

war-torn societies project

in practice

WISP

"When the War-torn Societies Project began, we did not expect to produce spectacular results. This very different project was an experiment. It was initiated to explore the role international assistance actors might play in the complex task of rebuilding countries torn apart by war, taking into account the priorities of the people of the countries themselves. At the same time, its unique methodology was designed to help these national and local actors to identify those priorities together in a process that would forge consensus and so contribute to sustainable peace.

In short, we wanted to experiment with a more flexible, subtle and locally aligned approach to post-conflict rebuilding. This meant taking some risks, because the processes we initiated, the methodology we developed, applied and continuously adapted, became the engine that drove WSP in the countries in which we worked. As a result, we had to live with the untried and the unpredictable. As we found ways to integrate the unexpected into the project, and learn lessons from it, the methodology was further refined and the project developed.

WSP's Head of Operations, Oto Denes, recorded each twist and turn of this development in a daily operational diary. As the four-year pilot phase of WSP drew to a close, he transcribed this into a rough draft that became one of the main sources of this volume, along with a number of other records of reflection and analysis, and the substantial archive of notes and memoranda collected during the project. The primary source for this record of WSP's operational experience, of course, is the work done in the four pilot countries – Eritrea, Mozambique, Guatemala and Somalia – and at the central level in Geneva.

As the operational experience begins again in 'second generation' WSP projects in different situations and parts of the world, we want to share what we did and what we learned with others whose work — not only in post-conflict situations but also in 'normal' development and research areas — might benefit from our experience. One lesson learned in all four pilot country projects was that there was a need for a concise description of the project that would allow operational lessons to be drawn and shared so that others who might want to replicate the WSP approach and methodology would have the tools they needed to do so. This volume is one of those tools."

Agneta Johannsen, WSP Project Officer

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WSP



PSIS

**In loving memory of Adam Biixi, Zonal Project Coordinator in the
WSP Somali Programme's Puntland project, whose enthusiastic "Ah-ha!"
and sense of discovery embodied the spirit of WSP in practice.**

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An introduction to WSP

The War-torn Societies Project (WSP) began in 1994 as an experiment. It was an attempt to find answers to some of the questions that had arisen in the late 1980s and early 1990s about the role of the international assistance community in the rebuilding of countries emerging from conflict.

This was a time of disillusionment and disappointment: the heady years following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War had raised hopes of a new era of peace, a time when efforts could be concentrated on moving the development agenda forward and seeing real improvements in the lives of people all over the world. Instead, the failure of the international community to prevent new outbreaks of war in countries like Cambodia and Angola, the disastrous international intervention in Somalia, and the helplessness of the tragedy in Rwanda plunged the international community into a period of self-evaluation and instability.

A new name had been coined for the daunting challenge that assistance agencies faced: the complex emergency. This was recognition of the reality of action on the ground. No longer were the development agencies the principal actors in aid recipient countries; increasingly, development work was continuing alongside peace-keeping and emergency relief activity – particularly increasing demands for support to those displaced from their homes by conflict or famine. The concept of discrete phases of aid – where relief personnel would leave and peace-keepers move in, eventually to be replaced by development workers – was no longer valid. Now these three arms of international assistance found themselves working side-by-side and, inevitably, competing for funds, duplicating effort, leaving gaps in needed assistance and sometimes treading on each others' toes. Despite calls for coordination and strategic direction, and several genuine attempts to make these a reality, the international community was just not getting it right.

WSP was set up as a pilot project to explore the use of participatory action-research (PAR) in post-conflict settings. WSP's innovative adaptation of PAR methodology involves initiating interactive research and dialogue to bring together the many different agents of rebuilding from both inside and outside a war-torn country. With the objective results of preliminary research as their starting point – research during which they have themselves been interviewed, along with a wide range of both national and international individuals and groups –, these representatives debate rebuilding issues they have agreed are priorities. As they share information, opinions and inevitably different viewpoints, they also prompt further research and thus drive an interactive research-action process. In a neutral forum in which they are free to differ and discuss, and with data collection and analysis to support their debate, they attempt to reach consensus on the action that needs to be taken to address the priority issues they identified.

In this way, WSP aims to produce both a body of research knowledge on priority tasks facing a country beginning the post-conflict rebuilding task, and a process of

consensus-building that addresses the major issue facing post-conflict societies: rebuilding relationships and trust. It also helps external assistance actors to identify how their projects and programmes might best take account of locally agreed priorities, and facilitates their understanding of the rebuilding needs of a country and the resources available locally to address them.

From 1994 to 1998, WSP piloted this methodology in four countries at different stages of reconstruction and that had emerged from different kinds of conflict in different ways. The WSP experience in Eritrea, Mozambique, Guatemala and Northeast Somalia (Puntland), has been documented in a series of reports explaining both the field experience and the lessons that were learned in each country (see page 2). In late 1998, WSP initiated activity in Northwest Somalia (Somaliland).

PAR had been used by social science researchers in the late sixties and seventies at village level in Latin America and elsewhere, but had never before been used at national level. Moreover, whereas early forms of PAR had involved a single researcher and a small community, WSP undertook PAR with a team of researchers and specially constituted groups of representatives from widely differing sectors of society, including members of the international community based in each country.

Additionally, WSP was designed to link individual PAR actions in each country through a central 'hub' (the Central Coordination Unit, or CCU) that would support the projects, manage relationships (including advocacy and funding) with external stakeholders, undertake complementary research, and generally keep an overview of the global project, including doing arms' length evaluation and drawing lessons.

As the model was implemented in each of the pilots, it moulded itself to the specific realities of each country situation. In hindsight it can be said that in no one country was the project implemented 100 per cent as the CCU had designed it. Operational realities caused shifts in time frames and personnel; the momentum in each country and the priorities superimposed by the national participants caused the 'shape' of WSP to change. Nevertheless, if the country projects are taken as a single 'global' experiment, then it can be said that all the elements of the methodology were tried. Obviously, however, a '100 per cent purely implemented' WSP is still to be tested; it may be that this can never happen given the flexibility of the project that makes it so malleable to individual country requirements. In short, there could be as many WSPs as there are countries to try it in.

After its four-year pilot phase, therefore, WSP did not end. The interest and commitment of the donors who had supported WSP continued, and the valuable results of the initial experiment prompted a call for work to continue. The project, donors believed, should be tried in other countries, in other kinds of post-war situation, with new variables. More analysis and research should be undertaken to continue both drawing the lessons of WSP and sharing them with those who might benefit from them. Some stakeholders questioned whether WSP might not begin training others to use WSP methodology and so repeat the experiment with new players. Importantly, donors asked whether WSP might not be applicable, in some

form, in pre-conflict situations, where it might contribute to preventing conflict from breaking out, or during conflict when it might have a mediation role.

At the beginning of 1999, therefore, WSP moved into a transitional phase in which all these possibilities would be explored and the future of the project shaped. In the meantime, it was decided to produce this short volume – not as a prescriptive ‘handbook’ but as a descriptive guide to WSP methodology and operational lessons. In this way, WSP hopes to begin to introduce others to what happened to WSP ‘in practice’. In hindsight, too, WSP management realized that the work of the country teams would have benefited from some form of concise but comprehensive operational handbook that would serve as a general reference tool.

WSP does not claim to have found all the answers to the complex challenge of rebuilding war-torn societies nor, indeed, to identifying the role that international assistance actors should play. The project was set up as a small-scale risk-taking experiment whose limitations of size and scope were factored in to the experiment, as they should be to the analysis of the results. WSP cannot deliver solutions that will improve overnight the effectiveness and efficiency of international assistance. However, WSP has tested some fundamental theories and practices of post-war rebuilding; it has tried out innovative methodology and found it to be useful; it has facilitated the drawing of a number of important lessons about post-conflict reconstruction and external assistance and, significantly, it has indicated directions that might be followed as international assistance actors continue reviewing and revising their approach, structures and operations to better support countries emerging from war.

Step 1: choosing the country

Throughout its first four years, WSP was regularly asked to set up country projects, both by external assistance actors who wished to learn lessons in a specific country situation, and by national authorities and other actors who believed that WSP could make a useful contribution to their rebuilding work. But the decision to begin activity in a country is not an easy one. The choice of country may itself have an impact upon the likely success or failure of a WSP-type project.

What WSP did

WSP drew up a list of criteria, and evaluated more than 20 countries that were potential candidates for WSP activity against it. Factors to be taken into consideration were:

Status of the armed conflict

- still intense?
- sporadic?
- peace restored?

Type of ceasefire/peace agreement

- negotiated ceasefire between parties?
- externally imposed ceasefire?
- military victory by one side?

External assistance

- formal peace mission and major international involvement?
- significant intervention/involvement?
- limited intervention/involvement?

Demilitarization

- well advanced or completed?
- under way?
- not yet under way to a meaningful degree?

Security

- stability in the whole country?
- stability in part of the country only?
- unstable?

Political reconstruction

- elections held and/or government and judicial institutions (re-)established?
- transitional political forms?
- imposed political forms?
- effective civilian authority at national and regional levels still absent?

Economic reconstruction

- substantial reconstruction since the end of the conflict?

- war damage (human and material) still much in evidence?
- little reconstruction possible?

Social reconstruction

- significant social integration, including return of refugees and displaced people?
- some social integration evident at local level, but dislocation prevailing in war-torn areas?

Research attention

- attracted much attention?
- attracted modest attention?
- very little research?

In Eritrea, for example, a national liberation movement had triumphed after 30 years of struggle and military confrontation with Ethiopia, and a major question was what the role of the international community might be in the rebuilding of a country that had achieved victory largely without external support and that remained fiercely proud of its self-reliance. In Mozambique, an externally driven peace agreement had been established between the FRELIMO government and the rebel RENAMO movement, and international assistance actors had been present in large numbers. WSP's hesitation at becoming operational in Mozambique, on the basis that it had already passed a critical point at which the project might be useful, was overcome when it became clear that the aid-dependence that had grown out of the high level of engagement of the international community would itself be an interesting factor to work with.

In Guatemala, intensive internal negotiations between the government and the guerrilla movement had resulted in a peace agreement and WSP was able to take the opportunity to see how the project might work in tandem with the ongoing peace-building debate. In contrast to these three scenarios, the former Somalia remained fragmented, with no solution for the whole territory in sight but relative security and stability in parts of the northeast and northwest, where peace and mechanisms of governance were becoming established. Of particular interest was how the rebuilding process might be supported and developed outside 'traditional' forms of government and in the absence of the interlocutors normally sought by international actors, and the question of whether the stable areas of the territory could become 'building blocks' for peace in the whole of the former Somalia.

Additionally, given the experimental nature of WSP's first four years, it was considered important to select countries that had different cultural and historical backgrounds and that were ideally on different continents (in the event, the first four pilot countries did not have the geographical spread WSP had hoped for, although they were in other ways extremely diverse).

What WSP learned

Not every country that has emerged from conflict and is engaging in the task of rebuilding is a suitable host for a WSP-type project. There must be stability and

willingness on the part of interlocutors at all levels to participate, not least the authorities who are major players in reconstruction. Moreover, there are many different kinds of transition from war to peace, and stages from emergency to reconstruction and development. Researching and evaluating these, understanding thoroughly the situation in each country, and ensuring the support and cooperation of all those who will be involved are vital if the project is to succeed.

This is particularly true of what WSP has defined as the 'political space' in a country where a project might be initiated. It is important that the dynamics of political development and the agendas of the many actors who would be involved in the project provide an environment in which the project can succeed and be truly useful to the rebuilding process. This is true at all levels – local, national, regional and international. It expresses itself primarily in the readiness and willingness of the main national actors to participate in WSP, to 'play by the rules of the game' and to look upon WSP as an opportunity not a distraction. At regional and international levels, it presumes that both those involved in a WSP country project and those who observe it will give the process a chance, again seeing it as an opportunity – with all the risks that involves – not a threat. It was the absence of political space that explained why WSP did not get involved in some countries. Afghanistan and Nagorno-Karabakh, for example, were both considered but then rejected because of a perceived lack of political will among the regional actors involved.

This political space also tends to open and close depending on a wide number of factors, so that a keen sense of timing is essential, and any project must be prepared to be delayed or, conversely, to have to move quickly. WSP therefore maintained a watching brief over an extended period to ensure that it might be ready for any shifts in political realities on the ground.

As the evaluation of candidates for WSP activity progressed, the somewhat academic exercise of weighing candidate countries against the 'check-list' took on less significance, and the political space available to the project became perhaps the single most important factor in the decision to become operational. Also of importance, however, was WSP management's perception of the level of impact the project might have in the countries where it became operational. As WSP mutated from an arms' length exercise in research methodology to a clearly useful programme for the countries in which it was working, there grew a genuine expectation that WSP could make a real, if modest difference in a country's post-conflict rebuilding.

There was also awareness that the project might have an impact at a wider international policy-making and programme-planning level. At central level, therefore, there was ongoing consideration of other United Nations and international initiatives both in the countries being considered and also in the wider field of post-conflict assistance, and an effort to place WSP in the context of these initiatives.

As a result of all this, the decision to set up projects in Eritrea, Mozambique, Guatemala, Puntland and then Somaliland, was not a simple academic exercise.

It was very pragmatic, based as much on an informed instinct that the time and place were right as on a list of measurable factors. Similarly, decisions not to become operational in some countries were also based on combinations of different factors: WSP did not set up operations in Bosnia, for example, because of a perception that international assistance actors were in the country in such large numbers that WSP would have to vie both for political space and for opportunities to make an impact. In Yemen, in contrast, WSP would have been one of very few international initiatives, but this in itself would have limited the impact of the project since it would have been almost impossible to bring international actors into the equation either inside the country or at headquarters level.

Step 2: exploring the terrain

From the outset, WSP undertook extensive preparation on and in each country where it proposed to initiate activity before making a final decision to proceed. This was to ensure a thorough understanding of the situation in the country, including human and other resources, and to secure the understanding, trust and help of all those who might be involved. It was also to make sure that WSP would be politically useful to the country and that it would not be competing with emerging local structures and initiatives that might be undermined. Indeed, WSP tended to proceed with exploring possibilities in a country only when interest in the project had been expressed by the host country itself.

What WSP did

WSP embarked on a detailed and ongoing survey of a candidate country, taking every opportunity to consult experts on the country and region, gathering data from sources as diverse as academic publications and newspaper reports, and undertaking exploratory visits to the country when the time was ripe. Such visits have a threefold purpose:

- They allow a final decision to be made on whether or not the project should go ahead in a particular country, since they provide the opportunity to observe all the major factors feeding into this decision at first hand, for example the security situation, the willingness of players to cooperate, and the availability of resources, both material and human.
- They begin the process of trust-building and collaboration that is vital if the project is to succeed in its aim of bringing people together on neutral ground and in an atmosphere in which vested interests can be put aside.
- They allow WSP to begin identifying the major ‘fault lines’ between actors and groups of actors so that the principal relationship-building focus of the country project can be defined.

The number and nature of country visits by WSP staff and advisors depended very much on the needs of each country: for Eritrea, for example, there were only two full-scale visits before the project became operational, mainly because the major protagonists were clear (the government and external assistance actors), and structures relatively easy to define. The first visit to Eritrea was consequently an exploratory visit to meet a wide range of groups and individuals whose cooperation would be necessary if WSP was to succeed, for example academics and government ministers as well as representatives of external assistance organizations present in the country. During this first visit, practical issues such as an appropriate institutional framework for the project, premises and the availability of research and administrative staff were also explored. The second pre-WSP mission to Eritrea included meetings with the political leadership, including the President, and negotiations that would allow WSP to become operational. Each visit was also a

fact-finding exercise during which knowledge and understanding of the situation in the country was documented and reviewed. In Mozambique, too, the political leadership was consulted and agreement was obtained on the project's becoming operational. Extensive discussions also took place in the university and other research institutions. These provided valuable information about the research environment and potential candidates for the researcher posts. In Guatemala, where a well developed civil society exists and a multitude of actors therefore compete for attention, three carefully prepared missions were carried out by a team of experts. These paid particular attention to identifying the precise niche the project might occupy in relation to the many existing and ongoing initiatives and actors.

In the course of the visits, additionally, WSP would seek to identify appropriate candidates for the in-country project leadership. In a series of wide-ranging interviews with representatives from many different groups, WSP mission members attempted to become acquainted with sensitivities, affiliations, possible obstacles and ways to avoid or overcome them. This is in many ways the beginning of the consensus-building process that is at the heart of the project.

In contrast, the fragmented and complex situation in Somalia meant that this exploratory phase lasted almost two years. It was clear that it would not be possible to become operational 'nationally' in what was by most definitions no longer a nation. It was therefore important to identify accurately which parts of the former Somalia might be ready for WSP, and adapt the methodology to take into account the complex political realities on the ground. For example, the political ground in the former Somalia shifts constantly due to clan and sub-clan politics and changing affiliations depending on the issue under review; this meant that extra time was needed to truly understand the terrain and adapt methodology and structures. With no central authority, the project was remodelled to begin as 'micro-projects' at sub-regional grassroots level whose deliberations and research would be brought together into what WSP called 'zonal' work. For all this to happen, the minutiae of socio-political realities needed to be accurately appreciated and shifts in these had also to be monitored. WSP achieved this by a dynamic mix of country visits, 'informants' in Northeast Somalia itself, Nairobi-based advisors, consultations with diaspora Somalis, and cooperation with other agencies operational in the area.

In addition to this, WSP management knew that the project could only become active and successful in Northeast Somalia if the timing of visits, as well as the early phases of the project, coincided with the readiness and willingness of local actors. It was therefore vital to remain at all times responsive to signals coming from Northeast Somalia itself and to adjust planning to them.

What WSP learned

These early months of preparation are even more important than they might at first seem. It is clearly vital that preparatory missions are undertaken by people who are particularly skilled in listening and who have credibility in the country itself, but it is equally important that country visits be supported by ongoing, high quality research

that is up-to-date and based on local realities, not external perceptions. This first 'positioning' of the project through its representatives who visit the countries can be a 'make or break' point. Establishing credibility as soon as possible through knowledge but also through respect for local interlocutors is not only necessary for information gathering but also fundamental to the consensus- and trust-building process.

For this reason, too, it is helpful if those who undertake preparatory visits are already known to the authorities and others, either because they have worked in the country before or because they have an established reputation both for their professional skills and for their independence and objectivity. In short, 'friends of the country' are more likely to be welcome than those who have been linked to particular personalities or who have favoured a particular political or ideological position. In many cases, unfortunately, the nationality of a visitor can have a positive or negative effect. This does not reflect on the professional or personal qualities of the person concerned but is rather a political reality.

Beyond the value of the exploratory visits to WSP central management, the visits came to be seen as a vital step in the set-up and positioning of the eventual country project itself. This is clearly illustrated in an internal WSP note following a first exploratory mission to a region in which, to date, WSP has not yet become operational:

"What is proposed (next) are low-key exploratory initiatives to investigate the situation today in the region, to identify major actors and interest groups, to understand their concerns, to understand why certain developments are blocked, and to explore whether the functional and political space exists for WSP to play a useful role...The initial outcome (of suggested preparatory research and consultations by local researchers) would be: (a) a feasibility study assessing the usefulness of WSP involvement; (b) an issues paper that would be circulated among the communities involved in the research and serve as a tool for communication among them. It is hoped that this paper would help unblock some of the contentious issues and start a process of rapprochement among the various actors and interest groups".

Step 3: identifying the Country Project Director

Once the decision has been taken to become operational in a country, a person has to be identified to lead the project in-country. This choice is particularly important given the need to maintain, and to be seen to maintain a neutral position with regard to all political leanings, social and interest groupings. In particular, in a post-conflict society any indication – perceived or real – of favouritism towards one group can render the project unworkable, so whoever leads the project must be seen as independent. The person chosen must consequently be very much a ‘consensus figure’ and also, of course, have the appropriate academic reputation to lead a research project whose credibility will be important if its results are to be acceptable.

It is important that the identification of candidates for the post of Country Project Director should be consultative if it is to remain faithful to the project’s participatory philosophy.

What WSP did

In the course of preparatory meetings with the many individuals and groups that might become involved in the project in one way or another, WSP sought input on the type of person who might be considered to lead the project. Where possible, names of specific people were sought.

At the same time, WSP consulted with a wide range of advisors familiar with the social and political history of the country, and in particular with recent conflict-centred political realities, and sought suggestions on suitable candidates.

In Eritrea, the first Country Project Director was Dr Nerayo Techlemichael, Director of the Eritrea Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (ERRA). He was subsequently appointed to a post in another country, and was replaced by Dr Tesfai Ghermazien, Minister of Agriculture. Neither was independent of government, although this was offset by their personal qualities and management style, which promoted a constructive environment for action. Additionally, in the specific case of Eritrea, easy access to government sources and, perhaps more importantly, direct impact on government decision-making were seen as appropriate compensatory factors for the ‘non-neutral’ profile of the Director.

