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Background guide

Topic (2): Integrating sustainable development into post-conflict reconstruction

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**Abstract**

Conflict is serious disagreement and argument about something important. It could be an internal conflict or a fight between countries. Therefore , If two people or groups are in conflict, they have had a serious disagreement and have not yet reached agreement. These conflicts usually do not lead to violence if they are controlled. A post-conflict is the period immediately after a conflict is over, in other words there is an absence of war but it’s not entirely peaceful. Prolonged conflict can lead to terrible human loss and physical harm. It can also lead to the breakdown of systems and institutions that make a stable society function. A period of post-conflict offers an opportunity to work on the reconstruction of the country. To achieve that, they must establish sustainable institutions and ensure a long-term security. Post-conflict reconstruction is known as a difficult process that determines full effort to improve the military, political, economic and social conditions. After any conflict, a country’s natural resources are most often destroyed. Their economy is damaged and the quality of living conditions has severely been affected. Post-conflict reconstruction often takes up half or more of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)[[1]](#footnote-0) of a country. The economic aspect of post-conflict reconstruction usually involves tasks such as sharing of assistance and reestablishment of social services.

Sustainable development is based on the principle of meeting the needs of the present without cooperating the ability of future generations to meet their own needs[1]. Conceptually, sustainable development have three essential dimensions. First dimension is economic sustainability that promotes and increases a society’s well-being, economic equity, eliminating poverty and providing equal access to resources and the effective use of natural resources. Then there’s the Socio-political sustainability which promotes social equity and elevates the quality of life by improving access to basic health and education services. Lastly, Environmental sustainability which means the improvement of the environment and natural resources for present and future generations.

**Introduction**

In a post-conflict country, security, social, economic, and environmental challenges can lead to another conflict. These challenges can be poverty, unsustainable development of natural resources, insecurity, social divisions, poor governance and poor economic performance.

Therefore, international aid and funds are needed to rebuild the nation. It is essential that the population is willing to work together with the government and that there is a base of collaboration from either side.

Sustainability is one of the most important key terms in the post-conflict reconstruction process. There have been several cases where reconstruction has been ignored, where countries have not had enough funds for their own reconstruction and cases where the process has been going on far too long after the conflict. The main reason for the failed attempts is that short term solutions were always chosen over long term ones. For a country to fully recover and be rebuilt to the nation that it was before the conflict, solutions to combat the consequences need to be long term and should aim to make them sustainable.

Basic services are factors that help the world’s population living standards improve. Taking into consideration that not all countries can offer basic services and develop appropriate and modern infrastructures due to solid waste issues. It is important to find solutions to ensure the world’s inhabitants are given a decent standard of living while getting rid of solid waste of preserve the planet in a rapidly changing world.

Post-conflict reconstruction aims at the alliance of peace and security and the achievement of sustainable socio-economic development in a war-shattered country. Furthermore, they aim to regain a sustainable environment by achieving their country’s needs and the economic and social sustainability. Post-conflict conditions differ among all countries. All countries affected have three common goals in order to integrate sustainable development in their post-conflict reconstruction: maintaining and improving security, reconciling different communities and the population as a whole and developing many aspects such as socio-economic growth. Apart from their goals, they bear in mind that armed conflicts are no longer fought on actual battle grounds but in communities, which are targeted by terror tactics. Consequently, communities suffer severe physical damage, for example, to their infrastructure, schools, homes and health facilities.

**Definition of key terms**

1. Post- conflict reconstruction: Post-conflict reconstruction is the process of rebuilding a country after it has been at war or involved in a conflict. Some of the wide variety of aspects that are worked on in this process are sustainably reducing poverty, boosting security, increasing human rights and transitioning from conflict management to development planning.
2. Basic Services: the basic necessity needed in today’s world such as clean, drinkable water, electricity and education.
3. Sustainability: it’s the ability to be maintained at a certain rate or level while avoiding the depletion of natural resources in order to maintain an ecological balance.
4. Infrastructure: buildings present all over the world, such as offices, houses, shops and schools, roads, sewage system.
5. Solid waste: unusable and damaging waste matter that can be caused by chemical activities (ex: industrial waste) or simply natural causes such as infertile soil or other agricultural wastes.
6. Urban growth: the increase of population in an urban zone. When people leave the countryside to join the city, it is considered as urban growth due to the population increasing in the city.
7. Agriculture: a land where it is possible to grow plants and raise and breed animals. Agriculture is part of the primary sector as it involves the extraction and collection of natural sources such as crops and wool from sheep.
8. BRICS: Brazil, China, India, Russia and South Africa, which are the five countries that are emerging as a major economic power.
9. Gross Domestic Product (GDP): the total monetary value of all the goods and services that have been produced within a country’s borders in a specific time period (usually a year.)
10. Reconciliation: it’s the process of reestablishing friendly relations and in the case of post-conflict reconstruction most often it’s between the government and the population.

