engage in constructive discussion?
2. How the measures on relationships between conflict stakeholders can be used to support planning and monitoring of a conflict resolution project?

After these research questions are answered, we expect to provide:

- A. A procedure for collecting and synthesizing expert information to provide numerical measures on the relationship between conflict parties in different dimensions.
- B. Methods for presenting the measures that serve the purpose of planning and monitoring a conflict resolution project.

The methods and tools created in this project will be tested with CMI staff in the context of conflict mediation and dialogue in Palestine. These research questions and expected results are tentative; all of them need not to be answered. The project team may decide to focus on only some of them in order to provide quality results. The project team works in close cooperation with CMI to ensure that the outcomes of this project work are useful for CMI.

3. Project tasks

1. To answer the first research question the following tasks will have to be completed:
 - 1.1. Identify the experts whose judgments will be collected. For example, are the experts outside observers, staff of CMI or conflict participants? Discuss how the selection of experts affects the assessment process.
 - 1.2. Design questionnaires to elicit the expert opinions on relationships between stakeholder groups. This includes coming up with a reasonable definition for trust, communication capacity, respect etc. in the context of conflict mediation. Here the relevant literature related to e.g. measuring trust (see, e.g. [4, 5]) should be consulted.
 - 1.3. Study how judgments from multiple experts should be aggregated.
2. To answer the second research question the following tasks will have to be completed.
 - 2.1. Identify what can a CMI led conflict resolution project influence. Identify possible goals of CMI's actions.
 - 2.2. Study how information about conflict stakeholder relationships can be used to improve planning of CMI's actions. E.g. design a way to visualize the information such that it helps forming an overall view of the conflict scene.

2.3. Study whether the information about conflict stakeholder relationships can be used in monitoring of peace mediation. Discuss the possibilities and limitations.

To provide A we should design

- A set of questions to collect information from experts.
- A method for combining the information from different experts and possibly a method for aggregating different dimensions to a one number that describes the relationship between two groups.

To provide B we should design

- A tool for efficient visualization of the expert information.
- A method or procedure for identifying interesting patterns in the information provided by the experts. This method could e.g. help in identifying the stakeholder relationships which are crucial for the peace mediation process.

The project team will work closely with CMI to ensure the relevance of this work for them. The methods and tools created in this project will be developed in two levels: a conceptual level that is generalizable and on a more practical level where these tools are aimed to support the CMI's project in Palestine. The validation of the outcomes of this work will be done by assessing their relevance for the CMI's project in Palestine.

4. Project management

Each team member is assigned to work specifically on some of the tasks mentioned in the previous section. The responsible person for each area will conduct most of the work in that area and is responsible for writing about that area in the course reports.

Tuomas is responsible for coordination of the project. In addition he works with Riikka on tasks 1.1. – 1.3. Both of them are responsible for this area. They will also work on the tasks related to providing A.

Riku and Joonas are responsible for tasks 2.1. – 2.3. They also work on the tasks related to providing B. Joonas's focus is more on conceptual work, e.g. defining what is important for CMI. Riku works more closely on technical details, such as deciding a suitable visualization tool.

The team will meet weekly to present the development of the project work in different areas and to discuss. In addition, the team members will be in contact with each other when necessary. CMI staff has encouraged the team to be in contact via e-mail and phone whenever necessary.

The communication between the team members is crucial as the responsibility areas are closely connected, especially the areas of Riku and Joonas. They will assume that numerical scores representing the relationship between two groups in the different measurement dimensions are available for each pair of stakeholder groups. In some cases these measures can have direction, e.g. group A's trust towards B can differ from B's trust towards A.

Table 1: Timetable for the project work.

Week	Deadline	Working phase
-8		Setting the research questions, planning the project.
9	Project plan, wed 26.2.	Setting the research questions, planning the project.
10		Working on the research questions. Emphasis on developing the methods for collecting expert information. This is crucial for Palestine workshop with CMI. Developing preliminary visualization methods to be trialed with CMI's Palestine experts.
11		Same as above.
12		Planning the Palestine workshop with CMI.
13	Palestine workshop with CMI, fri 28.3.	Planning the Palestine workshop with CMI. Using the developed tools and methods at workshop with CMI. Discussing the further development and usefulness of the tools and methods.
14	Midterm report, wed 2.4.	Developing the methods based on the workshop
15		Same as above.
16		Finalising the methods, summarizing what has been created, planning the final report
17		Writing the final report
18		Same as above.
19		Same as above.
20	Final report 13.5.	Same as above, preparing for the final presentation.

4.1. Palestine workshop

The Palestine workshop is crucial in setting the pace for the project work. Before the workshop, preliminary methods for collecting expert information and visualization should be developed. At the workshop, the tools will be applied with CMI's Palestine experts. After the workshop, the focus is on improving the tools and writing the final report.

4.2. Risks

Lack of time. This risk can be realized if we set our aims too high, if we overestimated the amount of work we are able to put into this project, if we have unexpected illnesses or if someone quits the projects.

This risk can be mitigated by monitoring the workload. If it seems that we are not able to fulfil all our goals we must narrow our focus on only some of them.

The outcome of the work is not useful in practice. It is possible that, e.g. due to our lack of experience in conflict resolution in practice, we develop methods and tools that are useful only theoretically but not in practice. The methods could e.g. be based on unrealistic assumptions on what information experts can provide or our tools could lack value added to conflict resolution project planning. Using our methods to monitor progress could be unrealistic.

This risk is mitigated by working in close contact with CMI and frequently reporting our ideas and solutions to our contact persons at CMI. Besides the primary contact person Oskari Eronen, we are in contact with Juha

Törmänen from CMI methods team and with some of the persons in the CMI Palestine group. The workshop where we try our methods with CMI persons on the Palestine project will be a key step towards developing practical methods. The feedback gotten at that workshop will be important.

A problem comes up that we are not able to solve. It is possible that we are not able to solve some of the problems that come up during the project work. In this case we must redirect our focus. It is also possible that our contribution is in identifying those problems that are in the way of measuring and visualizing relationships between conflict stakeholders.

5. References

- [1] OECD (2012), "Glossary", in Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility: Improving Learning for Results, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264106802-3-en>
- [2] Crisis Management Initiative, Development Cooperation Programme Every Peace Matters 2014-2016, lähde tallennettu 21.01.2014
- [3] Eronen Oskari, CMI projektiseminaariesitys, lähde tallennettu 21.01.2014
- [4] Mizrachi N, Drori I, Anspach RR (2007). Repertoires of Trust: The Practice of Trust in a Multinational Organization amid Political Conflict. *American Sociological Review*, 72(1), 143-165.
- [5] Rotter BJ (1967) A new scale for the measurement of interpersonal trust. *Journal of personality*, 35(4), 651-665.