In Mozambique, the Director had an almost ideal profile. Dr Brazão Mazula had spent the previous ten years of the civil war in Brazil, where he had earned a doctorate in sociology. On his return to Mozambique, he was named as President of the Electoral Commission and supervised the first elections, in the process acquiring a wide reputation for impartiality and fairness. This is the profile he brought to WSP Mozambique. Unfortunately, after only a few months at the helm of the project, Dr Mazula was named Rector of Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique and had to reduce his time on the project to 30 per cent.

Dr Edelberto Torres Rivas was named by many of those interviewed in the course of preparing the project in Guatemala. He was an outstanding sociologist who was returning to Guatemala after a number of years in exile during which he had held a high-ranking university post. He had directed a number of national and international research institutes and projects and had additionally gained a reputation for fairness and impartiality.

In Somalia a different structure had to be put in place because of the fragmentation of the country and the fact that WSP was to be introduced in the northeast first and later in other areas. Additionally, the factionalism and antagonisms that continued meant that the issue of independence and neutrality was particularly important. It was therefore decided to create a project support office in Nairobi – thus clearly not emphasizing the importance of one area over another (as well as providing the convenience of easy contact with the external assistance agencies working in Somalia out of Nairobi offices), with an expatriate Programme Coordinator (this title was used for reasons of political sensitivity and only much later changed to ‘Director’ to acknowledge acceptance of the reality of the position by all those involved in the project).

Matt Bryden, a Canadian, was a Somali speaker with a Somali wife, and had worked in Somalia since the disintegration began. Thus his knowledge of the political and social situation was good and his credibility and impartiality recognized by all those who might participate in WSP. In addition to Bryden, however, it was also decided to appoint a Somali Zonal Coordinator for the northeast – Adam Biixi, – and later for the northwest – Hussein Bulhan. Their tasks would be specific to Puntland and Somaliland respectively, and they would also make the link between project management in Nairobi and the programme teams.

What WSP learned

It soon became very clear that the role and person of the Country Project Director is of fundamental importance to the success of the project. It is the Country Project Director who, through actions but also through his/her own profile, positions the project in a country and ensures that it continues to maintain a neutral and politically acceptable place. Without this appropriate positioning, the project would not be able to function. The person chosen must be of sufficient stature to have convoking power, recognized leadership and charisma. Ideally, he/she should be able to commit full-time to the project.

Interestingly, WSP learned that ‘neutrality’ does not necessarily mean ‘non-governmental’. The Eritrea case showed clearly that the political position held by the Country Project Director (in this case, as a known member of government) is not so important as the political reputation of the individual as a consensus figure who can oversee research that is objective and participatory. This was confirmed in the projects in Puntland and Somaliland, where the locally recruited zonal coordinators’ known political leanings were offset by their clear willingness and ability to work collaboratively with colleagues from other political groupings.

What this means, however, is that there is no 'ideal profile' for a Country Project Director. Each country case and each potential candidate must be evaluated in detail. Reputation and perceptions are in many ways as important as experience and position.

WSP also learned that it is unlikely that any one person can fulfil all the requirements of the Country Project Director's profile. With the needs of consensus, political positioning ability and power, and reputation at the forefront of the selection process, it may well be that the person selected for the post of Country Project Director will need support in the areas of project management, administration, or research oversight. In Eritrea, for example, Dr Tesfai's dual role as Country Project Director and also Minister of Agriculture did not allow him the time to also oversee the research, so Dr Berhane Woldemichael, a PhD graduate from the London School of Economics, took on the role of research coordinator. This configuration was subsequently tried in Mozambique. In Guatemala, management of the project was fairly equally divided between the Country Project Director and a full-time research coordinator, Bernardo Arévalo de León, bringing together a social scientist and a political figure in a close management relationship. This worked particularly well. In Puntland, the 'management' of the project was divided between the WSP Somali Programme Director and the Zonal research coordinator, based on the strengths of the individuals concerned, the demands of the project at different levels and negotiated roles and responsibilities.

In late 1998, in a departure from the structures that it had planned and developed during the first four-year pilot phase of WSP, the project in Somaliland was launched as a local NGO (the Somaliland Centre for Peace and Development, SCPD). This recognized not only the situation in Somaliland but also the most striking lesson learned during the course of the first four WSP projects: that the projects quickly become locally 'owned' and that they will be sustainable to the extent that this local ownership becomes structural

Step 4: selecting researchers

The researchers in WSP country projects have to be able not only to undertake research but also to moderate the Working Group meetings and hold together the consensus-building process that is at the heart of the interactive research phase of the project. They must be able to see themselves, where necessary, as providing a voice for those participants in WSP who cannot express themselves easily. Within the context of the specific research aims of WSP, additionally, they need to be able to move beyond research as data collection and achieve understanding of the diverse links among actors, policies and programmes.

What WSP did

Finding suitably qualified researchers is not always an easy job in countries emerging from conflict. Often research capacity has been lost, not only because academic institutions may have been dismantled and resources dispersed, but also because academics and other researchers who left the country may be unwilling to return.

In Eritrea, the WSP researchers were all middle-level government employees released part-time to work in the country project. This was a very successful arrangement because not only did it provide researchers and resources to the country project, it also fed the experience of the country project into the day-to-day work of government. The researchers themselves maintained a clearly neutral approach to the WSP research and were well accepted by WSP participants.

In Mozambique, the core team consisted of two full-time researchers. Despite their dedication and commitment, it took quite a long time for them to become accustomed to the WSP approach and methodology and the CCU had to provide support and training in the first half of the research phase. Training was also provided to the Eritrea researchers, again because of the important differences between 'traditional' research and the specific type of PAR being piloted by WSP (see below, Step 5).

In Guatemala the project was able to select researchers from a large, well trained pool. In light of the experience in Eritrea and Mozambique, however, WSP organized two one-week training and orientation sessions early in the country project. In Puntland, in contrast, the number of qualified researchers available was very limited. Although the CCU and the Nairobi support office organized two training seminars for the researchers eventually appointed, and despite a number of visits both from the WSP Project Officer and the Principal Researcher, the lack of experience of the researchers made the transfer of methodology difficult and time-consuming. In Somaliland, in contrast, a larger number of researchers was available and more streamlined administrative structures provided a simpler framework in which they could work.

What WSP learned

The clearest lesson to emerge was that, even when experienced researchers are appointed, they need support from the CCU to reorient them towards the new WSP methodology and to provide support as they undertake the work, not only through written guidelines but through on-the-job training, monitoring and hands-on support if necessary. In Guatemala, for example, the researchers struggled to come to terms with the dual role of researcher and facilitator, since the former requires the acquisition of knowledge of a subject, and therefore suggests guidance of debate, whereas the latter requires hands-off neutrality to be able to encourage other people's views. This task is never 100 per cent successful; rather it is a question of finding an acceptable equilibrium. The WSP Somali Programme tried a slightly different model to deal with this problem: there, some of the 'researchers' were essentially facilitators, and local resource people actually carried out the research on some of the topics.

The research team as a whole must also be seen as neutral or impartial, since the researchers are in many instances at the forefront of the process of consensus building. The team is also therefore most likely to succeed if it has been negotiated – or at least discussed – with all the stakeholders in the project. In this way a team can be built that is not necessarily apolitical but rather politically balanced. In the same way, the research team can itself balance any perceived political inclinations of other members of the WSP staff.

It may be necessary to sacrifice academic qualifications for the sake of perceived impartiality or acceptability. Indeed, the quality of the research undertaking cannot be judged against traditional criteria; the consensus-building successes of the research team and the ability of the researchers to be accepted and therefore hold the WSP process together politically may be just as important as the research results themselves.

Step 5: transferring the action-research methodology

WSP's original impetus came from the need of external assistance actors to find their place in post-conflict reconstruction, but work in the pilot countries centred on gaining and promoting a better understanding of how the country itself could more effectively rebuild after war in a way that would promote reconciliation and contribute to sustainable peace. WSP sought to achieve this not by traditional research, but by piloting the innovative use of participatory action-research (PAR).

PAR had never before been used at the country level. In the 1960s and 1970s, it had worked well at the small village or community level, where it empowered people in confrontation with better informed and equipped authorities. This involved an external researcher facilitating data-gathering and exploration, and working with the subjects of the research to find solutions to potentially confrontational situations.

In WSP, in contrast, there is no external researcher but a research team from within the country itself. The participants in WSP are both the objects of the research to the extent that the issues being studied 'belong' to them, but also the proponents of the research through their contributions to the data, analysis, debate and understanding in a forum that is neutral and not conflict-centred. The researchers are equal partners in this, not external to it. And the end result is not definitive solutions but agreed priority options, consensus and fledgling relationships of trust on which future discussion and indeed action might be built.

Preparing researchers to facilitate and participate in this dynamic action-research process – and to communicate both the process and its dynamism to WSP participants – is a difficult and ongoing task.

What WSP did

WSP attempted to help country researchers to understand and then continue to be guided by the multi-faceted nature of PAR: that it aims not only to provide the kind of data that can be used to establish reasonable policies, but that it promotes transparency and sharing of information on intended plans of action, programmes and projects (by external as well as internal actors), transparency that forms a platform for discussion, an environment of sharing and the beginning of consensus. To a large extent, transferring understanding of this approach to researchers must be done face-to-face in training and briefing sessions by those who have a developed grasp of the methodology (largely, in WSP's case, staff of the CCU and its Nairobi outpost), and by the Country Project Director and research coordinator who have been nurtured as in-country guides.

WSP learned this through trial and error. In the first country project, Eritrea, it was presumed that describing the methodology and producing guidelines for its

implementation (see Annex 1) would prepare the WSP Eritrea research team for the work to be done. In practice, understanding the methodology in theory was not the same as implementing it in practice. Significant delays in the preparation of the Eritrea Country Note (see Step 7), which reflected a quasi-traditional approach to data gathering, indicated that there was a need for the CCU to step in and provide closer support to the researchers as they gained experience in PAR methods. Following the Eritrea experience, more developed training and more regular ongoing support in the WSP approach and PAR methodology were introduced into the country projects.

By the time the fifth WSP project was launched in Somaliland in late 1998, training in WSP methodology had become an integral part of the set-up of the project. Consequently, early in its operations, the SCPD organized a six-week on-the-job training programme for its team of five researchers and research coordinator, with the WSP Somali Programme Director and research coordinator as resource people. The sessions covered WSP methodology, exploration of issues for preliminary research, preparation of research questions, creation of a tentative workplan and collaboration on a short concept paper. Beyond the preparation of the researchers, this structured training programme also contributed greatly to the beginnings of forging a cohesive team.

What WSP learned

WSP learned that it is important to keep checking the country teams' understanding and implementation of PAR. There is a tendency for researchers to slip back into traditional methods, even if they understand PAR in theory. Beyond the written guidelines, therefore, training and ongoing support at central level – or where appropriate at regional support level – is vital. The 'maximum independence and liberty of action' approach that the CCU had envisaged for the research teams underestimated their need to receive ongoing support in implementation.

By the time of the Somaliland initiative, this had developed into an understanding of the need for regular opportunities for evaluating progress on implementation of the methodology. The WSP Somali Programme Director and the SCPD research coordinator followed the progress of the research team closely, making minor adjustments or giving immediate support where necessary. This contrasted significantly with the earlier projects, where isolated training sessions held every few months meant that sometimes major corrections in the application of the methodology had to be made.

WSP also learned that the CCU can learn from the country teams with regard to the process and nature of data gathering. The *Guidelines for Research* prepared by the CCU, for example, provided an outline of the kinds of issue that the researchers might explore and to some extent the line of enquiry they might first take. In practice, WSP learned that the perspectives of the country participants sometimes deviated from these, and that the country participants at times had a quite different focus on a particular issue. In short, the spirit of the action-research methodology –

that presupposes that there is no one truth but multiple viewpoints – applies equally to the possible differences of emphasis given by the country project and the CCU.

Beyond transferring a working grasp of the methodology, which takes time and ongoing cooperation and support, WSP found that there were a number of specific areas where country researchers might need guidance:

- evaluating existing documentation relevant to the rebuilding process – in terms of the value-added analysis that is envisioned by the WSP approach, rather than the simple collection of data;
- developing the Country Note (see Step 7) – again with a view to exploring the synergies among different actors, levels of action and policies, rather than simply documenting them;
- organizing and coordinating the work of the Working Groups (see Step 11), with a view to facilitating discussion, promoting impartiality and trust and encouraging openness and consensus;
- developing the skills of facilitation in particular (often difficult in hierarchical traditions), to be able to maintain equitable ‘space’ in the meetings, negotiate processes such as rotating chairpersons, and demonstrate active listening skills;
- understanding and underpinning the role of the Project Group (see Step 9) as a high-level ‘clearing house’ where the research findings can be explored further, developed and translated into external forums,
- appreciating the use of other communication tools to complement the consensus-building process (see Step 10);
- reflecting the role of the local dimension in the research (see Step 14);
- integrating the Visions Project (see Step 15).

Step 6: integrating International and Regional Researchers

The WSP project document foresaw that planning, organization and implementation of all actions in the country projects would be carried out by national personnel. However, it was also recognized that the search for appropriate policy options in each country should take account of the regional and international context. This recognizes the reality of the situation on the ground, where regional and indeed international political forces and dynamics play a sometimes significant role in the potential of a country to rebuild and to avoid conflict.

Integrating this wider regional and international perspective into the country research is the role of the international and regional researchers. Selection of the people to take up this task in each country project was to be based on their knowledge of the country, previous research and other experience in the country and region, and their having the necessary profile to fit into the national research team. This recruitment was to be done during the preparatory phase, to allow the international and regional researchers to help the national team from the outset in, for example, evaluating existing documentation.

What WSP did

In Eritrea, WSP identified a senior researcher, Martin Doornbos, from the Institute for Social Studies in The Hague as International Researcher. Doornbos knew Eritrea and was respected inside the country as well as in international research circles. He visited the project on several occasions and provided useful input to the research while also keeping an arm's length overview of the WSP Eritrea project and providing support at crucial stages, for example in the final evaluation phase. No Regional Researcher was identified.

No Regional or International Researcher was taken on in Mozambique or Guatemala. However, Rubén Zamora of El Salvador, a member of the WSP Special Advisory Group, played an important role in the project in Guatemala from its earliest stages, providing regional and international input and undertaking specific tasks such as evaluation of the project.

In the Somali Programme, because of the 'bottom-up' approach adopted and the different 'geographical shape' of the country project, and given that the Country Project Director himself had international experience, it was decided not to recruit either an International or a Regional Researcher.

What WSP learned

In Eritrea 'external' research support was largely successful, although the specific regional challenge of continued potential conflict between Eritrea and its neighbour

Ethiopia might have been appropriately tackled by a researcher based in the region. To some extent this was compensated for by the fact that many of the Eritrean researchers brought a wider Horn of Africa experience to the project, although the politically very sensitive cross-border question was not able to be tackled. WSP learned quickly that there was no possibility of identifying an Ethiopian researcher – nor indeed a regionally based researcher with standing in Ethiopia – who would be acceptable to the WSP Eritrea country team. In the absence of a Regional Researcher, in fact, it was essentially Martin Doornbos who provided both regional and international input to the research.

In Guatemala, too, Rubén Zamora's Central America and international experience meant that he was able to provide both regional and wider input to the country project, and the Country Project Director himself brought a regional perspective to the project.

The attempt to integrate a regional and international perspective to the research failed in Mozambique. Attempts to engage a researcher from South African universities were not successful, and at the same time it became clear that the regional and international elements of the research had to take second place to the need to reach national consensus. What seemed to be a reluctance on the part of the country team to accept a Regional and/or International Researcher was therefore largely explained by their concern that factoring these elements into the research undertaking would make the task more difficult and divert their attention from the very important national processes they were embarked upon and that needed their full attention. This may well have been a question of timing; it is possible that there was a moment later in the project when the idea of engaging a Regional and/or International Researcher might have been reintroduced.

Note 1: set-up at the central level

WSP began as an exploration of the role that external assistance actors might play in the rebuilding of countries emerging from conflict. To this extent, it began as an externally initiated project. Very soon, however, all those involved in WSP were struck by the speed and intensity with which the individual country pilots developed into national projects, with their own country-specific dynamics, singularities and conclusions. For the central-level management of WSP – the CCU – the project therefore took on multiple personalities, and the management of these became more complex and indeed time-consuming than had been anticipated.

WSP central management insisted from the outset that the country projects should remain as autonomous as possible, with the country team headed by the Country Project Director taking the lead and the responsibility for all aspects of the project in-country. The CCU saw its task as providing guidance and support to the country projects. Additionally, of course, the CCU had a responsibility to ensure appropriate reporting on the country projects to donors who were providing financial support to WSP, and itself retained overall responsibility towards the donors.

This responsibility went beyond simple reporting. The CCU's role within the wider aims of the global project was also to work with the international community to bring about change in the planning and delivery of aid. It therefore had the ongoing task of building and maintaining strategic political/institutional relationships that would allow it to negotiate such influence, and to build a base of support within sponsoring and other organizations that would extend into policy and operational areas. For this effort to be credible, WSP centrally had also to continually demonstrate that it was abreast of political, research and operational trends in the field of post-conflict rebuilding, could respond to and build on them and was able to situate WSP itself in this broader perspective.

The initial set-up stage of WSP therefore had two distinct arms: set-up of the project in-country, essentially the responsibility of the country team with support from the CCU where required, and set-up of the overall project at central level.

In-country, there were a number of logistical issues that had to be tackled once the decision had been taken to launch the project and once its place had been secured politically. The country project needed a home, and this was never simply a case of finding a suitable building. Each country case was considered individually: in Eritrea, for example, it was considered important to rent premises that were in no way identified with government, external assistance agencies or academic institutions, so that the neutrality and independence of the project would be visible and participants would have no concerns about uncomfortable affiliations. Similarly in Puntland, the disastrous interventions of the international community and the cynicism towards external assistance agencies meant that the project could not share

United Nations or other agency premises; at the same time it had to avoid premises that might be seen as factionally significant. In contrast, in Guatemala it was seen as an advantage for the project to operate from UNDP premises; in Mozambique, the project worked out of rented premises in a residential area of Maputo that was known to all the actors involved. In questions like this, the CCU was able to work with the country teams and add to their understanding of on-the-ground realities an understanding of wider international community perceptions and trends.

Other logistical issues such as equipment, communications and administrative and technical support remained the responsibility of the Country Project Directors, although equipment was normally provided through the CCU. Country Project Directors also dealt with country-level fundraising and donor relations, although in practice the CCU secured the majority of funding at central level. In the WSP Somali Programme, the project in Puntland, then in Somaliland and potentially in other areas later, received central support from the Nairobi support office, a sort of 'branch' of the CCU. Partner organizations also provided support: while transport in Eritrea, Guatemala and Puntland was secured through rental arrangements, in Mozambique the local UNDP office provided two vehicles free of charge. Administrative issues were handled by the local teams with help and support from the local UNDP office in Eritrea, Mozambique and Guatemala, and UNOPS in Puntland and Somaliland.

The CCU, for its part, put in place consultative mechanisms through which donors and other supporters of the global project could contribute to its development, be kept fully informed, receive regular reports on progress and financial matters, and eventually participate in the drawing of lessons from the project and feed these into their home institutions (a smaller-scale echo of this was also created in Nairobi).

WSP management convoked two important groupings without which the global impact of the project would have been much reduced. The Special Advisory Group (SAG) consisted of a small group of high-level advisors who lent considerable legitimacy to the project in international circles through their experience and reputations. Joseph Garba, former Foreign Minister of Nigeria; Curt Gasteyger, Director of the PSIS; Dharam Gai, Director of UNRISD; Vladimir Petrovsky, Director General of the United Nations Office in Geneva; and Michael Priestley, former Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in Ethiopia and Sudan, provided ongoing advice to WSP management and worked on the project's behalf in a number of important forums. Ambassador Jonathan Moore, of Harvard University's Shorenstein Center; Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun, former United Nations Special Representative in Somalia; and Rubén Zamora, former Vice-President of the National Assembly of El Salvador, played specific roles in their specialist areas, with Sahnoun following closely the work in Somalia, Zamora keeping a close eye on developments in WSP Guatemala, and Moore providing policy advice across a range of political, development and policy-related areas.

Additionally, WSP management created the Periodic Donor Consultation Process (PDCP), comprising supporters of the project who met approximately twice a year and received regular interim mailings to keep stakeholders informed on progress, to

seek their views and support, and to facilitate the soliciting of political, institutional and financial support as necessary. Importantly, the PDCP also provided a mechanism through which WSP could filter lessons coming out of the project, shaping them into useful tools that PDCP members could then introduce into their organizations, spreading the impact of the project into the community that had instigated it.