**Background information**

The topic of reconstruction has been studied since the 19th century. While imperialists associated reconstruction with greater involvement of the urban centers in the affairs of their colonies which had a role of commerce for the improvement of states and people within them. David Ricardo examined in 1815 the subject of post-war economic recovery and dealt with issues such as the reorientation of capital movements towards peace.

The origins of the modern meaning of reconstruction are traced in the rebuilding of the South after the defeat of the Confederacy in 1863 and in the discussions about the controversial role of Northern businessmen. The first in history international post-war reconstruction effort was carried out in Austria after the end of the First World War. It was undertaken by the League of Nations and was based on the work and the suggestions of an economic order. Austrian reconstruction involved the delay of reparation payments and the start of economic reforms. A similar but less wide reconstruction was in Hungary, while the third international reconstruction program of the interwar period focused on the return of deported Greeks from Turkey after the 1922 war.

The most important and known post-war reconstruction was at the end of the Second World War. It concerns the work of the United Nations Relief and Reintegration Administration towards Europe and China (1943-1946), the Marshall Plan for Western Europe. Of all these programs, the Marshall Plan stands out as the most successful initiative. It implied a transfer of $13.3 billions of aid from the United States to Western Europe for the accomplishment of the following objectives: increase of production, expansion of foreign trade, enhancement of internal financial stability, and development of European economic cooperation. It was involved mainly of services and technical support and its success has been recognized. It was successful since the GDP of the recipient states grew by 35% and intra-European trade increased by 80%.

The consequences of any conflict can be major and they always affect the growth and development of any country that was involved. Whether it was an armed conflict or an internal one, they often lead to forced migration, long-term refugee problems, and the destruction of infrastructure. As well as Social, political, and economic institutions can be permanently damaged. conflicts are particularly damaging since they affect both the supply and demand for social services and health infrastructure. At the same time, countries in conflict are less capable to provide them because during conflict, governments divert resources from health and social services to military spending and a conflict is known to destroy critical infrastructure such as hospitals and health centers. However, towards the end of a conflict and in the initial post-conflict years, we see a sign of recovery and development. The recovery growth is on average but it’s not sufficient to cover the entire damage caused by the conflict. The average conflict country is almost 10% below the trajectory it would have followed without the conflict. [1]

[1] Scott Gates, “Stockholm International Peace Research Institute” in https://www.sipri.org/about/bios/scott-gates

**Major countries involved**

* **State of** **Japan** In 1952, Japan has established itself as a global economic and political power. Even though after the war, Japan was led by an American written Constitution, they were still able to exert a stance that showed powerful influence. Japan is now the third largest economy in the world and its infrastructures are regularly upgraded which helps Japan remain competitive in today’s fast-paced world. Despite the country’s high level of development, one out of six of its inhabitants lives in relative poverty. One of the possible causes is the increasing number of single mothers working in low paid jobs. Most of the families living in poverty would use the little money they earn to let their children participate in expensive academic activities. Although this helps the family hide their poverty it also affects their standard of living. For example, a poor family may not be able to afford enough food for all the members.
* **People’s democratic Republic of** **North Korea** has 25 million inhabitants and for every 5 of these Koreans, only about 3 of them have access to proper food. About 25% of North Korea’s GDP is used by Kim Jong-Un to show his power with the presence and development of nuclear weapons, and as a result the country is losing support from leading organisations. This is one of the countries in the world in which the inhabitants’ needs are not a main priority, basic services are not provided. The tensions between North and South Korea escalated in the late 1960s with a series of low-level armed clashes known as the Korean DMZ Conflict. In 1966, Kim declared "liberation of the south" to be a "national duty" this is when Korea started facing post-conflict problems.
* **The Republic of India** is the second most populated country (1.3 billion), which is more than one seventh of the world’s population. It is a member of the BRICS meaning that the country is becoming economically powerful; however the country only spends 5% of its GDP on infrastructure. As a result their infrastructure is less developed than other BRICS members such as China. Due to underdeveloped infrastructure in India, access to medical access care is limited and people living in rural areas are at a higher risk of getting ill. Less than 20 percent of the rural population can obtain safe, clean-drinkable water, meaning health and hygiene standards are very poor. About 70% of Indian cities do not have the necessary infrastructure to transport and dispose of municipal waste which leaves this cities in a bad state.
* **The People's Republic of China** is the country with the highest investment in infrastructure. It can be observed that the level of funding in rural roads grew by 51% annually between 2001 and 2004. China is the most highly populated country in the world with 1.4 billion inhabitants. The country has to spend a lot on infrastructure in order to care for these 1.4 billion people. However, these rural improvements have not overcome the disparity between China’s urban and rural areas. Due to the students’ parents not having enough money in rural areas to send them to school, the students often have to drop out and follow their parents’ poor, peasant lifestyle. China is one of the major countries that helps dealing with the post-conflict zones and countries such as Africa.