These consultative mechanisms and the raising of ongoing financial support for the project were the two most important tasks of the CCU not only in the set-up stage of the global project but, indeed, throughout the first four years

For the CCU to be able to instigate these innovative participatory procedures, and for it to be able to respond to the needs of the country projects and, indeed, to 'reinvent' itself as the experiment progressed and lessons were learned, it had from the outset to be constituted as a temporary, flexible structure that would be seen as impartial but have enough institutional solidity to be able to receive funding and function effectively. The global project therefore developed a number of quite distinct personalities that mark it as both innovative and experimental:

Firstly, it was designed to avoid bureaucracies and political agendas, and to be as operationally independent as possible from other organizations. At the same time, the project needed to have a place in forums where it could establish its credibility and have an impact on the debate surrounding post-conflict rebuilding action. WSP therefore – both at central level and in the countries where it began operations – attempted to juggle its institutional affiliations depending on the needs of the project, moving in and out of United Nations circles, keeping contacts with NGOs but not becoming one, underlining its own transmutability and ephemeral nature while putting in place minimal administrative agreements with first the United Nations Office in Geneva and then UNOPS.

Secondly, despite its geographical 'home' in the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), WSP had a complex relationship with research as it is traditionally considered by academics and researchers. WSP did not attempt to produce academic research conclusions on the countries in which it worked but rather to support the interactive research being undertaken by national actors. At the same time, it needed to have a neutral research identity itself in order not to be confused with local self-interests or to be seen as a mediation project, as well as to retain credibility in research and academic circles where its eventual conclusions on the use and relevance of PAR in post-conflict reconstruction might be critically evaluated.

These multiple, ever-changing facets of WSP's identity were an enormous but fascinating challenge. Indeed, the ability of the project to meet this challenge became an integral part of the WSP experiment and a potential source of many lessons. On a day-to-day basis, however, it had tangible repercussions for organizational and administrative relationships (including such nitty-gritty issues as staff contracts), project planning and workplans, hierarchical relationships and responsibilities. In the early stages of WSP, inevitably, this occasionally caused strains among the staff and to some extent contributed to a relatively high staff turnover.

This pressure on staff was intensified by the nature of WSP's funding. Although throughout the project donors were supportive and generous, the project itself did not fit comfortably into 'traditional' funding lines, and donor governments and agencies often had to find creative ways to make funding available. This meant that funds were at times irregular, and juggling commitments and available resources gave rise to an ongoing cash-flow challenge. Short-term staff contracts were therefore the norm, another pressure for the CCU staff in particular, since funding priority was always given to the field projects.

Among the many lessons drawn from the project at global level, the need to identify well-trained, risk-taking, flexible, creative staff who can cope with extreme pressure and uncertainty was one of the most regularly tested.

Step 7: drafting the Country Note

To build a broad base of information on the post-conflict situation in a country, the country research team undertakes a preliminary exercise in data gathering. The products of this exercise are the data themselves but also the beginnings of the consultation process that will form the action part of the project.

If debate on needs and priorities is to be constructive, it must take into account what is already being done, and what individual perceptions are of outstanding needs. The twofold nature of the preliminary research undertaking provides both of these.

Additionally, this is the first official country team contact with the potential members of the project, and it is important that they understand that the information being sought on their programmes and actions is intended not to criticize them but as the beginning of a process of interaction of which they will be a part and which will ultimately help them. This is also the point at which participants can be helped to understand that WSP does not seek a single definitive solution to the problems of post-conflict rebuilding but rather seeks to facilitate debate and consensus on priorities to be tackled and to formulate negotiated recommendations.

The data gathered are analysed and written up into the Country Note. This is a 'snapshot' of the situation in the post-conflict country at a given moment and a balance sheet of the issues facing the country in the rebuilding task and the resources available to meet them. It analyses the recent past and identifies the most important issues (Entry Points) that have to be faced. It is also an important step in demonstrating the quality, objectivity and independence of the project. (In the Somaliland project, the SCPD elected to call the Country Note the Somaliland Self-Portrait).

What WSP did

The researchers begin by assembling all existing documentation, including the programmes and activities of all the internal and external actors involved in the rebuilding process. This essential 'mapping' exercise is important if duplication of effort is to be avoided. It also identifies major gaps in programming but perhaps above all gaps in the different actors' knowledge of each other's programmes and plans; to this extent it is an important information-sharing mechanism. In addition, the researchers meet with the widest possible range of internal and external players to discuss the data in more detail but also, in the process, to begin to understand their particular perceptions and to interest them in bringing these into the consultative process of debate.

The research team has then to evaluate the documents and interview records with a view to identifying the general impact of the programmes under way and also the synergies and possible contradictions among them.

In Puntland and Somaliland, the researchers were faced with an enormous gap in the information and documentation available in the country itself. During the conflict in the former republic, centres of documentation and repositories of information were destroyed or dispersed; academic and other expertise was largely lost to the diaspora; and the majority of information available on the country, particularly recent information, was almost entirely in the hands of external actors, not local people. Both in the Nairobi support office and at the SCPD, therefore, the compilation of existing resources, and the production of briefing notes to fill gaps in documentation, were seen as a vital platform to the preliminary research undertaking.

The CCU had developed guidelines for preparation of the Country Note, with the proviso that these were not prescriptive but should be looked upon as an indication of possible areas to be researched, the final decisions on the scope of the research and the presentation of the results remaining with the country teams. The guidelines suggested that each Country Note should reflect the country priorities and underscore the major issues identified through interaction with the country participants. Some of the issues included in the guidelines might not be relevant to a particular country situation; others might arise that are not in the guidelines. The *Guidelines for research* are included in Annex 1.

Specifically, in Eritrea discussions on the Country Note began in June 1995, and the note was expected to be ready three months later. This did not happen for a variety of reasons including personnel moves in the Eritrea country team. The draft finally arrived at the CCU in October but was not sufficiently analytical. Essentially descriptive in nature, it did not explore the main issues involving the mix of policies, actors and levels whose synergy needs to be analysed if the post-conflict situation is to be holistically understood. The CCU sent a member of the research staff to Asmara to help with the preparation of a new draft and the final Country Note was ready by the end of the year, to be distributed to potential members of the Project Group in January 1996.

In Mozambique, work on the Country Note began in mid-July 1995 and was to be finished by the end of November. Again, the draft eventually produced did not meet expectations. An introduction by the Country Project Director reflected well the basic ideas of the project, but the presentation of the political, economic and social situation that formed the body of the note lacked analytical depth and any attempt to evaluate the possible synergies or contradictions in policies and programmes. After more discussion, the Country Project Director stepped in, presenting the collected proposals in a draft called 'a picture of the country' (*imagem do pais*). This was ready for distribution in January 1996.

The project officially began in Guatemala on 1 August 1996, but the Country Project Director had had a long lead-in as a consultant from April that year, and lost no time contacting major internal and external players. He also had the findings of the missions made to Guatemala during the exploratory phase and his own reports and analyses made during his consultancy. A member of the SAG provided valuable input during brainstorming sessions in September 1996, when lessons learned from

Eritrea and Mozambique were fed into the WSP Guatemala experience. On the basis of all this, a short project document was prepared that was used as a substantive 'calling card' to introduce a wide range of potential participants to the project. More than a hundred meetings were subsequently held with a wide range of different individuals and groups covering the whole, stratified social structure of the country. This helped not only to identify the main development issues but also to begin to reach consensus on priorities. More importantly, this process began the relationship- and trust-building necessary to the future of the project in Guatemala. The first draft of the Country Note, with the title *Guatemala at the crossroads*, was ready by the end of October 1996 and was presented to the Project Group in January 1997, just ten days after the Peace Agreement had been concluded. As the result of broad interaction and input from some 120 meetings, it was unanimously accepted by the Project Group (see below) – a clear vindication of the procedures followed in its drafting.

In Puntland, instead of the Country Note the team produced three Regional Notes – one for each of the regions in which WSP initiated work (Bari, Nugal and Mudug). This took almost eight months, given the severe shortage of research documentation available in the northeast and the need to develop information through interviews while building up a documentation resource. Since much of the population of North-east Somalia is nomadic, interviews with members of this group were particularly difficult. Once the Regional Notes had been drafted and agreed, they were worked up into a Zonal Note covering the northeast zone as a whole. This zone-based document was much more than a compilation of the three Regional Notes, however, and aimed to identify areas of commonality and difference among the three regions.

What WSP learned

The experience of the preliminary research phase in Eritrea showed clearly that there must be an understanding of the need to move beyond documentation into preliminary analysis in the research. Although the researchers attempted to evaluate existing programmes and actions, it was clear that such evaluation was superficial and did not have the full involvement of all the appropriate actors. While there are readily available evaluations of most international assistance programmes, for example, the Country Note needed to move beyond this and build such evaluations into a 'bigger picture' that would help to demonstrate complementarities, overlap and contradictions in programming and indicate priority areas for action. This did begin to happen later as confidence in the project grew, but critical analysis was elusive at first.

In Mozambique, too, the researchers had problems breaking out of the traditional research model and tended to collect data in a clinical, non-consultative way. In both Mozambique and Eritrea, it was evident that this resulted from a lack of understanding of this step in the methodology, and a need to be supported in breaking out of traditional research methods, rather than a reluctance to analyse and evaluate.

In Guatemala, in contrast, the long preparatory stage undertaken by WSP with the Country Project Director and then by the country team leaders with the researchers meant that the methodology was more firmly grasped and implemented. Moreover, the WSP Guatemala decision to hold workshops as part of the information-gathering process was hugely successful.

In Puntland, the country team moved rather slowly on the initial research, to a large extent because they were working in an environment where the research tradition had been lost. At the same time, however, they were also building a documentation centre that was to become a resource not only to the project but open to others who wished to use it. Importantly, moreover, during this long preliminary research phase the WSP country team was confronted with the fact that there was no coherent vision among local players of what the future might hold for Puntland. It was WSP that initiated such reflection and discussion and fed these into the working document of the Puntland Constitutional Conference.

In the second Somali project, initiated in late 1998 in Somaliland, the lessons of the four pilot projects were well learned. A large number of research interviews and meetings were held outside the capital before the project held its first major meeting, and these provided a range of diverse views. The whole SCPD research team spent up to two weeks in each of Somaliland's six regions and met representatives of all sectors of society. This carefully prepared, exhaustive field research greatly extended the time normally allocated to this element of the project, but the SCPD team felt that it was of vital importance given the nature and structure of Somali society.

Globally, the Country Note came to be seen as a document whose value goes far beyond its technical position in the project as a starting point for debate. It is also central to the process of consensus-building and of fundamental documentary value beyond the confines of the project. Such is the value of the Country Note, in fact, that one evaluator of WSP suggested that the very act of preparing a Country Note is a significant step in the rebuilding process and might be undertaken even without a WSP-type project being set up, perhaps even in normal development situations.

In practical terms, too, WSP learned that the Country Note must look beyond the capital or main towns of a country and attempt, from this early stage, to involve information and views from district and provincial levels. This 'local level' activity should not be initiated only at the interactive research phase but begin with preparation of the Country Note.

Step 8: selecting Entry Points

Preparation of the Country Note allows the research team to identify some of the most important and urgent issues that have to be resolved if the rebuilding process is to succeed – called Entry Points in WSP terminology, since they are discrete ways in to the wider challenges of rebuilding. Entry Points constitute key areas that WSP participants agree deserve priority action. They are therefore taken as the basis for interactive research that feeds into a Working Group for each Entry Point and that develops through group exchange and debate.

It is true that in post-conflict countries all issues seem important and urgent. The task of assigning priorities to such tasks – and of facilitating consensus on this among the wide range of actors involved in rebuilding – is one of the primary aims of WSP. Already the debate at Project Group level on which Entry Points to select begins to focus discussion, and allows WSP participants to define their different approaches and to see that differences, even disagreements, do not have to hinder collaboration and eventual consensus.

What WSP did

It is the task of the country research team, after long consultations, to short-list those issues that are generally agreed to be priority areas for action, and from which Entry Points might be selected. In Eritrea, 20 possible Entry Points were suggested. Five were eventually chosen by the Project Group: *social reintegration*, reflecting concerns over the reinsertion of refugees and demobilized soldiers in post-conflict Eritrea; *food security*; *human resources*; *infrastructure* and *governance*.

In Mozambique, the research team submitted six possible Entry Points to the Project Group, who struggled to focus debate. The difficulty of setting priorities when so many issues are urgent was evident, and Project Group members gave many suggestions so that, by the end of the meeting, 24 more potential Entry Points had been added. This inability to come to a decision on the Entry Points also illustrated clearly the political gamesmanship that can enter into the WSP process in these early stages: to a large extent in Mozambique, indecision was caused because the two main political parties, FRELIMO and RENAMO, predictably contradicted each other – not necessarily on the substance but for reasons of political expediency. The Project Group consequently asked for more analysis to be done and for the research team to resubmit a short-list, but it was considered more effective to appoint a representative, neutral advisory committee to look again at all the possibilities. As the group studied the proposed Entry Points in more detail, it became clear that there was not much political ground at stake since the focus would be on research, not decision-making. The advisory group was therefore able to make recommendations to a second Project Group meeting. This time, four Entry Points were chosen: *the reintegration of demobilized soldiers*; *the role of mass media in democracy and development*; *the impact of structural adjustment on agriculture*; and *decentralization*

and participation in local self-government. The fact that the WSP process involves non-binding debate and results in recommendations, not hard decisions, is fundamental in avoiding the kind of ideological fireworks that might otherwise characterize such intense debate.

In Guatemala, the country team learned from the lesson of Mozambique. Rather than suggest narrowly focused Entry Points, they proposed broad areas for consideration that the Working Groups could then proceed to narrow in the course of debate. Moreover, in keeping with plans to ensure that work would complement the peace-building process that was under way, they took into account the issues being discussed in national forums. *The modernization and strengthening of the state; economic and social development; the administration of justice and public security, and the multicultural nature of society* were chosen as the four broad areas where discussion would begin.

In the WSP Somali Programme in Puntland, the process of deciding upon Entry Points was more complex, since it worked at two different levels. Since the project had been initiated in three different regions, three separate Regional Notes were produced instead of one Country Note. Each of these proposed Entry Points to a Regional Project Group. In fact, the three research and consultation efforts indicated broadly similar priority concerns: security, governance and economic development. These were presented to Regional Project Group meetings in March 1998, at which the respective Regional Notes were approved and 13 preliminary Entry Points were identified – four in North Mudug, five in Nugal and four in Bari (some of them the same).

The three Regional Notes were subsequently reworked into a Zonal Note presented to a Zonal Project Group that also met in March 1998 and that brought together more than a hundred people from all sectors. Discussion here focused on issues common to all three regions and in due course Entry Points were narrowed to: *basic institutions of government, social integration, the role of different actors in providing social services, and economic rebuilding*. This latter needed to be further refined since its exact focus could not be decided. Soon after the Zonal Project Group meeting, however, WSP members participated in the 1998 Constitutional Conference, also known as the Puntland Conference, aimed at developing a preliminary agenda for social and economic reconstruction in Puntland. The conference effectively caused WSP research to be put on hold for four months as other priorities took the attention of the researchers. Nevertheless, WSP research was also fed into the conference debate and, in due course, WSP Entry Points were further refined to reflect the future direction indicated by the conference. Eventually, *basic institutions on the local level, the implication of the Puntland Conference on social integration, opportunities for the improvement of social services, and transformation to a regulated economy* became the Entry Points on which work would focus.

What WSP learned

It became clear that, despite the urgency and importance of a whole range of challenges facing a country in the post-conflict period, no more than four or five

Entry Points can be dealt with in the period allocated in the WSP research plan and given the size of the WSP project in each country. It is important that the researchers understand that their task goes beyond the substantive issue they are examining and includes analysis of the ‘policy, actor and level mixes’ that WSP seeks to illustrate and explore. Fundamental questions therefore need to be posed by the researchers: do the rebuilding priorities and programmes of major internal and external actors reinforce each other, or do they overlap or even contradict? What political dynamics are at play in the formulation of policies and priorities? (policy mix). How do external and internal actors at different levels – local, provincial, and national – work together? (actor and level mixes) What is the relationship within a country between different levels of society, for example capital city and remote community? (level mix)

Given the analytical complexity of this work, it is generally necessary to begin research and debate on Entry Points that are realistically researchable in the relatively short time allocated to this work. Nevertheless, the Entry Points must attempt to cover the strategically most urgent and important issues in rebuilding. It should not be forgotten that the process of the interactive research phase is at least as important as the substantive results of the research themselves.

Step 9: bringing together the Project Group

While the driving force of the WSP country project is the research team, and the focus of action the Working Group, its fundamental strength comes from the Project Group that guides and directs the interactive research and positions WSP within the communities that it aims to support.

As a collective body, the Project Group is a democratic forum in which all representatives participate at will; all issues – including controversial or politically sensitive ones – can be raised and clarified; all existing or new initiatives can be introduced and supported; all individuals, groups or organizations can be presented and supported; all activities can be impartially evaluated; new ways of planning can be examined and accepted; and new methods of implementation can be tested.

What the Project Group is not is an inter-ministerial committee to evaluate the performance of the government, or a panel to criticize national and international organizations working in the country.

The first meeting of the Project Group constitutes the end of the first research phase and the launch of the second, interactive phase.

What WSP did

Ideally, the Project Group should include representatives of all the internal and external actors involved in the rebuilding process. In practice this is not only extremely difficult but would also result in a Project Group so big as to be unworkable. For discussion in the Project Group to remain productive, there should be no more than 30 or 40 members, so WSP supported a process whereby community groups chose their representatives to attend the Project Group meeting trying, if possible, to ensure that the level of representation remained appropriate. Since part of the rationale of the Project Group is to position WSP within the country's rebuilding effort and to help dissemination of its work and conclusions into opinion-forming and decision-making forums, then it is undoubtedly useful for the Project Group to comprise heads of organizations and institutions where possible. Middle-level managers and those working at a more technical level are more likely to represent their organizations within the Working Groups, where their 'hands on' strength is fundamental to the process.

Contacts with likely members of the Project Group is initiated during preparation of the Country Note. These exchanges provide an opportunity to exchange information, identify problems and their root causes, and analyse those circumstances that might help indicate priorities among the many possible Entry Points.

The WSP Eritrea Project Group met three times during the course of the project: in January, June and December 1996, and then again in March 1997. The government

took an active part in the meeting, with a number of ministers attending. In Mozambique, some representatives of international assistance organizations (the World Bank, for example, and UNDP) as well as some donor country representatives (Sweden, Italy, the Netherlands), were very active. Both political parties as well as representatives of civil society were also strong contributors, but the government hesitated at first and joined the process rather later, becoming very active in the final stages of the project. Five meetings were held in Mozambique: in February and June 1996, in March and June 1997, and in March 1998.

The WSP Guatemala Project Group met three times during 1997: in January, June and November, and in March 1998. Representatives of the multilateral organizations took an active role in both the Project Group and the Working Groups, but the bilateral organization representatives were less enthusiastic, explaining that they “did not wish to interfere in the internal affairs of the country”. Internal actors – including indigenous people – were well represented.

In Puntland, the Project Group mechanism echoed the regional/zonal structure that the project had adopted. Regional Project Group meetings were held in North Mudug, Nugal and Bari in March 1998. That same month, the first Zonal Project Group meeting was held. This was attended by more than a hundred people from all sectors, and surpassed all expectations. The Regional Project Groups had each nominated 10 members to participate in the Zonal Project Group and, in addition to these 30 participants, the Group included a number of representatives of regional political and traditional groupings. All the international organizations were invited, both local and from Nairobi, and a large delegation attended from Nairobi.

After the first Zonal Project Group meeting, the Regional Project Groups dissolved. The Zonal Project Group met again in September 1998 to reaffirm and refine the Entry Points, and was scheduled to meet in October 1999 to consider final recommendations.

What WSP learned

The limited number of meetings of the Project Groups in the country projects was both a cause and result of the approach the Country Directors took to the role of the Project Group. In general, the group was seen as a sort of ‘Board of Directors’ that lent weight to the project, oversaw it from on high and had limited impact on operations. In fact, the Project Group could have been a much more dynamic management tool, its potential for access to decision-making processes, and its range of expertise offering the chance for much more frequent interaction with the Working Groups and researchers.

Beyond the frequency of meetings and the role of the Project Group, it became evident that the way the meetings are conducted, the interaction of Project Group members and country teams before, during and after the meetings, are important factors in securing and maintaining interest in the project and therefore its likely

impact. In Guatemala, for example, the success of the country team in preparing a high-profile first Project Group meeting that attracted high-level representation and therefore strong media interest helped launch the project as a dynamic force and position it clearly within the wider peace and reconstruction debate.

Preparation of the first Project Group meeting in particular must therefore be thorough. Not only must the issues to be discussed be clear, but also the nature and sensitivities of the participants must have been identified. The presentation of issues is similarly important, since much of the information to be presented may be controversial as well as complex. Preparatory meetings with the main players help to clarify this, identify possible conflict points and prepare the ground for collaboration.

Planning the presentation, using audio-visual support, and prompting interaction from those present will lead to a more lively meeting and engage the interest of those present. Encouraging a relaxed environment in which everyone feels they can participate frankly and honestly without being shouted down or in any way 'put on trial' is fundamental to the success of the Project Group meeting and, indeed, the process in general. This extends as far as careful planning of seating arrangements at the meetings, the placement of those facilitating the meeting, and even the decision on whether or not to use microphones.

Project Group meetings held after the interactive research phase has begun should not just be 'rubber stamp' sessions or passive reports on progress. The Project Group plays an important role in reacting to the results of the research, reorienting and guiding it, and 'taste-testing' emerging conclusions and recommendations in decision-making forums. The vital role played by the Project Group in carrying consensus recommendations into the individual organisms they represent must be reflected in the way the Project Group is handled and the messages sent to its members. This is not easy, not least because high-level participants do not have time to meet more than three or four times a year, but most of all it depends on the Country Director's ability to accept that the WSP country project is 'managed' by the Project Group as much as it is by the senior staff member.

The attendance of high-level decision-makers in the Project Group is of fundamental importance to the impact of WSP in the country. In general, WSP learned that government ministers and other influential figures are ready to participate in the Project Group, since they see it as an opportunity to add value to their own programmes and to see the 'bigger picture' relating to issues with which they have to deal. The neutrality of the meeting is of central importance here, as is the perception of neutrality that participants have. At times, for example, government participants in particular can begin to have doubts about participating, and may pull back from the process. WSP learned that such fear is best mitigated by clear demonstrations of sincere intent for impartiality and neutral debate, and lack of a political agenda. This also explains why WSP had more success as a forum than many similar attempts at international coordination forums did; as a facilitator, rather than a coordinator, WSP clearly had no individual agenda to pursue.

Step 10: putting in place communications processes

Given the collaborative nature of WSP, communication at all levels is of great importance.

The set-up and methodology of the project foresaw three different categories of information flow:

- Operational communication, largely between the country project and the CCU (or in the case of the Somali Programme, the Nairobi support office), ranging from administrative issues to project-specific questions, for example related to understanding of an element of the methodology.
- Project communication, which is information flow that forms part of the methodology and process of the project, for example among and between the participants and staff of the country project; within a given country between the capital-based project and activities and participants in the field.
- External communication, which has essentially three general targets: other country projects (information of all kinds); interested groups in a country that are not participating in the project (particularly, for example, the general public via the press); interested individuals and groups in other countries, particularly in the region (external communication outside the country projects, originating mainly at the CCU, is dealt with separately in Notes 3 and 4).

What WSP did

As part of the set-up of the project, WSP central management helped the country teams to establish the technical infrastructure needed for operational communication: telephones, fax, e-mail facilities. This had to be done well before the research phase began. In Eritrea and Mozambique independent telephone and fax lines, as well as e-mail connections, were put in place. In Guatemala, the project was able to use the lines in the UNDP offices where it was located, although access and independence had to be secured. In Puntland, since there was no functioning telephone service, a satellite communication system was put in place with three stations: Bossaaso, Garowe and Galkayo. This required the purchase, too, of generators and peripherals.

Project communication was written into the methodology, which presumed an ongoing exchange of information within the country projects, including via a newsletter in English and other languages as appropriate, to which participants might contribute reports on progress of the research and debate. The newsletter was envisaged as a simply produced bulletin, not a glossy magazine, that would appear regularly throughout the project. The Country Director would take responsibility for editorial approval of the bulletin. Additionally, the newsletter could be sent to participants in the project based outside the capital. The project document also

presumed that the pilot projects would exchange information among themselves and that WSP country teams might meet from time to time.

An external communication task for the country projects was also written into the plans, as two distinct elements: first in-country external audiences and other WSP country projects – and of this the newsletter in English would be one element, along with press briefings, notes on progress and personal contact; and second in the form of input to the Global Communication Strategy, that would be implemented out of the CCU in the final year of the pilot phase (see Note 4).

The WSP Somali Programme, having observed the difficulties the first three projects had in coming to grips with external communication, made a special effort to begin communication work early in the project. In reality, though, nothing very concrete was produced for some time, although the will was strong. In later stages, however, regular radio programmes began on Radio Galkayo and were reported to have broadened public debate and helped the Working Groups take account of this. Radio Voice of Peace also provided some coverage of the project, and there were articles in the local press. A locally produced newsletter began in 1999 but was not particularly well received. Far more successful in this society where oral communication is strong, was ‘word of mouth’, and Zonal Project Coordinator Adam Biixi’s regular contact with local communities was powerfully important in this regard.

In the Somaliland project, a member of staff was recruited with specific responsibility for communications work. He was provided with technical equipment. Already in the early stages of the project, ideas were being put forward to work with local TV and radio stations, gather audio-visual materials and use them to make the SCPD an ‘attractive hands-on’ centre, and to initiate a series of speakers as a communications event.

What WSP learned

Although in general operational communications functioned well, the human element sometimes intervened in the task of communicating operational information. Reporting from the field to the CCU was sometimes irregular and at times information on quite important issues was received only after repeated requests from Geneva. In some cases this was because the national management of the country projects preferred to tackle problems themselves first, before contacting the CCU. Although the CCU insisted that the country projects should, indeed, be as autonomous as possible, this did mean that problems that could not be solved at the country level reached Geneva very late. It is important to decide, from the outset, the level and nature of reporting to the CCU and the areas in which the CCU should be immediately consulted. This applied too, in the case of the WSP Somali Programme, between the Puntland field-level sub-offices and the Nairobi office; only one person in Puntland ever used the e-mail facilities provided, so that the researchers posted in the various sub-offices did not ‘talk’ to each other. Visits and the telephone compensated for this to some extent, but the potential offered by rapid e-mail links was lost.

At the same time, communication essentially 'at a distance' sometimes gave rise to problems too. The replies and requests of the CCU were at times misunderstood – either because of their content or their presentation. In some cases, also, they were ignored. In general, two-way operational communication functioned better in Guatemala and the Somali Programme. There is little that can be done about the 'human element' in communications; the building of working relationships, clear guidelines for communication and continued efforts on all parts are a partial response.

Substantive project communication among the country teams was much less than planned or, indeed, desired. This was partly a result of the intense focus of the country teams on what was happening in their own country and the rather short time they had in which to achieve the aims of the project. It may also have been a result of language differences that made easy exchange of day-to-day information more difficult. To some extent the CCU acted as a sort of clearing-house, attempting to transfer information from one project to another, and the creation of a WSP web site with large amounts of substantive information accessible by all the country projects also filled this gap, although passively.

A meeting in the round-up stages of the global project in Addis Ababa in 1998 finally brought all the country team leaders and some researchers together, and there was a rich exchange of ideas and lessons. It is clear that such a meeting earlier in the project, or even at regular intervals, would have added greatly to the development of the individual country projects and to WSP as a whole. There are both time and financial limits, however, to the number of 'international' meetings that can be arranged, and the country teams repeated the need to concentrate first on the demands of their own country programmes and the short time-frame allowed for the project. One-off visits by staff members to another project, perhaps in the course of other travel, might be an alternative. Certainly this interaction among the projects needs to be considered.

External communication differed among the country projects. In Eritrea a newsletter was produced bi-weekly throughout the action part of the project, and was generally well received, although it is important that the purpose and content of the newsletter be strategically reviewed at the outset. There was some dissatisfaction among WSP Eritrea participants with what they saw as occasional 'trivial' content in the newsletter, which they considered a vehicle for serious research information. The Eritrea newsletter did also provide useful and interesting information for those participating in the project, and others. There was not, however, a strategic mailing plan drawn up at CCU level to target a large external audience with the bulletin, largely because the newsletter was seen as an integral operational part of the project in Eritrea itself. WSP Eritrea succeeded in obtaining good television coverage of the project meetings and this raised awareness about WSP among a wider group. It has been estimated that WSP Eritrea's outreach through direct participation in the project was approximately 400 people; TV coverage, the newsletter and later research publications obviously multiply this figure considerably.

WSP Mozambique's newsletter did not appear as scheduled, largely because of questions relating to the format (the research coordinator wanted something rather more ambitious than foreseen) and the need for multiple language versions. The CCU eventually intervened and the newsletter appeared during the last five months of the action, when it received positive results. In contrast, WSP Mozambique established good relations with the press – partly because the role of the media was one of the Entry Points and a number of journalists were consequently participating in the project. There was substantive reporting of the project in Mozambican newspapers. As in Eritrea, this would also have considerably increased awareness of the project beyond the 800 or so people estimated to have participated directly in WSP Mozambique.

In Guatemala, the footage gathered during the Visions Project (see Step 15) was used for a number of television programmes, and work with the press was satisfactory, although low-key. This was not through design but perhaps because there was not a specific communication strategy in place. At the same time, there was a keen understanding in WSP Guatemala of the political implications of external communication. Far from being just a decision on who to inform of what and when, external communication must take account of the ongoing national political process and the impact information has on this. In hindsight, therefore, WSP Guatemala was satisfied with the level of profile the project had, since a higher profile would have put the project 'in a direct collision course' with the government, that was launching its own peace-building dialogue mechanisms. A valuable lesson drawn by the WSP Guatemala team, therefore, related to the need to strategize communications output depending on the changing situation in the country.

With this in mind, WSP Guatemala used selectively the material compiled during the Visions Project. The potential of such material, though, is clear: it can be re-edited and used to illustrate the project to external audiences. In this case, however, it is important to make sure that interviewees agree to having their words and images broadcast outside the operational needs of the project, and the need to balance the neutrality of the environment in which they speak and the public nature of the broadcast media must be taken very seriously. In contrast, the newsletter in Guatemala elicited mixed reactions. WSP Guatemala's most important outreach work was undoubtedly through the large number of meetings it held both in Guatemala City and in the provinces. It is estimated that some 1200 people were directly involved in the project through the opportunities afforded by this most direct form of communication.

Note 2: ongoing work at the central level

By the time the country projects were into the preliminary research phase, the CCU had begun to change shape to respond to the changing needs of WSP. In addition to the political and financial/organizational support role that had been foreseen in the initial plans, the CCU had anticipated two quite distinct tasks, one centring on the needs of the country projects for operational support as they implemented the project (for example in developing the research agenda and workplan), and one focusing on complementary central-level research that would help to provide wider context and issues-based analysis for the project globally.

In practice, the balance between these two arms of the work of the CCU shifted substantially and in time the line dividing them became blurred.

The major tasks of the operational unit were: establishing WSP field offices, concluding administrative and organizational arrangements with local authorities and organizations working within the country, procuring equipment, supporting the recruitment process, back-stopping all activities, and providing liaison between the country projects and the CCU.

The small research unit set up in Geneva soon found that its main task was support and training to the researchers in the country projects. To this extent, they worked under the guidance of the WSP Head of Operations and took their lead from the operational needs of the project. The time for 'pure' research at central level was diminished and, in the course of the four-year pilot project, was limited to three (substantial) occasional papers and a newsletter for academic and research institutions in the middle years of the project. This did put a strain on the research staff, who had to consider their longer-term career development and who had therefore to make difficult choices about how much 'traditionally accepted' research they needed to produce in order not to jeopardize their careers in research.

The fact remained, however, that the central hub of the project needed to remain as flexible and responsive as the field-level components. This could only be achieved if all those involved in the project were prepared to take risks. For example, it presumed that staffing levels and the nature of the staff on board at any time might be subject to change. Short-term contracts were offered to the research staff, bringing with them issues of personnel instability, higher than usual levels of individual risk and therefore commitment, and an increased administrative load for WSP management. The use of consultants with specific area specialisms became more frequent to allow the CCU to respond to global and country needs.

Personnel management consequently became a major time-consuming task of the CCU. Added to this, the juggling of finances to deal with the irregularity of donor support (rarely lacking but often difficult to predict at any given time), the need (and

indeed desire) to maintain high levels of reporting and consultation with all the stakeholders, and the ongoing research and communication tasks that the CCU attempted to undertake despite low staffing levels and high workloads, greatly expanded the work at the central level.

Step 11: constituting the Working Groups

The second phase of the research is the real action phase, where participants in the project collaborate with the WSP research team to explore the Entry Points agreed by the Project Group and, through debate and exchange of ideas, work towards consensus policy recommendations for action.

The Working Groups are both the framework and the environment for the interactive research, and have to be carefully structured and developed. Group members should reflect a balance between internal and external actors and between academics and operational people. While participation in the Working Groups is not restricted to any particular level, it is useful to secure the participation of middle-level representatives who are familiar with daily practice and who have concrete experience in solving problems.

The frequency of meetings also has to be carefully planned to maintain the interest of the participants while at the same time ensuring that the meetings are integrated into the research process and not simply periodic 'evaluation panels' at which the progress of the research is judged.

The need to prepare the researchers, therefore, is paramount. Not only do they need to be sensitive to the dynamics of the Working Groups and to react to these by adjusting schedules and direction, they also have to coordinate and facilitate the debate. This involves preparing the documentation for meetings as well as the agenda of the meeting itself, reporting on the research and ensuring that the debate flows and that potential obstacles are dealt with, and facilitating the flow of the discussion without ever imposing conclusions.

What WSP did

Helping to create a positive, neutral space in which WSP participants can share opinions, agree and disagree, shift viewpoints and generally feel free to expose themselves in debate, is central to the aims of relationship building and consensus. In all four WSP country projects, this succeeded but in different ways.

The research team in Guatemala was able to step back as the Working Groups began to drive the research. In Eritrea and Mozambique, in contrast, the Working Groups were used much more to confirm or challenge the findings of the researchers, rather than as initiators of research.

In Puntland, Working Groups were constituted at both regional and zonal levels, but did not function as well as hoped, partly because the researchers were reluctant to convene Working Group meetings without full documentation in support of the discussions, and the writing of these documents simply took too long. As a result, the Working Group meetings were to a large extent replaced by broader workshops

held all over Puntland, at which the Entry Points were discussed. While this was a departure from WSP methodology used in the earlier projects, it proved to be useful in Puntland, where transport and distance problems made regular, formal Working Group meetings difficult, and where consolidating public discourse on rebuilding issues added an important element to the project's impact.

In most cases the subject matter of the Entry Point determined membership of the group. In Eritrea, for example, the Commission for Relief and Rehabilitation not surprisingly joined the Working Group on social reintegration; in Mozambique the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization participated in the discussions on the impact of structural adjustment on agriculture; and in Guatemala national NGOs were particularly active in the Working Group looking at the multicultural nature of Guatemalan society. Where the allocation of interests was not so clear, the country project teams suggested which groups participants might wish to join, attempting at the same time to maintain a balance between national and international players, different kinds of organizational groupings, and among policy, academic and operational actors.

In general, membership in the Working Groups ranged from 10 to 15 people at any one time, with usually a 'hard core' of six or seven who attended all the meetings and provided the driving force. The number of meetings varied, once a month being the usual frequency depending on the progress of the research, although there was often contact among Working Group members between the meetings. In Guatemala one Working Group met every two weeks, and this played an important role in building the confidence of participants there.

What WSP learned

In all the country projects the Working Group meetings became important and wide-ranging forums for discussion and sharing, and the process of national ownership of WSP developed through the commitment and engagement of the participants. But it was not an easy process. There remained a tendency in all the country projects for the Working Group members to look upon the research as essentially being the business of the researchers, with the role of the Working Group itself being mainly to confirm or challenge their conclusions rather than to initiate or participate in the research themselves. In both Eritrea and Mozambique, the Working Group members saw themselves as 'helping' the researchers, rather than the other way around.

In Guatemala, the Working Group members seemed more prepared to take an active part in the research, perhaps because the groups met more frequently. Some Working Group members even travelled to the field with the researchers, whom they saw as facilitators and coordinators. As a result of this intense engagement in the Working Group process, the groups in Guatemala saw themselves much more as a cohesive forum for discussion and exploration, rather than just a step in a process. In one case, notably, the group decided to continue as a forum for discussion even after the project had officially ended.

WSP learned that the momentum of the Working Group process, its dynamism and the engagement of the participants depend on a number of complex and interlinked factors. The personality and understanding of the researchers are both important not only to the relationship between the research and the debate of the Working Groups, but also to the perception the Working Group participants have of this relationship and indeed their own role in the project. Reticence, distance or a false separation between the research and the Working Group forum can impede the engagement of the Working Group participants and diminish the interactivity of the process.

Such interactivity and engagement are also encouraged if there is interaction not only within the Working Group but also among the different Working Groups. The same is true of the interaction of the Working Groups and others who are involved in the issues being discussed, for example in the field.

For this complex, sensitive work to succeed, the researchers need to be adequately prepared and continuously supported. WSP learned that it is helpful if the researchers can encourage the creation of a nucleus of the most qualified, interested participants in the Working Group who will help them in planning and driving the interaction. Support in the field, in the form of an 'antenna' who can act as liaison person between the Working Groups and discussion groups in the field is also helpful, since it widens and deepens input into the debate, and stimulates interest.

The project found that in Puntland, where public discourse and exchange of information on sensitive issues such as those identified as Entry Points was not common, the Working Group process was slow and difficult. An early evaluation of the project in Puntland suggested that the notion of interaction, with Working Group participants informing each other of their plans, carrying out joint research and beginning to understand how their individual views and projects fitted into a holistic framework for rebuilding, was 'a step too far too fast for Somali society'. For this reason above all, the interactive phase was 'toned down' to become wider, less actor-focused discussion. One result of this, however, was that international actors – already reluctant to participate in the WSP Somali Programme, perhaps because they were generally based in Nairobi, and to some extent a result of excess caution in confronting the serious gap between the focus of international programming and the priorities identified by Somalis – were even more inclined to keep their distance. In hindsight this may not be inappropriate, since WSP realized that, given the particularly sensitive situation in Somalia, just as in any unequal relationship, a separation of the two partners and the creation of a safe space for the underprivileged one were in fact desirable.

Step 12: finalizing the agenda and workplan

The research component of WSP tries to break out of the classic mould in which research, policy-making and action are clearly separated. WSP research is intended to be an integral part of the rebuilding process, providing an objective starting point for debate and reacting to the needs and views of all those involved in the Working Groups so that it helps to lead to a consensus for action that is useful to both national authorities and external assistance organizations. Because research as foreseen by WSP is so closely integrated into the project overall, and because it can therefore not be separated from group meetings, communication processes and other facets of the project, the planning and management of the research agenda and overall project workplan are complex.

What WSP did

Once the Entry Points have been agreed, they have to be further explored and defined. In particular, the focus of the research has to be decided. WSP researchers used the questions posed during the drawing-up of the Country Note, along with a checklist provided by the CCU, to build up their outline workplan and timetable. The checklist reminded researchers to take account in their planning of:

- any particular requests for information and documentation
- additional contacts identified for interview, both inside and outside the country
- the involvement and input of the Regional and International Researchers, if appropriate
- contacts and input from other case studies
- contacts and input from international research institutes
- target days for specific activities (interviews, briefings, press conferences etc)
- any plans for audio-visual recordings of events, including for the Visions Project (see Step 15)
- tentative dates for Project Group meetings
- tentative programme for Working Group meetings
- visits to the field, including work on Local Level Initiatives (see Step 14)
- any other communication activities such as newsletters
- the involvement of internal and external actor representatives (who, when, how).

All these variables had to be taken into account to allow for a process of interactive research that would both continue to produce substantive findings and also allow meetings and input of the participants. To further encourage this, the researchers could refer to a set of lead questions developed by the CCU and country team together, that might help narrow the focus of the research. These questions were also then used in the course of field research interviews and as a framework in discussions.

In both Eritrea and Mozambique, changes in the country project leadership caused some problems in the overall planning and management, and left the researchers at times adrift. A researcher from the CCU visited both countries to provide practical help. In Guatemala, in contrast, the early cohesiveness of the country team and the earlier training sessions supported smoother management, and both the research agenda and the overall workplan were produced without problems.

What WSP learned

The early provision of briefings and training and the cohesiveness of leadership and management are fundamental to the ability of the country teams to devise functional, realistic research agendas and workplans. Although the CCU can provide guidelines and checklists, ultimately it is the country team that will plan project activities and monitor and eventually modify them as the project progresses.

An important lesson in this regard was that the time allocated for each phase of the project was underestimated by WSP central management. Finding the right staff, training and national political realities all played a role in prolonging the country projects' work. There is a distinct difference between 'chronological time' as followed by the bureaucracies of funding agencies and central headquarters, and the 'anthropological time' that is the reality of the project in the field, where people, politics and a hundred and one necessary pauses for reflection give cause for modifying the best-laid plans.