**Major organisations involved**

* **The International Solid Waste Association (ISWA)** aims for a world with as little solid waste as possible. One of its objectives is to raise awareness of the dangers of solid waste across the world, and more specifically alerting the population to the fact that it is becoming a more pressing issue each day. However, ISWA declared its main mission is: “To Promote and Develop Sustainable and Professional Waste Management Worldwide.” (<https://www.iswa.org/iswa/organisation/about-iswa/>) They try to achieve these goals by: helping the development of emerging economies. This means they will help underdeveloped countries to have a bigger economic influence in an economical way. They will also promote technologies that will minimise harm to the environment.
* **The California State Parent-Teacher Association** aims to improve children's lives by supporting laws that defend their health, safety and education. The Parent-Teacher Association is present in various locations across the world in order to help parents participate in their children’s school life and can be found in some countries and nations such as: India; the United Kingdom and the United States.
* **The Solid Waste Association of North Association (SWANA**) is concerned with issues relating to solid waste management. This association offers training to professionals, such as managers and industry consultants. Some certificates offered by SWANA are recognised by a number of different states.
* **Local Economic Recovery** have been designed to support these community development processes. In post-conflict situations, employment is a key factor contributing in the short term to the restoration of stability, reintegration, socio-economic progress and sustainable peace. Job creation provides the community and individuals with the means to survive, first aid and represents a constructive and positive alternative to social unrest. In times of irreplaceable destruction and loss, the end of conflict can create opportunities for social and economic reform. These are opportunities that societies in transition to peace cannot afford to miss, and where the international community can be very useful.

**UN Involvement**

· The department of economic and social affairs: Reconstruction, development and sustainable peace: a unified programme for post-conflict countries. The aim of this department is to review the role of economic welfare in conflict prevention, including the strategies required to ensure sustainable peace in post-conflict countries[1]. It differs in one important respect from most of the rapidly growing literature in this field. Instead of describing specific conflicts or policies to prevent them, it integrates some of the key economic, social and political factors into a general analysis, with an all-embracing strategy for post-conflict countries[2]. The integrated approach is essential because a unified strategy offers the only hope of preventing future conflicts and civil wars.

[1] United Nations, Geneva 2009, “United Nations Policy for Post-conflict employment creation, income Generation and reinteGration” in<https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5227107a4.pdf>

[2] Milivoje Panic, “Reconstruction, development and sustainable peace: a uni ed programme for post-con ict countries” in <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/CDP-bp-2005-8.pdf>

**Possible Solutions**

1. Adopting more practical macroeconomic policy measures which pay careful attention to the demands of long-term recovery and political stability are favourable in times after conflict.
2. Building per capita income is a way to integrate sustainable development into post-conflict reconstruction.
3. The international community can support government efforts to get the most out of domestic resources in several ways by providing technical assistance.



**Guiding Questions**

1. What are the criteria of being a sustainably developed country?
2. How to provide basic services and infrastructure while dealing with solid wastes?
3. How to deal with the reconstruction of the economical and social stages after any recession?
4. How to ensure that sustainable development will be fully integrated into post conflict reconstruction?
5. How to maintain the security and health state of the citizens in order to reach the process of reconciliation?
6. How will non developed countries seeking for a sustainable environment will be provided with a beneficial level of resources?

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* Annonyme, “Japan- Infrastructure, power, and communications” <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/economies/Asia-and-the-Pacific/Japan-INFRASTRUCTURE-POWER-AND-COMMUNICATIONS.html> the author based their research on “World Bank” World Development Indicators 2000.

Online pictures:

* Picture comparing the differences between the roads of North Korea and the roads of South Korea:<https://i.ytimg.com/vi/T75C78s2rSg/maxresdefault.jpg>
* Picture of a landfill:<https://lnu.se/ImageVault/publishedmedia/hdx4un2d0cdiagaza9u1/IMG_1767_YJ.jpg>
* Representation of most countries’ population through a map:

[https://assets.weforum.org/editor/fmABe\_O0BnYN28pihTWgy6WaRK00E5shW\_\_C3aozYmg.JP](https://assets.weforum.org/editor/fmABe_O0BnYN28pihTWgy6WaRK00E5shW__C3aozYmg.JPG)

1. Definition 9

   [1] United Nations, “Developing National Sustainable Development Strategies in Post-Conflict Countries”

   in <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1039guidancenotes2.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-0)