In a project like WSP, where these elements are a vital determining factor of the outcome of the project, they must be taken fully into account and the project must be able to respond to them. A strong country team that can handle this, supported by responsive central-level management that can then deal with the consequences (financial, donor relations, administrative) is of the utmost importance.

Step 13: undertaking field work

Reconstruction after conflict does not happen in one part of a country to the exclusion of all others. In particular, the concentration of political processes in a capital city, and the often difficult problems posed by poor communication and transport links out of the capital, can lead to an over-concentration on capital city problems and perspectives. It is vital, if post-conflict rebuilding is to succeed and lead to durable solutions, that the whole country be included in reconstruction plans, not only as recipients of assistance but as participants in planning and implementation.

The WSP project document called for the whole WSP process – research, group configuration, debate – to take into account the importance of including non-capital city input. This meant a detailed calendar and programme of visits to other areas, taking into account the research topics being studied, appropriate structures and interlocutors in the field, and methodology that allowed for cultural, ethnic and linguistic varieties. It foresaw the identification of ‘antennae’ in the field who would constitute a network of WSP players.

What WSP did

Since it was clear that, in the limited time available, it would be difficult to cover the whole country, there had to be a preliminary selection of areas to visit (the WSP Somali Programme was an exception to this, since its ‘from the ground up’ methodology led to a decision to try and cover the whole territory). A list of important factors to take into account was drawn up:

- the relevance of the area to the themes of the research
- accessibility
- ethnic structure
- social structure
- existing action by the government
- existing programmes of international assistance
- existing actions by NGOs and other operational organizations
- existing or planned initiatives by local individuals and groups
- human resources available for the research
- possibility of adding value through links with other Entry Points.

In reality, the field trips undertaken in Eritrea and Mozambique were more or less ‘classical’ information trips, where the researchers and their assistants observed and analysed the situation outside the capital. These visits were quite short and consisted mainly of interviews in which general questions were posed and no relationship-building attempted.

In Guatemala, the field visits were well prepared and included the participation of members of the central Working Groups. This meant that the visits were much less passive interview sessions and much more exchanges of ideas. Additionally, it meant

that there was more effective transfer of ideas from the field into the Working Group process. In general, in Guatemala research in the field was actively integrated into the project as a whole, and succeeded well.

In Puntland, although the project attempted from the outset to cover as much territory as possible and integrate as many different views as possible, the results of field research were not so successful. Workshops were held throughout Puntland but the research papers produced did not seem to be totally driven by them, and there was at times a lack of clarity about the constituencies to which the views expressed related.

To ensure that the research team had a chance to see the potential of field research, and to gain some experience in it in a training situation, the project in Somaliland used an eight-day field trip to the Gebiley district of Northwest Somalia as an on-the-job training exercise. This predominantly agrico-pastoral district is the most advanced area in Somaliland in terms of post-conflict rebuilding and was considered a suitable area in which the research team might 'practice' PAR methodology, test the lead questions they had prepared, and test themselves as a team. The field visit also provided an opportunity to introduce the SCPD to the authorities and people of Gebiley and for data gathering.

What WSP learned

The importance of identifying a field-based contact person ('antenna') soon became clear. This person can prepare the ground by sharing information on the project with people in the field, identify principal interlocutors, prepare the visits, maintain contacts, report on activity between visits, and identify and propose additional topics for research. Realistically, this person needs to have some academic background, be independent and acceptable to all the different groups in the community, be a good communicator who establishes and maintains contact with all those involved, and be a good organizer. The 'antenna option' appeared quite early in analysis of operational issues arising as WSP country projects got off the ground, but was never actually implemented. It remains an option, however, along with some other possible solutions that arose during the progress of the projects, including the option of multiple sub-offices, as in Puntland, and increased travel into the field, as in Somaliland.

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to create parallel processes outside the capital city WSP process, including a field Project Group and Working Groups. In this case, links between the field and capital city processes are of major importance; it is important not to create several different WSPs in one country without strategic and substantive links. The 'main' Project and Working Groups should continue to be seen as the ultimate concluding and recommending body, with the peripheral processes fully reflected in their deliberations. Audio-visual recordings of meetings can help form links.

WSP also learned that perhaps the most important rule to be observed relates to the continuity of the visits, which should not be isolated 'token' events but be clearly

seen as feeding into the WSP process. This is important to promote committed discussion; those contacted must know that their opinions and input matter.

It is also important that enough time is allocated to allow those participating to become familiar with the project and to understand how they can both contribute to and benefit from it. In particular, field-based participants must be encouraged to see that their contribution is part of the search for solutions to problems that are national.

The conclusions of the research team in Guatemala indicate just how important field visits are: they were amazed at how little they knew of the realities and viewpoints of people living outside the capital city. As a result, the research recommendations that eventually came out of WSP Guatemala stressed the deficiency of centrally formulated policy decisions and programmes that presumed a homogeneous society that simply did not exist.

An initial evaluation of the SCPD initiative in the Gebiley district suggested that it was extremely useful to the research team. As well as giving them an opportunity to test and hone their skills, it also brought them into contact with a wide range of interlocutors, who seemed “comfortable and quite at ease” – an encouragement to the researchers, who would have to undertake further field visits without the support of the whole team. In practical terms, it alerted them to the difficulties of interviewing the nomadic population of the region and led to preliminary suggestions that the researchers might attempt to integrate themselves into the daily routine of nomadic families in an attempt to appreciate their perspectives or that they might conduct interviews at watering holes or commercial centres.

The Gebiley initiative also underlined the cultural constraints the Somaliland team would have to overcome to capture the perspective and viewpoints of women. The Puntland team had also struggled with this, eventually employing a female gender researcher to concentrate specifically on integrating the views of women into the overall project. Although women take on the primary role of keeping family and home together during conflict, often are recruited to fight and generally play a central role in conflict and post-conflict economies through grey market enterprises, they invariably find themselves constrained by cultural, religious and often deep-seated traditions to revert to pre-conflict subservient roles once peace has been established. In Puntland, therefore, WSP began an enquiry into ways of understanding women’s views, perspectives and contributions, their resources and capacities, their concerns and the barriers that hinder their ability to contribute these to post-conflict debate. At the same time, the methods used in this enquiry were themselves an attempt to integrate women’s views into the WSP Somali Programme in Puntland and to draw operational lessons on how this did or did not work. The results of this work are to be compiled in a research paper in late 1999.

Finally, the Somaliland field initiative illustrated the unpredictable events that the researchers must be ready for as they undertake field visits: the SCPD research team vehicle suffered a puncture moments before sunset on the road back to Hargeysa, and the team had to walk for two hours to the nearest village for help.

Step 14: identifying Local Level Initiatives

It has been demonstrated that international assistance to rebuilding war-torn societies often ignores existing local resources and capacities and fails to build on them. Sadly, in some instances assistance has even led to the destruction of local institutions and undermined the solutions that were being sought by local people, also adding to social disintegration. The importance of understanding the nature and role of local efforts and their relationship and potential relationships with initiatives at other levels is clearly important.

What WSP did

The CCU devised a project component called *Local Level Initiatives*, which aimed to take stock of the many creative initiatives taken by local people both to cope with their situation in areas of political, social and economic reconstruction, and to further reconciliation.

The field teams were reminded of the importance of identifying representative local initiatives in the field of reconciliation, political, economic and social reconstruction. They were asked to describe the activities, the people engaged in them, their social position, how they were organized, their objectives, the intended and actual beneficiaries, who started the activity, what had been achieved, what obstacles had been faced and how they had been overcome, and any evident successes and failures, with reasons. At the same time, they were reminded that it is not always appropriate to work directly 'with the people', by-passing local elites (or the state), who may need to be strengthened in their ability to represent the vision of the people, to focus aspirations and to motivate the necessary social transformations. An understanding of these relationships and the need to reinforce not undermine them is an important element of WSP.

The research teams also looked at the relationships between local initiatives and national/international assistance, in particular examples of cooperation – good and bad. They were asked to identify the extent to which local activities corresponded to national priorities and whether these latter were indeed known at local level. The degree of interaction and cooperation between local actors and external assistance actors was also of interest, to see to what extent external assistance takes account of non-capital priorities and needs, and whether local efforts seek international support. The level of understanding of international actors of the kinds of relationships outlined above was also of interest.

Beyond looking at the nature of local initiatives, the research teams were asked to analyse, on the basis of the collected data, local needs, resources and priorities in rebuilding. They were asked to document the major needs of the general area, the extent to which they had been identified and met by local, national and external

initiatives, the resources in local communities and how they were being used, if at all. In this respect, they were asked to consider whether locally identified priorities corresponded with those of non-local actors, and whether there were conflicting interests and priorities.

Finally, the researchers were to look at the role of local initiatives in the wider national reconstruction process, and how the needs, resources and capacities of local actors could best be incorporated into rebuilding initiatives by national and external actors. In this regard, political considerations that might help or hinder such cooperation were also to be noted.

The end result of this wide study was to be suggestions on how local initiatives might be incorporated into the rebuilding process and be further supported.

Local Level Initiatives work had to be done with care and sensitivity, since it is important that local actors do not think that they are being 'evaluated' in the judgmental sense. Local communities are heterogeneous entities containing many different and often conflicting viewpoints and concerns, and it is also important not to encourage internal differences or conflicting interests.

What WSP learned

Although the Local Level Initiatives component was not comprehensively followed in all the country projects, the information that was collected was clearly useful to Working Group members, particularly those responsible for national planning. Not only were they able to take into account needs identified at local level in order to 'correct' existing plans, they were also able to see how local resources and capacities could be used in implementation. In Mozambique, for example, representatives from some of the regions visited by members of the project participated in some Project Group meetings, "bringing a fresh and authentic view of real life" as one participant put it. In Guatemala, the local dimension was more closely integrated into ongoing WSP work and had a direct impact on the findings and proposals of all the Working Groups. In general, however, the field research carried out in all four pilot projects was more akin to traditional research than to the Local Level Initiatives component as originally envisaged.

The problem all the country projects faced, though – beyond the researchers' need to understand the importance of local level initiatives – related to the need to devise a time-table and workplan that, from the outset, integrated the local dimension. Clearly the Local Level Initiatives component should not be seen as a separate element to be added or ignored at will. It is a part of the overall methodology and must therefore be integrated into all other work being undertaken. This is no small undertaking because it presumes that all the stages of WSP country projects will happen at local as well as capital city levels, from securing the trust and confidence of participants through to feeding final recommendations into the policy-making process. On the basis of this lesson from the first three country projects, the SCPD in Somaliland built a 'mapping' of local level initiatives into the earliest stages of the research work.

It is clear, given the importance of being able to use discretion in relation to hierarchies at the local level, that the local researchers need intimate knowledge of the social, economic, political and cultural factors at play at the local level. During the mapping of local level initiatives they should be able to draw out ideas and examples without suggesting any judgement of them or indicating preferences or pecking order. At the same time, it is helpful if they can evaluate the initiatives' sustainability (difficult because local actors often tend to respond to short-term needs), since this is of obvious interest to others who may wish to factor the initiatives into their own planning.

Finally, the mapping of local level initiatives is a time-consuming and resource-heavy undertaking. The Somaliland option of integrating it into base research may be useful; once other substantive research is under way, it is more difficult for the researchers to include local level mapping in their work schedules.

Step 15: initiating the Visions Project

One of the most important questions to be answered before a society can be rebuilt is what exactly that society is to be. The people of a post-conflict country will have a multitude of visions of what their society should be, and some of these visions will be more explicit than others. Some will never be given the chance to be articulated, and there will be much disappointment. In fact, such disappointment – unfulfilled aspirations and visions – in its extreme form can be at the root of conflict. In many cases the basic elements of a different society are exactly what combatants have been fighting for, even if they have not laid out these elements in so many words. More often, they have articulated what they do *not* want.

The recording of visions gives ordinary people the chance to be heard, and in forums where they would not normally have access. It also strengthens the basic premise of WSP: interaction at all levels among all groups.

In methodological terms, it provides the opportunity for Project and Working Group meetings to see other perspectives on the issues, and to be more lively and interesting. This helps to maintain interest in the project and to prompt discussion. It also underlines the importance of the democratic nature of WSP-initiated discussion, since it reinforces the validity of all views. The search for visions should be an integral part of the methodology, to be used throughout the different phases of the work, and to be fed into the project at every stage.

What WSP did

WSP acknowledged that people and groups at all levels have their vision of what their society should be like. The project therefore aimed to identify some of these people and their visions, either first-hand or through others who had heard about them. There is no defined method of articulating a vision: some people may sing their vision in songs and music; others may write it down in some form, perhaps in a poem. Some may only begin to put words to their vision in an interview or group discussion. These might be captured on video, audio tape, an Internet web site or in written form. Other manifestations of such aspirations might take the form of a new product brought to market, a new school built by villagers, or a comprehensive regional development plan. In most cases, it will not be a complex picture of a new society but rather elements of that society, reflecting the most immediate needs and wishes of the person or group. Together, all these individual pieces fit into the large mosaic that illustrates the future reality of a country or community.

WSP country teams were encouraged to seek out such visions and to encourage their articulation, particularly in forms that could be shared with other individuals or groups. In practice, in Eritrea the visions component was not systematically pursued, although about 30 hours of video footage and even more audio recordings

were collected. These were edited into two short videos shown on Eritrean television, but the materials never became part of the WSP process itself.

Mozambique, too, struggled with the visions project. A significant number of audio recordings were made of conversations in the field and of interviews, but they were not put to any strategic use. In Guatemala, video footage collected during the project was compiled into video presentations used in the Project Group meetings, although largely for illustrative purposes rather than as an element of research. In Puntland, although no video footage was collected, interesting audio material was collected, including some excellent poems.

In Somaliland, the visions component was built into the research at an early stage, partly because one of the researchers was given the specific portfolio of 'culture and communications' and therefore took responsibility for recording and documenting the field work on video and film. These visual resources were also planned as a resource to members of the international community associated with the project, as an illustration of the community's views.

What WSP learned

The Visions Project is not an easy concept to handle, especially for researchers who may see themselves as 'scientists' rather than 'artists'. Indeed, the WSP Mozambique country team declined to implement the Visions Project specifically, they said, because it was 'too folklorique'. Perhaps because of the way it was presented to them, the potential *form* of the visions clouded the importance of their content and usefulness.

In hindsight, the WSP Mozambique Country Director said that he believed that the Visions Project might have been integrated into the process in Mozambique if it had been allowed to grow naturally, for example as the result of work in the field or to document interviews. As a 'self-contained' component imported from the CCU in Geneva, he believed, it was not thoroughly understood and was too easy to put aside.

WSP also learned that the 'benign neglect' that was the most frequent response to the visions idea resulted from the belief that the capturing of visions – in whatever form – could only be done by professional camera operators, audio producers or writers. This is not true, of course, again because the content of the vision is much more important than its format (although a minimum quality needs to be ensured, so that the materials are usable). This was not generally understood. Sometimes cultural or religious customs also come into play. In Puntland, WSP distributed disposable cameras and small tape recorders in an attempt to encourage the recording of visions, but they were hardly used, perhaps because the capturing of images on camera is not common in Somali Muslim society.

In general, the failure of the Visions Project to become an integral part of the early country projects – and indeed to allow for sharing of experiences with other country projects and the CCU – resulted from a combination of factors: reluctance to try

something unfamiliar, shortage of time to experiment with something new, incomplete understanding of the purpose of the exercise, pigeon-holing of visions as something 'unscientific'. By the time the WSP Somali Programme was launched, it had become clear that the capturing of visions was a useful element of the project, not detached from it, and an integral part of the research methodology that should therefore be included in the early stages of planning.

Note 3: support and progress at the central level

The four pilot WSP country projects did not begin and end together; in fact, the project grew and developed over the four years of the pilot phase, with WSP Eritrea officially beginning in July 1995 and closing in October 1997, WSP Mozambique's official launch being in July 1995 and its closure in April 1998, WSP Guatemala beginning in the summer of 1996 and being officially launched in January 1997 and closing in March 1998, and the WSP Somali Programme's Puntland project beginning in January 1997 and ongoing in 1999. Although the projects had in theory followed a set timetable, they each developed slightly differently, and the longer watching briefs undertaken before beginning operations in some countries also caused a shift in set-up timetables. As a result, lessons from WSP Eritrea were able to be fed into the project in Mozambique. WSP Guatemala developed with the benefit of lessons from both these country projects, and the Puntland initiative only really got under way as the first three pilots were winding down. Somaliland came still later, when lessons had already started to be drawn from the four-year pilot overall.

The workload at the CCU in Geneva consequently also grew and shifted as the country projects developed into 'nationally owned' projects at different tempos. Although it continued to support the country projects, including stepping in with field visits as necessary, it was to some extent able to stand back and take a more global view of the work being done, including observing the progress of the methodology, the necessary shifts it went through, things that worked and those that did not, the interplay of project personnel, tasks, progress and results. Although it was not yet time to begin drawing conclusions, WSP central management did produce reflection papers, contributed to meetings on a wide range of post-conflict and development issues, thought 'around' the progress of the project, exploring links with other methodologies and processes and generally positioning and repositioning the project in the wider debate and even wider field of action in post-conflict reconstruction.

At the central level, this both resulted in and was supported by a modest information unit that worked to create and maintain a publications database on post-conflict and related issues, and to construct a contacts database that might in time become an all-important mailing list through which the project's preliminary global conclusions would be disseminated. As the contacts database grew, too, a regular newsletter, *Challenge of Peace*, was published and widely distributed. This had the twofold purpose of raising awareness of the project and keeping interested parties up-to-date on progress, and also of widening the debate on issues relevant to the project. All the 'products' of the project were made available through a regularly updated WSP web site hosted by UNRISD. This became a valuable source not only of archival information but also of current information from the field. The interactivity of the

site was assured through an e-mail contact address. In short, as the country projects became established and known, so the CCU consolidated awareness of WSP in other communities.

This, of course, took time and, as a result, these valuable resources were not available for immediate use by the country projects. Although they all had Internet access and e-mail links to Geneva (and, indeed, each other), individual country agendas and workplans – as well as habits and routines – were in place before the central resources were sufficiently developed.

Step 16: evaluating the country project

Because WSP was initiated as an experiment, internal and external evaluation of the project at both country and central levels was an integral part of the project concept. WSP set out with clear aims: first, to explore the role of external assistance in a post-conflict country; then, as the project progressed and its potential became clearer, to provide lessons about post-conflict rebuilding in general and about the role of research in particular; and finally to yield substantive results (both process and products) in the countries of implementation. The overall aim of evaluation, therefore, was to assess the extent to which the project had achieved its own stated goals.

What WSP did

WSP built into the project document at the outset plans for internal and external evaluation of the project in each country. The internal evaluation was intended to collect informal feedback from the participants in the project on the extent to which the project had been useful to them, both in terms of process (the research and consultation) and in terms of end product (research findings and consensus on policy priorities).

In Eritrea and Mozambique, a small working group of representatives from the Project Group, helped by the WSP research coordinator, responded to a wide-ranging questionnaire supported by interviews. At the same time, a review was undertaken of all the materials produced. Two months was allowed for this exercise in the project timetable. In a final evaluation document, the working group was tasked with describing and assessing the project's activities, outputs and results, and recommending any future activity beyond the life-span of the country project.

In Eritrea, the working group of 19 Project Group members devised two questionnaires – one, involving all the members of the Project Group, was designed to yield measurable information from responses graded on a scale of 1 to 5. The second aimed to produce descriptive, subjective information from the members of the evaluation working group only.

In Mozambique a quite complex questionnaire was elaborated and, perhaps not surprisingly, yielded few responses.

WSP Guatemala went beyond the evaluation processes suggested in the centrally produced guidelines and set up a three-stage process. At the first level, the Country Project Director and Special Assistant did their own internal evaluation, using as input the questionnaire responses that Project Group members had supplied. In a second round, an evaluation group was constituted of participants in the Working Groups, all four groups, across all levels of representation. They were tasked

particularly with evaluating all aspects of WSP methodology. Independent of all WSP internal guidance, they met in several sessions and produced their own report that went directly to the Project Group.

The external evaluation – external in the sense that it was undertaken by the country teams in conjunction with CCU or SAG members or other independent evaluators – was both qualitative and quantitative, looking at how effectively the Working Groups functioned (level of debate and interaction, frequency of meetings, group dynamics), the impact of the research and visions input in generating the information necessary for debate and policy analysis, the effectiveness of the approach itself in clarifying policy options, the quality of the products, for example the potential effectiveness of the reports and recommendations made.

The external evaluation was undertaken in each country by an independent evaluator who analysed all the documentation, including the internal evaluation responses, and travelled to the countries and conducted individual and group interviews both in the field and with the central management team. In Eritrea Martin Doornbos, who had been observing the project closely from its inception, produced a wide-ranging evaluation. Patricia Weiss-Fagen's Mozambique evaluation was subsequently reworked at the central level in collaboration with the WSP Mozambique team, who did not consider that it reflected a full understanding of the implementation of the project. Rubén Zamora's conclusions on the Guatemala country project not only evaluated the project but also attempted to draw conclusions on the place of the project in the wider context of post-conflict rebuilding and democratization in Central America. Doornbos also made an interim assessment of the WSP Somali Programme's Puntland project as the four-year global project drew to a close, so that lessons learned from this last project in the pilot phase could be factored into the overall evaluation.

The external evaluations were all published in due course and widely distributed to external stakeholders in the project, country participants and a long list of people and groups who might benefit from the conclusions.

What WSP learned

The experimental nature of the project meant that any internal evaluation results would be wide-ranging and relevant to varying degrees. The 101 variables that impacted upon the project at any time, most of which could not have been anticipated, and the constantly shifting nature of the project in each country excluded to a large extent any clinical, comparative evaluation of the country projects. Just as each project grew to be different, so did the focus and emphasis of the internal evaluations that grew out of them. WSP learned that these internal evaluations, coming at the end of the project, did not necessarily provide lessons that might improve the progress and impact of the country project itself, but rather served two quite distinct purposes: first, they fed into the understanding and appreciation of WSP at global level, thus potentially contributing to future WSP country projects; second, they had a 'process' value in that they allowed the participants in the country

projects themselves to 'round off' the processes they had been engaged in, thus permitting them to measure their own levels of satisfaction in what they had achieved, and providing a necessary launch platform for any future activity.

The external evaluations, in contrast – since they were somewhat distanced from the country project itself – were able to focus on a number of specific areas that could be studied, analysed and then compared at a more global level. Taken together, the external evaluations provide a wide-ranging overview of the success, failures and impact of WSP in each of the country projects but also in the wider context of post-conflict reconstruction.

Step 17: considering successor arrangements

In general, the most significant aspect of the evaluation exercise in each country – both internal and external – can be seen in the fact that, in each country, the recommendation was made for the project to continue in some form after WSP officially came to an end.

Partly this arose because everyone concerned with the project – participants and onlookers – agreed that the time given to the pilot was very short and that the results it produced could only therefore be provisional. Although the reports and recommendations had value in themselves, it was clear that the work in each country could be taken further. Moreover, the obvious success of the interactive methodology, which produced a dynamism for debate not found elsewhere, encouraged the participants to want to continue working. The question was what form such continuation might take.

What WSP did

The consideration of what WSP called ‘successor arrangements’ took place mostly at the planning stage of the project overall, and at central level. Unlike almost all other elements of implementation, which shifted with the demands of the country projects, the successor debate lay dormant during the country project implementation and, when it did arise towards the end of the project in each country, had consequently not gone through the moulding and honing that it needed.

As a result, the successor debate foresaw an ‘institution’ as a successor, regardless of the needs of the country participants and the country situation. It foresaw some kind of body with an institutional home – a research institution, for example. Plans focused on the careful planning and management that would be needed for such an arrangement to work. Where there was no obvious ‘home’, it was presumed that a new institution would be created, with negotiated statutes and legal framework, financial accountability, statutes and staffing. Work programmes, budgets and funding sources would be needed. In short, for a project that had laid great emphasis on process, the planned successor arrangements focused almost entirely on product.

In Eritrea, Mozambique and Puntland, consideration of what might come after the close of the WSP country project essentially followed these lines. In each of these three country projects, preparatory work was undertaken for the creation of an independent research centre. Statutes for the institutions were developed with the active participation of a large number of project participants, and donors promised financial support. The assets procured for the country projects were promised to the new institutions. Fairly late in these negotiations, however, the government in Eritrea postponed indefinitely the new Eritrean centre, explaining that it believed that the lessons of WSP research had been sufficiently taken on board in government

structures (for example a shift of emphasis to human resources as a cross-cutting theme) and that the role of the centre was not clear. In Mozambique, plans were finalized for the creation of the Mozambican Centre for the Study of Democracy and Development, although by late 1999 final approval from the Ministry of Justice was still pending. In Puntland, a number of unforeseen events delayed negotiations on the set-up of the new institution and its final status remained unclear in the third quarter of 1999.

In Guatemala, with the lessons of Eritrea and Mozambique in mind, the country team constituted a small team of Project Group members specifically tasked with identifying appropriate successor arrangements. They recommended not creating a new institution (given also the existence of a number of research institutions in Guatemala), but introducing and using the WSP approach and methodology where appropriate. Plans were put in place, therefore, to use WSP methodology in the work of local, regional and national development councils, which had been largely inactive. One of the WSP Guatemala Working Groups decided to continue its interactive research and dialogue under the umbrella of the Association of Jurists, and a special WSP-inspired project on the role of the military in rebuilding began. This shift away from institutionalization of WSP towards application of the methodology and continuation of the processes was an important step forward in the thinking on what form successor arrangements might take.

The Guatemala model of loose networking rather than institutionalization, however, gave rise to a different set of interesting lessons that must also be fed into consideration of the appropriate structural follow-up to WSP country projects. A year or so after the closure of WSP Guatemala, it became clear that even loose networks, individual initiatives to use WSP methodology and more systematized attempts to integrate the approach and methodology into existing or new processes, need support and at the very least a reference point to which they can refer. Some of the attempts to use WSP methodology in Guatemala post-WSP, for example, worked well. Others worked but could have worked better if they had had access to a readily available focal point for support; others failed. In a note detailing the successes and failures, WSP Guatemala noted: "it might be necessary to resist the temptation to institutionalize the method, but some kind of alternative has to remain in place for some time after the project is formally closed". The form this might take would undoubtedly depend on the particular country situation and the resources – both financial and human – available.

A different approach was taken in the fifth WSP initiative, in Somaliland, where WSP chose not to set up its own country project but instead to create, support and back-stop a national research institution (the SCPD) that *ab initio* would apply the WSP approach and methodology. By late 1999, this fifth project was under way but not yet at a stage where lessons could fully be drawn from it, although initial indications suggested that the model was working well, with the research team extremely committed to an institution that is essentially their own.

What WSP learned

The lessons of the WSP experience in supporting continuity of the project's aims after the official close of the project have not yet been fully drawn. In Eritrea and in Mozambique, this process has been interrupted and what will happen next is not clear. This incertitude shows clearly that it is more important to continue the processes that WSP has put in place than it is to institutionalize the country project itself, and that the ways and means of doing this must grow out of the country project in a form that takes into account political realities on the ground as well as the many other factors that are at play from the set-up phases of WSP in any country.

Attempts to do this in Guatemala are in the early stages, as is the experiment with different structures in Somaliland. One lesson that these two different manifestations of WSP have illustrated, however, is that only if a strong local team is in place, with vision and leadership, commitment and responsibility, will WSP be sustainable in the long term. If WSP has a distinct 'foreign' identity and is fully directed from Geneva, it will remain an 'international' project, not a local autonomous initiative.

Interestingly, the various stages that the country teams went through in debating and formulating successor arrangements, seeing them thwarted, modifying them and finding new ways to continue the WSP experience, did provide significant issues for reflection at WSP central level, which itself had to decide whether it would close down at the end of the pilot phase or continue in some form.

Step 18: finalizing the tasks of the country project

Before the WSP country project comes to an end, there are a number of final tasks that have to be undertaken both to signal to all the participants in WSP that their contribution has been worthwhile and has produced something tangible that will contribute to the ongoing task of rebuilding, and to consolidate the work done and build a platform for future research and dialogue.

The first task to be finalized is the drafting and editing of the research and recommendations from the Working Groups. Compiled into comprehensive documents, these are then submitted to the final meeting of the Project Group, for their consideration and eventual approval. Project Group participants are ideally placed to feed these considerations in policy debate into their own constituencies – government, think-tanks and academic institutions, operational organizations (local, national and international) and other venues where rebuilding policy and planning may be debated and decided.

Beyond this fairly direct route for the policy recommendations, wider dissemination takes place through events organized or attended by the WSP country team. These might include press briefings, presentations and input to conferences and journals, and distribution of documentation.

What WSP did

In Eritrea, the final Project Group meeting took place in December 1996 (with a special meeting in March 1997 specifically to consider ideas for a successor body). There was wide approval of the research recommendations, which were subsequently also published in book form as *Post-conflict Eritrea: prospects for reconstruction and development*. This comprehensive volume provided a much-needed compendium of the issues facing post-conflict Eritrea and was well received.

The final Project Group meeting of WSP Mozambique was held in June 1997 (again with a follow-up meeting, in April 1998, specifically to consider the creation of a WSP successor institution). At this meeting, the WSP Mozambique Project Group decided to extend the project for 10 months to allow for wider dissemination of the research results and to consider continuing limited research on decentralization in order to accompany the delicate process leading up to general elections. A compilation publication, *Rebuilding through dialogue: the Mozambican way*, containing the research findings as well as an overview of the project, was prepared for publication in both English and Portuguese.

A compendium volume of the research findings in Guatemala appeared under the title *From conflict to dialogue: the Guatemala way* in English, with a Spanish version also being made available. This was launched in early 1999 in Guatemala as part of

ongoing work to continue WSP processes and widen awareness of WSP methodology, aims and recommendations. Initiatives to facilitate this had been discussed at the final Project Group meeting in March 1998 as part of the discussion of successor arrangements and of the final research report.

A research publication was also planned by the WSP Somali Programme's Puntland team, as their research papers were being finalized in the third quarter of 1999. The final Project Group meeting was scheduled for October 1999.

What WSP learned

The closing tasks of the WSP country projects are not the same as the closing *down* of the project. They are rather an important ending to the project as it had been planned by the WSP central management in the context of the global initiative. Far from signalling the end of the WSP experience in a country, these tasks are very much a consolidation of the pilot phase and a platform for any future work that the country team and participants themselves wish to pursue. In many ways, the ultimate aim of central WSP management is to support the country processes to the point where they become self-sustaining in a form most appropriate to each country case.

In the same way, the books published by the country projects should not be looked upon as a static product that allowed the project to be filed away on a bookshelf and effectively cease. The books allowed the work done by the country participants and the WSP teams to reach a much wider audience, to become part of broader debate, and to fuel more ideas and continuing discussion. The degree to which the WSP country project members remained active in this differed from country to country.

Far from being a routine event, therefore, the final Project Group meeting, the finalizing of the research recommendations and the presentation of these in various forms, are an important element of the WSP country project and a transition to future initiatives created as part of the WSP process.

Note 4: conclusions at the central level

As the first four-year pilot of WSP neared its official end, the CCU had a number of important and substantial tasks to complete. The project had begun as an attempt to find ways for the international community to identify appropriate roles they might play in supporting the rebuilding of post-conflict societies; now it was time to take the project back to the international community and involve them in the exercise of drawing lessons that might help them to respond to some of their questions.

First, however, the staff of WSP in the country projects and at central level had themselves to step back and reflect on what they had achieved, where they had not succeeded and what lessons they could draw from the experience. In April 1999, therefore, representatives of all four pilot projects met with CCU staff and representatives of the SAG and PDCP in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to share ideas, compare experiences and draw lessons for the future.

This exercise showed clearly how valuable it would have been to have met more regularly throughout the project, but it was a big and costly undertaking. For five days, some 20 people described their own country project, in the process articulating successes and failures and drawing lessons that might have wider application when confronted with the experience of colleagues from other country projects. There were some surprises: the first was that this project that had been initiated by representatives of the international community who were looking for answers to questions about their own involvement in post-conflict rebuilding, had become in each country an essentially national process. The processes of interactive research and above all dialogue and consensus building were seen as the most important 'products' of WSP in each country, independent of the level of involvement of international representatives in the country projects.

At the end of the Addis meeting, the WSP team had a chance for the first time to confront representatives of the international community with their experiences, thoughts and conclusions about WSP and wider questions of post-conflict reconstruction. In a half-day meeting, they presented these to a wide-ranging audience of donor, NGO, United Nations and media representatives. The response was positive. Those attending joined in the discussion and reflection that followed the presentation, bouncing the ideas they had received against their own experience and building on them.

Two months later, a three-day encounter in Bossey, Switzerland, continued this process in a more intensive and systematic manner. Representatives of governments and institutions that had supported WSP and who had played a role in its development through the SAG and PDCP processes, came together to continue the lesson-drawing exercise, specifically with a view to merging it with their own

experiences in development, emergency relief, management and planning, and post-conflict reconstruction programming. Their aim was to emerge with a series of 'tools' that they might take back to their own organizations and use to begin to integrate some of the lessons of the WSP experience into their work.

At the end of the Bossey encounter, the participants formulated and agreed on two important 'tools': the *Bossey Statement*, an important commitment in which 29 signatories 'in a spirit of cooperation and with a desire to better fulfil (our) respective roles in the process of post-conflict rebuilding' identified immediate steps that could be taken and urged colleagues to 'reflect on the message they carry and consider their relevance and adoption'. In pursuance of the spirit of the *Bossey Statement*, the workshop participants drafted a detailed document containing 'practical recommendations for managers of multilateral and bilateral aid agencies'.

Through the Bossey process, therefore, WSP came full circle, taking back to the community that had initiated the project lessons and directions they might follow to begin to achieve the improvements they hoped for.

Involving the end users of the lessons in the elaboration of these lessons and their translation into practical, custom-made tools is clearly important. In hindsight, WSP succeeded in doing this in a way that itself reflected the spirit of WSP – a spirit of collaboration, dialogue based on thorough and consultative information gathering, and consensus. This was to pay dividends in the weeks that followed, when the Bossey documents began to be fed into the organizations of the international assistance community and interest in the project's outcome – and perhaps more importantly for the way in which it had achieved it – grew.

The response from those members of the international community who participated in the processes of WSP – both at the dissemination stage but also on an ongoing basis throughout the project – was extremely encouraging, signalling as it did a desire to share, learn and be open to change and potential uncovered by new and different processes. This response was not always matched at the country level, where international actors did not always involve themselves according to the project's expectations. While it had been presumed that they would engage in the action-research and debate much as the national actors did, in practice the international actors found quite different ways to relate to WSP, depending on the profiles their individual agencies had in the different countries and on the existing relationship between the international community and the country concerned.

In Eritrea, for example, external assistance actors were active in WSP Working Groups, because they were eager to learn about and understand more fully and comprehensively the Eritrean Government's plans and programmes – information to which they had not had easy access before. In the first WSP Somali Programme country project, on the other hand, external actors based mostly in Nairobi had their own information and co-ordination mechanisms and, although these did not provide the consultative local and national insights that WSP could offer, many external actors did not readily become involved in WSP processes taking place in

Puntland itself. This was in part also because of their physical location in Nairobi and the difficulties involved in travelling and communicating with and within Somalia.

In Mozambique and Guatemala, the external community had itself attempted to create forums for discussion and saw no great need to engage in other forums, although the internal actors who participated in WSP saw WSP meetings as more inclusive than existing opportunities for debate. In short, response from international actors at field level depended very much on field-level relationships and initiatives and did not necessarily fit anticipated patterns. This lesson was well learned but quite late in the pilot, after some initial disappointment. At headquarters level, in contrast, there was clear and sustained interest in WSP throughout the project.

In response to this, a Global Communication Strategy (GCS), put in place in March 1999 and implemented from May, aimed to take information about WSP, from A to Z, to a wide range of interested parties in a variety of different forms. The CCU underwent a complex but important exercise to identify the many different audiences it might wish to target with information, from operational staff in field offices to policy departments in governments, from researchers looking at methods and processes of peace-building to journalists on the foreign desk, from NGO planners to individuals with a specific interest in one of the pilot countries or one of the issues being explored.

A comprehensive mailing list allowed these groups to be targeted according to their needs and interests. A modular package of information was written and produced, comprising reports on each of the WSP country projects, an overview of the global project, a press pack with articles and photographs, and a folder containing the Bossey and other relevant documents (in 1999 this package of materials was completed with an overview publication telling the story of the project globally, a presentation of lessons and reflections on the project by its Director, and this operational reference work).

A video presentation of the WSP experience was produced and formed part of a flexible 'roadshow' package that was hosted by a number of partner institutions in New York, Washington, Atlanta, Ottawa, Geneva and Nairobi. This package was tailored for the different audiences invited to each venue. Each time the main presentation was accompanied by smaller meetings, sometimes with specific operational actors such as the UNDP Africa staff in New York, sometimes with policy staff such as those at USAID in Washington.

WSP learned that this 'tailoring' of its dissemination effort for the many different audiences who were interested in different facets of the project was greatly appreciated. It allowed the interaction at the heart of WSP to continue in external forums and involved many different players who, even belatedly, themselves became a part of the WSP experience.

As the GCS came to a close, the constituency that had come to be known as 'the friends of WSP' had grown. Support had been consolidated and, importantly, enthusiasm for the potential of the project – both that which had already been

illustrated and that which was still untapped – was high. A decision was therefore taken to move WSP into a ‘transitional phase’ during which its future – the form it might take, the focus of its tasks, its refined objectives and methodology – would be explored. This phase was to last from January to December 1999. Interestingly, this decision not just to close WSP but also not just to continue it without further reflection was very much in line with the lessons the WSP country projects had illustrated in their experiences over successor organizations. It was clear that the form of a successor body must grow out of the needs of the communities it aimed to serve and the nature of the work it would do.

With the financial backing of Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Carnegie Corporation, DPA, UNDP, UNICEF and UNOCHA, therefore, the transition team set out to define the mandate of a successor body and explore appropriate institutional frameworks and funding arrangements. In the course of wide-ranging consultations with United Nations and bilateral bodies, NGOs and aid recipients, and after assessment of other organizations and initiatives working in related fields, it sought to:

- identify what is different in WSP’s approach and the specific value it offers in relation to the identified needs of the international community and national and local actors;
- identify functional spaces within policy-making mechanisms and operational practice where WSP initiatives might concretely add value and strengthen international and local responses to crisis and conflict;
- define possible collaborative links and partnership arrangements for a successor body;
- test the possible application of WSP approaches to new contexts by exploring and in part initiating new field activities (in the Horn of Africa and Kosovo);
- test the possibility of strengthening links between WSP field activities and international aid programmes, initially in the ongoing WSP Somali Programme;
- test modalities for supporting ‘second generation’ WSP projects by establishing a collaborative relationship with WSP’s former country team in Guatemala.

In the third quarter of 1999, a proposal was prepared to set up a successor body to the WSP pilot project that would focus on the project’s experience in initiating and supporting operational field activities, and allow it also to provide advice in support of international assistance programmes and projects who might wish to conduct programmes embodying WSP principles. The new body would also provide more general support to international and national efforts to improve responses to conflict and post-conflict situations through limited evaluation and assessment services and advice on the reformulation of policies and reform of institutional and operational tools to implement them. Through partnership agreements with organizations and initiatives, the new body would also be able to provide advice and materials for training, research and lessons dissemination.

To continue to have the flexibility so necessary to WSP’s innovative methods and approach, the proposal was for the ‘new’ WSP to be a Swiss organization closely

linked to the United Nations through its constitution (based on a General Assembly resolution), governance (the United Nations having a permanent seat on the organization's board), and mandate, with some of its operational activities implemented as a United Nations project.

By the third quarter of 1999, with a provisional strategy, workplan and infrastructure proposal in place, WSP was ready to both continue and begin anew.

Annex 1: Guidelines for research

Chapter 1: Introductory note

Project objectives

The research component of this project breaks away from the classic divisions between research, policy making and operational activity. The research itself is intended to become part of the rebuilding process. Its purpose is to help create a more favourable environment for rebuilding, thereby bringing concrete benefits to national authorities. Research findings will form the basis of discussions in which all participants can express opinions and suggestions on the basis of objective substantive information and analysis of needs and potential solutions.

Sequence of activities for the first phase of the project (2-3 months)

As a first step, the research team will review these guidelines, and prepare a workplan that outlines the manner in which they intend to proceed. This workplan will be discussed and prepared with the cooperation of the Research Unit of the War-torn Societies Project. The questions that comprise the guidelines are not meant to define research categories rigidly, nor to be treated as a form in which each item must be mechanically completed. The workplans will reflect the country priorities by underscoring those questions the researchers believe to warrant major attention.

Each country team will produce a paper of approximately 30 pages that gives an overview of the issues in these guidelines. We are aware that the information and analysis are bound to be somewhat superficial in so brief a format. However, these overviews will assure that the country teams adopt similar approaches. They will allow us to compare priorities, strengths and weaknesses in the rebuilding process at different stages and in different circumstances, and to learn about actors and their inter-relations in different contexts. The completed papers will be referred to as Country Notes.

We expect the Country Note to define the issues we have identified in ways that help understand the contradictions, constraints, and the different political perspectives of the actors. Indeed, we are as interested in *why* certain issues are or are not important, relevant, or difficult to address, as in who has done what to address them. The Country Note will conclude with a list of tentative Entry Points which are suggested as the subjects of future research and action.

The Country Note will be discussed in a working seminar consisting of the full Project Group. Thus, the preparation of this paper will prepare the ground conceptually and politically for the final selection of Entry Points for the action-research. The result of the seminar will be analysis of issues, actors, opportunities and obstacles to rebuilding on which the national action-research agenda and a new workplan will be based. When prepared, the new agenda and workplan will represent the consensus of the entire Project Group.

Chapter II: Research Questions

The research guide below draws on information in the categories of political, economic and social reconstruction. These, of course, are artificial constructs. An integrated coherent rebuilding process blurs and merges these categories, and success is possible only with advances on all three fronts.

Another artificial construct derives from the realms in which particular actors engage and define their mandates: ie relief assistance, securities and demilitarization, rehabilitation and development. These terms not only define the areas of activity but the time frame in which they are carried out. Thus, constraints are built into donor government assistance structures (eg emergency relief is funded from different sources than development assistance) and are reinforced in the recipient countries by the structures on national ministries and departments. United Nations and other multinational entities are categorized as agencies of 'emergencies,' development, 'conflict resolution,' etc, and tensions among them are often due to activities that necessarily carry them beyond their official mandates. NGOs, as well, tend to follow similar structural divisions, and their activities are funded and supervised accordingly. There is a growing recognition among assistance agencies at all levels that, for purposes of coherent post-conflict rebuilding, these divisions and narrowly defined mandates may prove obstacles to effective performance.

Experience shows that international humanitarian assistance to rebuilding war-torn societies often ignores existing local resources and capacities and fails to build on these in its strategies and activities, although to do so would contribute to local capacity-building and development. In some cases humanitarian assistance may even destroy local institutions and undermine solutions and thereby generate further social disintegration. The project seeks to use the knowledge about local initiatives to inform and hopefully influence policy makers and other relevant actors to take these into account in the national reconstruction process. Local involvement and initiatives at the local level are the essential ingredients of national reconstruction. The Local Initiatives agenda in the annex of this document (see Annex 2) is intended as a guide for those doing research in local areas. The written results will follow the general outline in these guidelines. The field research team will decide how best to incorporate the information gathered into the Country Note. When the research team and Project Group have decided what will be the project's Entry Points, the local and national research agendas will coincide.

Conflict and Reconciliation

ISSUES: How a conflict is resolved, the extent to which fundamental issues that gave rise to conflict were addressed and whether there were clear winners are major factors in establishing the post-conflict consensus essential for rebuilding. If, for example, armed conflicts are merely translated into political conflicts with no victors and without having resolved fundamental sources of tension, it is difficult to achieve reconciliation, to establish governmental authority and legitimacy and to demand economic sacrifices from sectors of the population.

A Root causes of the conflict

- Describe briefly the most deeply rooted historical causes of the conflict.
- Describe the more immediate causes of the conflict.

B Impact of the recent conflict

- How was the conflict resolved and how does this affect attitudes and capacities for rebuilding? Were the short- and longer-term causes of the conflict resolved, partially resolved, or are they still unaddressed? What major tensions remain? Alternatively, in what way and to what extent does the previous conflict persist?
- If there are remaining post-conflict tensions, where do they show themselves most clearly?
- Is there a human rights agenda related to past abuses? If so, how is it being handled?
- Briefly outline the major legacies of the conflict: physical impact, political, institutional, economic, social and cultural impacts. Which areas and sectors have suffered most from the effects of war, and which, if any, have gained ground?

C Moving toward reconciliation

- What kinds of structures are in place for reconciling different interests and resolving conflicts at national or local levels?
- Describe the reconciliation process, in terms of the methods used and actors involved. How would you assess the results? Where and among what sectors has reconciliation progressed most/least?

Security situation

ISSUES: If the end of conflict is marked by the continued prominence of armed factions and has not brought about significant disarmament and the restructuring and re-orientation of military and police forces, civilian authority is more fragile. The following questions are meant to evaluate the status of the security forces who fought or supported the fighting and to assess whether armed elements still pose a threat to peace and public confidence in civilian rule.

A The present situation

- Was there a general disarmament process after the conflict and, if so, how effective was it?
- What is the status of the military and the police? Have one or both been fully demobilized? Have the armed forces and/or police forces been restructured, retrained, replaced?
- Are there private armies, militia or other kinds of informal armed groups and, if so, under whose control?
- What is the general security situation, including banditry? Has the aftermath of war generated more criminal activity?

B Addressing the issues

- What has been the international role and what have been the strategies supported for dealing with security questions?
- If demining is a problem, how much has been accomplished and by whom?

- How successful has the reintegration of former combatants been thus far? Is this a potential security issue?
- Have civil military relations changed meaningfully? If so, what factors have produced the change, and/or what mechanisms were put in place?

Major actors in the rebuilding process: internal and external, individual and institutional

ISSUES: As we examine rebuilding initiatives, it is of fundamental importance to know and understand the priorities and particular interests of the major internal and external actors in the different sectors, and to analyse the dynamics of their relationships and interactions. These organizational actors will not only be the subjects of the country studies, but must be drawn into the project as participants, interested in discussing their programmes and projects in an environment favourable to the exchange of opinions and suggestions.

- External actors: Which are the major multilateral, bilateral, and other external actors, including NGOs, and regional entities that may play a role in peace consolidation?
- National actors: Take into account official and *de facto* leaders at all levels, throughout the country, and note those which have and have not been closely associated with and/or dependent on foreign assistance for maintaining their authority and influence.

Questions related to the two aforementioned points:

- Discuss the relevance and scale of the major entities involved in the rebuilding process. Do they constitute new or traditional actors in decision making and influence?
- Of the agencies that play the most important roles, how would you characterize their approach and goals they wish to achieve?
- Where does most of the foreign assistance go and how is it channelled to the target groups?
- How much and what kind of coordination is there among those working on similar issues? How are coordination questions related to the broader goals of the different actors?
- Describe the kind of leadership that may exist in areas that have made notable progress in rehabilitation and productivity without external support.
- Are there global programmes for reconstruction and rehabilitation in which a diversity of internal and external, national and local actors participate?

Emergency and humanitarian actions

A Humanitarian relief

- Which national and international agencies have been most involved in humanitarian relief efforts?
- During and immediately after the conflict, how were services provided to those sectors of the population most affected by the conflict? Where were the major gaps? Are significant programmes of emergency humanitarian relief still in operation?

- How have humanitarian relief projects tended either to reinforce or undermine previously existing coping strategies and traditional institutional structures with which the society handles crises?
- What has been the impact of humanitarian relief on longer-term rehabilitation and development prospects? Comment on the positive and negative factors of major relief programmes, eg quantities, relationship to needs, means of delivery, political and social consequences.

B. Returning refugees and internally displaced people

- Describe the magnitude of refugee repatriations thus far and still to come. To what extent has the repatriation been organized or spontaneous? What, if any, are the obstacles to full return?
- Describe patterns of return. If not in their places of origin, are returnees in fairly cohesive communities? What are the major issues involved in absorbing and integrating the returnees?
- What has been the balance of internal vs. external resources for repatriate integration? Describe national policies regarding refugee return.
- What kinds of strategies have been devised to permit and encourage returnees to become productive? To what extent do returnees still depend on the delivery of relief items? Do present forms of relief stimulate self-reliance?
- Describe the magnitude of internal displacement as a result of the conflict. What are the patterns of movement and what factors dictated the directions of population movements?
- To what extent have people either settled in place or returned to areas of origin? Have many now settled in new areas, including large towns and cities? If there are continued large movements of groups, what factors are causing or promoting these movements?
- Has there been adequate funding to deal with the needs of the internally displaced, and what has been the balance of internal vs. external resources?

Political rebuilding

ISSUES: War-torn states are likely to inherit weak political structures, unable or unwilling to support and direct the rebuilding process and sometimes insufficiently accountable to the people they are charged to serve. The transition from a society organized for war to a diversified civilian society requires adjustments at all levels. The transition is subject to competing objectives, eg attempts to enhance capacities and transparency among officials in national and local government bureaucracies may founder due to the political imperatives of achieving balance among hostile sectors and pacifying certain powerful sectors. Human rights concerns and accounting for past abuses may require immediate attention, but the risks involved in attacking still powerful factions and the need to promote reconciliation may mitigate against punishments.

Peace agreements must be translated into politically viable systems in which all major parties have a stake in the power arrangements. In the longer term, it is essential to uphold the rule of law, as well as to establish institutions and

administrative structures in which the population has confidence. Donors have devoted large amounts of resources to promote elections and particular models of democratic rule that they believe essential for good governance, but if the imported models do not take root, an even more precarious political balance may be produced.

A The present situation

- Is there a strong sense of nationhood and/or national identity in the country? What are the institutional, historic, ethnic-cultural or other factors that promote or impede such identity?
- How have current governments been created (eg by election, as a legacy of military victory)? Where does greater power lie (eg in the executive, legislature, military)? Is there a working constitution or are there plans to create one?
- Are there sectors of the population that the government is perceived to represent or to favour?
- How much power sharing is there among formerly warring factions, at the national, district and local levels?
- Is there a political party structure? If so, what do the different parties represent and which sectors identify with them?
- What is the political space for opposition and local participation?
- Does the legal system function adequately? How independent is the judiciary? Do citizens generally have confidence in the ability of the state (and/or national and local officials) to protect their rights?
- What have been and remain the major issues that may affect governance and confidence in government, eg national legitimacy, accountability for war crimes, human rights, elections, judicial restructuring, administrative experience, corruption?

B Addressing the issues

- What working relationships are in place between national government, including local authorities, the organized sectors of civil society and national NGOs?
- Relate how external actors may have affected the evolution of political institutions, eg strengthening or weakening government entities at different levels, promoting greater centralization or decentralization of authority and decision making.
- What steps have been taken to enhance institutional and legal capacities for designing and executing programmes, achieving consensus, modifying existing structures and carrying out needed reforms?
- Is there a general coincidence between local traditional leadership and political party leaders at the local level?

Economic rebuilding

ISSUES: To the extent that people see improvements in the quality of their lives, peace will be more durable. The seeds for long-term rebuilding must be planted along with relief during emergencies. After years of conflict, it is imperative to rebuild shattered infrastructure, transportation and communications systems. However, the urgency of undertaking these tasks often precludes adequate reflection

about how such systems might be restructured for the benefit of the population. The undeniable need for social spending after war may conflict with steps taken to gain international credit and confidence. National authorities have to balance the diverging priorities of donors with those of different sectors of their own population. International economic assistance, while essential, has not always paved the way for sustainable development or self-reliance and all too often has had the effect of undermining local capacities.

A The present situation

- Briefly describe the post-conflict economic power structure in relation to the political power structures. How do these factors affect rebuilding strategies?
- What are the most important economic, logistic and technical factors in the way of achieving integrated and sustainable economic development?
- What are the major sources of income for the population? How have these been affected by the conflict?
- What are the major sources of national export earnings? How have these been affected by the conflict?

Comment on the general economic conditions of that part of the population which has been most affected by the war, eg their ability to earn a livelihood or to provide for families.

B Addressing the issues

- What have been the priorities of post-conflict rebuilding in the early phases? What have been the most difficult 'trade-offs'?
- If the government has created a national reconstruction plan, describe its strengths and weaknesses. Is it generally accepted? Is the government capable of putting it into effect?
- What sectors have been involved in designing the national reconstruction plan, and how? To which sectors is it directed? Whom does it actually reach? How is it being implemented at the local, district and national levels?
- What is the financial base for reconstruction, nationally and through international donations or loans? Is there a consensus between internal and external actors on priorities and the design of operations? How are decisions on important economic questions taken with regard to internationally funded projects?
- Has the informal sector of the economy grown as a result of war and its aftermath? Within and around the informal sector, are there seeds for growth and the potential for expanding the economic base?
- Is there a pattern of locally initiated income generation and recovery projects and, if so, have they received national or external support?

Social rehabilitation

ISSUES: A war-torn society is one in which social structures and cultural values have been challenged or even wilfully destroyed. Vast numbers of people have been uprooted and their lives disrupted. While reintegration and social stability are major challenges for a country emerging from conflict, it is often impossible for people to

return to their places of origin and they must learn to live with groups quite different from themselves. Furthermore, there may be good reasons not to recreate or strengthen traditional social forms, for example the subordinate status of women, exploitative forms of labour and elitist land tenure patterns. The society must absorb the combatants who fought and, often, attend to the special needs of a generation brought up in, and possibly traumatized by conditions of war. In the case of civil conflicts, recent enemies who killed each other's families must learn to live peacefully and to share resources.

A The present situation

- To what extent did social services survive during the conflict and could they be restored soon after the conflict? Are such services appropriate to needs?
- What major changes can be detected in cultural values and social structures as a result of the conflict, eg gender roles, family structures, social hierarchies? How are such factors likely to affect rebuilding initiatives in the post-conflict period?
- Comment on new and traditional social forces that have arisen or been changed as a result of the conflict. Do the social changes affect rebuilding positively or negatively and for whom?
- Comment on the social consequences of large-scale population movements.

B Addressing the issues

- What kinds of programmes have been put in place for particularly vulnerable groups? What important needs are not being met?
- Where communities and groups have been able to mobilize most effectively for self-help, what factors account for their success? Describe ongoing significant local efforts aimed at restoring communities and integrating war-uprooted people.
- In terms of public services, such as education, health, transportation, with what kinds of local and national participation are these services being restored or created?
- What is the role of international assistance in addressing social questions, and what are the relations between international and national actors? Which programmes have been most successful, least successful, and why?
- Are there systematic efforts to create and build a 'culture of peace'?

Chapter III: Analysis preparatory to the action phase

Researchers should focus on the current opportunities, obstacles and long-term expectations for the rebuilding process. They should take into account how external and internal actors, including NGOs, have treated their mandated limitation (eg targeted beneficiaries, time-limited interventions, localized theatres of action) in designing and implementing programmes and projects. There are three interactive approaches which we believe to be determinant:

- Among the multitude of issues covered in the Country Note, where do you see the major contradictions, synergies, and opportunities for rebuilding?
- Looking at national as well as local levels, describe the nature of the relationships

between internal and external actors as they affect rebuilding and, in particular, the evolution of national capacities. To what extent do either the national or international actors formulate and build their projects by taking advantage of existing local capacities?

- What are the most strategic issues at the local, district and national levels that at one and the same time are essential to the rebuilding process and amenable to collaborative change?

From the results of the research, analyses, and in the framework of the interactions among internal/external actors, it should be possible to draw conclusions and make recommendations related to the collective performance of all parties, and to establish the preliminary list of Entry Points for the following action phase of the project. This is the objective of the action-research being undertaken.

Annex 2: Local Level Initiatives

(This description of the Local Level Initiatives concept and guidelines for its implementation were prepared in June 1995.)

The research on local initiatives is an important part of the project and will focus on initiatives taken by individuals and organizations to rebuild society at the level of the region, sub-region, community or sector of the community. These initiatives are likely to be taken independently or largely independently of initiatives at the national level, although they may well be prompted by policies at other levels, and be implemented in cooperation with national and regional actors.

The purpose of the research is twofold: first the project will take stock of the multiple and creative initiatives taken by local people themselves to cope with their situation and to rebuild their communities in the post-conflict period. These initiatives may build on existing social structures and cultural values or they may be innovative and experimental. Local activities may focus on one or several of the areas outlined in the guidelines above such as reconciliation as well as political, economic and social rebuilding depending on the priorities that different groups within society have and on the options they see for pursuing these. The research team will not only register activities, but more importantly describe the major social transformations that have inevitably taken place at community level during the conflict and post-conflict periods and thus identify new strong social groups as well as emerging marginalized and vulnerable groups in relation to the rebuilding process. Both the identification of who the actors are and how they are organized are important issues to be examined, as local communities are heterogeneous entities expressing many different and often conflicting interests and concerns.

Secondly, the research will examine the relationship between national and local rebuilding initiatives. We believe it essential to conduct research on local initiatives and to 'map' the local scene in order to understand both how the ultimate subjects and beneficiaries of reconstruction view activities under way, and what the real implications of these processes have been and are at the grassroots level. On the basis of the information gathered on needs, resources, capacities, and interests in local communities and the knowledge about national and external rebuilding efforts, the research team will identify what opportunities exist to further involve and support local communities in the rebuilding process and thus make rebuilding more constructive and relevant at all levels and for all sectors.

The research on local initiatives follows the framework for the overall research, but it emphasizes perspectives and activities at the local level. While the research team will not be able to record all ongoing activities, it is important that the cases selected for research are representative of post-conflict society and the rebuilding process. The research will thus include initiatives taken in different regions and by different ethnic and religious groups just as it will present and discuss the gender dimension of local rebuilding. It is equally important that the research reflects the

engagement and situation of both strong and more vulnerable social groups in the rebuilding process.

Research questions

Identify representative local initiatives in the fields of reconciliation, political, economic and social reconstruction, and describe these.

- What are the activities? What fields of reconstruction do they stress? To what extent do they build on pre-conflict social structures and cultural values and to what extent are they innovative?
- Who are the actors? What is their present social position? What was their position during the conflict? What is their experience of the conflict and peace process? Why and how were the activities started? What are the explicit or implicit objectives? How are the actors organized?
- Who are the beneficiaries? Are the beneficiaries and the actors the same? Who supports and contributes to the activities?
- What are the experiences? What has been achieved? What kinds of obstacles have there been? Have any promising initiatives failed and what were the reasons?
- Is there a high or low degree of cooperation between local and national actors? What are the experiences of cooperation, if any? Do the local activities correspond with the identified national priorities? Are these known at the local level? How are the national efforts at reconstruction perceived locally? Do local actors see any areas where increased cooperation?
- What is the relationship between local initiative/international assistance to reconstruction? How are the international efforts perceived locally? To what extent have local actors sought international support? Do local actors see any areas where increased cooperation is needed and would be possible? What are the concrete suggestions for increased cooperation?

Identify on the basis of the collected data existing local needs, resources, and priorities in reconstruction.

- What are the major needs of the area in general? To what extent have they been identified and met by local, national and external initiatives?
- What are the resources/capacities in the local communities? To what extent are they being used? Are there any obvious needs for further training of local communities to cope more efficiently with present problems?
- What are the main priorities of the local communities? How do they correspond to the priorities of non-local actors? Are there conflicting interests and priorities at the local level? If so, how are they being handled?

Assess the role of local initiatives in the national reconstruction process.

- What role do local initiatives play in the national reconstruction plan? How can the needs, resources, and capacities be better addressed and incorporated in reconstruction initiatives by national and external actors? What are the political considerations to be taken into account?

Expected Output

After the first research phase the Local Initiatives researcher will prepare a section on the main findings of the Local Initiatives research for the general Country Note.

The Local Initiatives researcher and the Research Unit will consider means of dissemination, beyond the information on the Country note, ie:

- Directory of local initiatives indicating major actors, fields of activities, their focus and scale. This will give basic information about local initiatives in a systematic way in order to help national WSP research teams and the central research unit and assist other external actors who wish to explore ways of cooperation.
- Accounts from the field
 1. Accounts of local projects to show the multiple perspectives of local communities.
 2. Photo-stories and/or videos showing the process of local initiatives. These can be used as complete stories to illustrate how reconstruction can be addressed at local level, what the resources, capacities and obstacles are. Such material can further be used to inform other actors at all levels in a more engaging way about potential at the local level. The material (photos) can also be useful for WSP publications in general.
- Comparative analysis of the potential and constraints of local communities in rebuilding war-torn societies based on the collection of examples of local initiatives in all test cases, including failures as well as success.

Annex 3: Visions project

(This concept paper was produced for internal use in November 1995.)

The concept

One of the major questions in rebuilding war-torn societies is the definition of the society that has to be rebuilt. A multitude of visions, some more explicit than others, exists in any society. It is particularly important to recall that the process of rebuilding a war-torn society does not start only after the conflict, as is generally presumed, but actually before the crisis, through the identification of the deficiencies and failures of the existing one which leads to the crisis. Although in many cases it is more clear what the contestants do not want, the visions of a new society, or at least the basic principles which they have been fighting for, already exist. Rebuilding a war-torn society can therefore not be a simple repetition of the previous one, since the realization of those visions and dreams need to be taken into account. These may not necessarily be shared by groups or regions, rather than nation-wide.

The project should provide space for the identification, recording and presentation of the visions of the society being rebuilt. In doing so, it should take into account not only the visions of the leaders of political parties, religious and other groups, but also the visions of ordinary citizens as well as of the many external actors involved in rebuilding the country. The collection of visions will reflect fulfilled or unfulfilled expectations, hopes and disillusion, as well as particular goals existing among different sectors of society, thus providing valuable indications and orientations for further research.

There are dreams and visions at all levels and in all sectors of human activity. The project should identify people who have visions, including those who have heard about other's visions, about an idea just next door, in the next village and so on. The search for visions should therefore become part of the methodology to be used throughout all phases, especially in the second operational phase of the project.

It should be noted that there is no limit to forms of expression: it may be a song, a poem, a drawing next to written proposals and recorded interviews. It may be a picture of a new school built by villagers, a new product that has been brought to the market, or a more comprehensive plan for the reconstruction of a locality or region. In most cases it will not be a complex picture of the new society as a whole, but a reflection of how to better meet immediate needs, such as the organization of the household, the need for a sanitation system, the development of the market in the village, the construction or improvement of a transportation system to link isolated communes to the regional and national system. All these little pieces will become precious stones in the overall mosaic that has to be outlined to reflect the reality of the country.

Expressions may also include more sophisticated presentations of ideas including video or computer programmes in a particular sector, economic or social, or the vision of the new society as a whole.

Besides providing revealing insights into the different aspirations and expectations of the main internal and external actors, the recording of visions will also give a voice to ordinary people, *vox populi*, voices which have rarely been heard in the past.

- It will strengthen the basic premise of the project, namely the interaction at all levels between the different actors, whether external or internal.
- It will provide an excellent opportunity for the project group to be innovative, to get 'another' perspective on various issues, to be more lively as well as more interesting and useful for its members
- It will confirm that the project group is a democratic forum where all ideas and proposals can be heard and presented without fear of being 'labelled'

Implementation

The identification and recording of visions is not a side activity, nor is it simply technical. It is a rather sensitive issue that requires careful implementation. It can therefore not be left to the audio and photo/video technicians, although their participation and assistance is essential.

As it is part of the methodology of the project, it must first be adequately explained and introduced to the members of the research team. They have to understand and accept it as an integral part of the research, and not as a secondary activity.

The search for and identification of visions has to start at all levels. However, most of them should come from the field, from local levels. As it fits very well into the identification and promotion of local initiatives, a great part could be included during the initial 'mapping' throughout the country.

Once identified and recorded, the visions should be shared not only with the members of the Project Group but with the other case study teams as well. The exchange and comparison of different experiences on the same or similar subjects will extend knowledge and improve evaluation and conclusions.

The utilization of visions is multifaceted and depends both on their content as well as on the quality of presentation. In any case, they should first and foremost be used as part of the in-depth research on the particular Entry Points, in accordance with the goals set up by the project. This does, however, not exclude additional forms of usage (such as exhibitions, video and computer programmes, films and books).

Annex 4: Evaluation guidelines

(These guidelines were prepared by the CCU as the first country project, in Eritrea, drew to a close.)

Introduction

WSP country projects are not easy to evaluate, because WSP's innovative approach attempts to combine research with the facilitation of dialogue and the identification of new policy approaches. In consequence, the country projects are neither action projects in the conventional sense, with well defined and straightforward objectives and outputs, nor are they 'normal' research projects with well defined problems and expected outputs in the form of papers and monographs. WSP outputs are both 'processes' and 'products', some measurable, others not. The evaluation will have to examine both, and the interaction between the two. Some of the results of such an examination might be surprising, as is to be expected given the approach of this project and its evolving context.

Given WSP's experimental nature, evaluation and assessment are integral parts of the project's concept. Regular assessments of project developments have already taken place in order for project participants to determine future directions. Similarly, a final country project evaluation is intrinsically linked to the project and should be carried out during the project's active phase rather than *ex-post facto*.

It is the purpose of this note to develop a framework for carrying out such an evaluation. General lead questions are proposed. The evaluation's precise form and approach must be defined at the country level in accordance with local realities.

Justification

There are obvious reasons for conducting an evaluation:

As the project's concept and methodology are novel, an examination of its achievements is particularly useful in determining the merits of this new approach. Conclusions need to be drawn in the national context and lessons applied to similar situations elsewhere.

More than twenty multi- and bilateral actors of international assistance, and national authorities and actors in the countries concerned, have invested many resources and much energy in the project. Even though the project has been a participatory exercise with donors associated in a continuous way with its implementation, the evaluation should particularly assist: national decision-makers, as key stakeholders in the project, in assessing how useful the project activities and the policy recommendations emerging from it have been in helping them to tackle the complex challenges they are facing; and donors in assessing how useful their contributions have been, both in terms of assisting the selected country where WSP work was carried out, and in re-thinking their own policy response to these kinds of situations.

Objectives

The project has focused on the complex and delicate problem of international assistance to post-conflict situations. It has attempted to assist actors with designing new approaches and translating them into operational practice, and it has done so using innovative and experimental methods.

The evaluation should thus assess to what extent the project has been successful in:

- increasing the understanding of complex post-conflict situations and problems
- improving policy responses to these situations and translating them into operational practice
- carrying out a participatory action-research exercise at the macro-social level.

These general objectives will be pursued by dividing the evaluation into two distinct parts. The first part of the evaluation will cover the first two objectives; the second part the last objective.

Evaluation I

In the first part of the evaluation (hereafter referred to as *Evaluation I*) the focus will be on the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the project in terms of its stated goals. It will assist main actors who participated in the country project with reviewing their experience with the project. Participants will want to draw lessons and take decisions on future activities. Hence *Evaluation I* will try to establish:

- the project's relevance to the process of rebuilding
- its effectiveness in clarifying options for rebuilding policies
- its impact on national and international policy formulation and implementation in rebuilding, and
- its effectiveness in developing or expanding national capacities for independent and critical research and analysis.

Evaluation I will primarily be carried out by the actors who participated in the WSP exercise as members of the Project Group or a Working Group, and with the help of the local WSP research team. *Evaluation I* is meant to be a collective and participatory assessment of the experience by the actors and from the point of view of the actors themselves. As such it does not claim to be objective, reflecting the subjective perspectives, experiences and agendas of the actors as they associated with or participated in the WSP country project. The actor's individual subjectivity is compensated by the multiplicity of perspectives. It is one of the challenges of this evaluation to reflect as comprehensively as possible an assessment of the WSP exercise as seen from the actors' different viewpoints. A second challenge resides in the need to reach consensus and agree on recommendations as to the continuation of project activities beyond WSP.

In practical terms *Evaluation I* should be carried out by a small working group composed of selected participants in the Project Group who have shown particular interest in the WSP exercise. External and internal actors should both be represented in the working group. They will be assisted by the WSP research coordinator,

or a specifically designated researcher, who will organize meetings, prepare questionnaires, conduct or accompany interviews, keep records, and write a summary report. The main tool of *Evaluation I* will be collective discussions in group meetings and open-ended interviews. Other tools might be questionnaires and a systematic review of already collected evaluation material (for example statements in newsletters, working group reports, and 'vision' documents).

Evaluation I will first identify and describe the project's activities, outputs and results, both in terms of 'products' and of 'processes' and then proceed to assess them in terms of the stated project objectives. Then the importance of these achievements will be tested from two additional angles: (1) different actors will elaborate on the practical benefits the project provided them with; and (2) the project's short- and long-term impact will be considered. In a final section, recommendations on the pursuit of some or all of the project's activities beyond the lifespan of WSP will be formulated.

Evaluation I should be concluded with a summary report written by the designated WSP researcher and approved by the working group, containing main findings and recommendations on future activities. General lead questions for *Evaluation I* are proposed below.

Evaluation II

In the second part of the evaluation (hereafter referred to as *Evaluation II*) an assessment will be made of the project's strengths and weaknesses in terms of its methodology, organizational set-up, administration, and operational functioning. It will focus on the specific concept and methodology of the project and its translation into operational reality, primarily in the country under consideration, but also in the CCU in Geneva. *Evaluation II* will provide insights into how WSP methodology can progressively be improved by drawing positive and negative lessons from this country project and applying the knowledge to future ones.

Assessments made in the second part would then also lead to a broader examination of the complex interactions between social science research and political action. This examination contributes thereby to a growing body of experience which UNRISD has accumulated since its first attempts to use methods of participatory action-research in the late 1970s and 80s.

Evaluation II should be carried out by a consultant who is familiar with the WSP experience and who is knowledgeable about other attempts to make research politically relevant through innovative action-research methodologies. The consultant should spend about two weeks interviewing participants in the project, primarily at the country level but also at the CCU in Geneva. A list of general lead questions is proposed below. These could be developed into a set of specific questions to be answered by the staff at country and central levels. These questions would target the full range of project activities, as well as relations between the CCU and WSP Eritrea. *Evaluation II* should be concluded with a summary report written by the consultant.

Lead questions for Evaluation I

Evaluation I will commence with describing the project's activities, outputs and results, and proceed to assessing them in terms of stated project objectives. Then the importance of these achievements will be examined by focusing on the practical benefits participation in the project brought to the different actors, and by considering their short- and long-term impact.

1. What has the project achieved?

Under this heading a diverse collection of achievements might be assembled, each dependent on the interviewee's particular point of view. This section is designed to understand the project's achievements in their broadest terms. As a result a broad list of achievements enumerating and cataloguing multiple aspects of the project's performance might be established.

Achievements should be determined in terms of the project's stated objectives. Various key project documents have described the intended outcome of the project as follows: (*UNRISD Progress Report 1995/96*):

"The project is expected to have an immediate and a longer-term impact on policy formulation and implementation, both in countries where it operates and at a global level. While actors in the rebuilding process – both in-country and at donor capital or headquarters level – participate in the project, they will progressively gain a better understanding of the complex interactions between different policy approaches and agendas. This should allow them to identify collectively better integrated policy responses to rebuilding. Within war-torn societies, it is also expected that the project can significantly enhance individual and institutional capacities for independent research and policy analysis and formulation, and encourage local 'ownership' of rebuilding programmes."

Stated project objectives can be broken down into the following categories:

1. concerning the actors and their interaction:

- bring together all main rebuilding actors (international, national and local);
- promote interaction between these actors;
- gain a clearer understanding of the actor mix (responsibilities/division of labour/internal-external/national-local).

2. concerning policy formulation and implementation:

- gain a clearer understanding of the policy mix (complementary/conflicting policies);
- generate more integrated policy options that take these interactions into account in their formulation and operational implementation;

3. concerning the development of national capacities:

- create or enhance local capacities for research and policy analysis.

A variety of questions could be asked under each heading. Most of these questions should be developed in the country itself, because their appropriate formulation depends to a large extent on understanding the subtleties of the context in which

they would be asked. Such understanding can only be gained in the country. Hence the questions proposed in the following section serve only as rough guidelines and would need to be modified for optimal return. The questions first try to establish the facts and are hence more descriptive in nature, and then attempt to analyse the evidence. The section ends with a summary assessment.

Concerning the actors and their interaction

What mechanisms/structures have been designed to promote interaction?

Meetings (Project Group, Working Groups, others)

- Who has met when?
- How often?
- At what level?
- Where?
- How many participants?
- Who has not been there?
- How have the meetings been conducted?
- How participatory have they been?

Other forms of interaction, eg newsletter

- questions on newsletter

Field research to interact with local level actors

- questions on field research

What informal mechanisms of interaction have existed and how have they worked?

- questions on informal interaction

Assessment

- How effective have the mechanisms/structures been in promoting interaction?
- Have these mechanisms been sufficient?
- What kind of interaction has taken place?
- What have actors gained from this interaction?
- How much more do they know about each other?
- Have they become aware of possible clashes of responsibility, overlapping mandates?
- Have they become aware of possible coordination/linkage opportunities?

Concerning the policies, their formulation and implementation

Policy clarification

- What mechanisms/structures have been designed to understand policies better?

Interactive research and analysis of policy issues

- Which issues were chosen for interactive policy research and analysis?
- How relevant are they to the political developments?
- How has the research been conducted?
- Have different policies been analysed?
- Have the linkages between different policies been analysed?

Project Group and Working Groups as places for elaboration of policies

- Have policies been explained at group meetings?
- Has a clearer understanding of each other's policies been the result?

Policy formulation

- Have new insights been gained by the interactive research and analysis?
- Have existing policies been questioned?
- Have they been reformulated?
- Have new policy recommendations resulted from this project? Which ones?

Policy implementation

- Have these recommendations been supported by all actors?
- How useful are these recommendations?
- To whom are they most useful?
- Are there any indicators that reformulated policies have been implemented?

Concerning the development of national capacities

- Who has been principally involved in the interactive research?
- Affiliation of researchers and research assistants?
- How much did universities or other existing institutions participate in the project?
- To what extent has the project become a resource centre?

2. How do the different actors see these achievements?

This section focuses on the supposed beneficiaries of the project, which will be judged primarily by the practical benefit it provided to key rebuilding actors. It is therefore important to establish exactly what these benefits are and who has gained them. Interviews with all participants might be the best way of eliciting this information.

Apart from gaining valuable insight into the project's practical usefulness for all stakeholders, such a review would also serve a second purpose. It would either confirm or refute the project's core assumption that the project can be beneficial to all participants, despite their many different interests, mandates and agendas. If this review can provide an indication that the inclusiveness of the project has indeed been its strength and all stakeholders benefited from this project in a variety of ways, an important lesson will have been learned.

3. What has been the impact of the project?

This section concludes the first part of the evaluation by assessing the short- and long-term impact of the project, and by positioning it in the broader rebuilding context and comparing it with other post-conflict initiatives. The task here is to consider this project's achievements in terms of its comparative advantages. This might be a difficult undertaking if few comparable initiatives are readily available for examination, but even a brief comparison of this project's unique features with those of traditional research projects, on the one hand, and operational programmes, on the other, would provide the evaluator with an insight of the size of this project's achievements.

This section also attempts to establish the project's longer-term value. Arguably, the project's ultimate success will be measured by the durability of its principles.

Even if a glimpse into the future might only be prognostic and reality might turn out to be different, a yardstick for the project's performance will be the present commitment of the participants to the project's principles also in the longer term. It is therefore important to establish how committed the participants are to continuing the exercise in similar form, even after the original WSP will have phased out. Interviews with all project participants would possibly be the best means of collecting this information.

Lead questions for Evaluation II

Evaluation II will examine how WSP functions in practice and what the positive lessons learned from this experience might mean for social science research more generally. Hence, *Evaluation II* will first determine the strengths and weaknesses of the project organization and administration both in the country project and the CCU in Geneva, and uncover the reasons for these results, and then enter into a broader discussion about the relevance of this experience for the relationship between social science research and political action.

Project organization and administration

Selection of staff (management and researchers)

- What were job descriptions/terms of reference?
- Have staff worked according to their job descriptions/terms of reference?
- Division of labour/responsibilities – how has that worked?

Selection of location of project

- Independent offices – useful or not?

Management and Planning

Efficiency

Timing of activities/lengths of project phases

Relations between CCU/country project

Backstopping (operational, administrative, substantive)

Training of researchers How has that worked?

Efficient communication?

Responsibilities: partnership, ownership? Who is ultimately responsible?

Relationship between CCU/country project and International Researcher

Effectiveness

Research and Analysis:

- Quality of research (feasibility, clarity of research plans and methods, quality of research results, outputs)
- Field research
- Visions

Dissemination and communication

With CCU – technical aspects

With other country projects

With others – how has it worked?

The WSP concept and methodology in the wider context of research and political action

This section concludes *Evaluation II* by positioning WSP in the wider context of action-research. The focus is on the project's novel concept and methodology, as it is in this respect that the project differs from other social science or operational projects.

The project's concept, its particular perspective on issues of rebuilding war-torn societies, can be briefly summarized as follows: it examines the roles, responsibilities and relationships of all rebuilding actors (the actor mix) as a basis for understanding how the actors' policies overlap, complement or contradict each other (the policy mix) in an attempt to develop an integrated framework of response to rebuilding problems. It pays particular attention to the relationship between external and local actors (the level mix), as it is in this respect that a number of improvements could be made. Hence, *Evaluation II* would attempt to assess how relevant and useful the WSP conceptualization has been. Questions could be as follows:

- Has the WSP conceptualization been useful in terms of its outcome?
- Who could relate to this conceptualization? Political actors? Researchers?
- Has this conceptualization been too complicated?
- Has the concept pedagogical value?

In order to assess the methodology's effectiveness, its two main elements need to be restated:

- it is participatory in bringing together national, regional and international actors and researchers in a collective analysis of pertinent national issues of rebuilding;
- it combines research and action by bringing together policy-makers and operational actors with academics/researchers in an effort to allow for a mutually beneficial relationship between research and political action.

Questions would be designed in order to provide insight into how important this methodology was in reaching the previously described achievements.

For example, these questions could be:

- How participatory has the project been?
- Have all participants had space to express their points of view?
- How much have the achievements depended on a participatory methodology?
- How have research and political action interacted with each other?
- What has been the pattern of interaction between researchers and political actors?
- What have been the difficulties with this methodology?
- Have research and political action gained from each other? What is the evidence?
- What are the benefits for research? For political action?
- How much have the achievements depended on action-research methodology?

Annex 5: WSP people

CCU staff

Director:	Matthias Stiefel
Head of Operations:	Oto Denes
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Senior Researcher:	Martin Doornbos
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Senior Advisory Group (SAG)

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Jonathan Moore
Vladimir Petrovsky
Michael Priestley
Mohamed Sahnoun
Rubén Zamora

Periodic Donor Consultation Process (PDCP)

Bilateral participants

Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, USA

Multilateral participants

EC, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOCHA, UNOPS, UNV, WHO

Other organizations

ACORD, Carnegie Corporation, ICRC, IDRC, MacArthur Foundation

WSP Eritrea project staff

Project Coordinator	Nerayo Teclemichael (1995) Tesfai Ghermazien (from 1995 to 1997) Arefaine Berhe (1997)
Special Advisor	Victoria Bawtree
Research Coordinator	Berhane Woldemichael
Principal Researcher	Ruth Iyob (1995)
Researchers	Alemseged Tesfai Haile Awalom Teclemichael Wolde-Giorgis Araia Tseggai Tekeste Ghebray Berhane Woldemichael
Assistant Researchers	Tuku Woleamlack Senayit Yohannes Eyasu Andemariam Selamawi Zere Abenet Essayas
International Researcher	Martin Doornbos
Visions Project	Christian (Hilal) Sabatier Ruth Simon
Office Staff	Lemlem Emmanuel Freweine Bercket Harinet Berhe

WSP Mozambique project staff

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Assistant Researchers	Guilherme Mbilana Eduardo Mussanhane
Advisory Committee	José Luis Cabaço José Manual Gambo Iraê Lundin Salamão Moyana Abdul Magid Osman Anselmo Victor
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WSP Guatemala project staff

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International Researcher	Rubén Zamora
Visions Project Producer	John Dunn
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WSP Somali Programme staff

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Deputy (Administration)	Abdirahman Osman Raghe
Programme Research Associate	Ahmed Yusuf Farah
Consultant	Fouad Ismael
Office staff	Hoda Hassan Kanyare Meymona Abdi Ayan Sheikh-Salah
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Zonal Project Coordinator	Adam Biixi (<i>deceased 1999</i>)
Researchers	Abdisalam Ali Farah (Mudug) Abdigafar Haji Mohamed Abdulle (Nugal) Ahmed Abbas Ahmed (Bari)
Northwest Somalia (Somaliland)	
Zonal Project Coordinator	Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan
Programme Administrator	Mohamed Abdi Mohamud
Research Coordinator	Mohamed Fadal
Researchers	Abdi Yusuf Duale Abdirahman Jimaale Mohamed Hassan Ibrahim Su'ad Abdi Ibrahim Abdirahman Yusuf Artan

The WSP Dissemination Phase

WSP in practice is one component of a wider exercise of evaluating the first four years of the War-torn Societies Project, and of sharing this evaluation and the lessons learned during the project with a wide variety of interested audiences.

The lessons have been compiled into a set of core reports that analyse the WSP experience in the four countries in which it was piloted, document WSP's operational experience at field and headquarters levels, and draw conclusions on the project overall:

The War-torn Societies Project: the first four years

(an overview of the WSP experience and lessons learned)

Rebuilding after war (lessons learned from the project)

WSP in Eritrea (an account of the project in Eritrea)

WSP in Guatemala (an account of the project in Guatemala)

WSP in Mozambique (an account of the project in Mozambique)

WSP in Somalia (an account of the ongoing project in Northeast Somalia)

WSP in practice (an account of WSP's operational experience)

In addition to the reports, there are three companion volumes published in collaboration with WSP successor bodies and/or regional publishers in the countries in which WSP has completed its pilot work:

Post-conflict Eritrea: prospects for reconstruction and development

published in association with The Red Sea Press

From conflict to dialogue: the WSP Guatemala way (English) and

Del conflicto al diálogo: el WSP en Guatemala (Spanish)

published in association with FLACSO

(Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales Sede Guatemala)

Rebuilding through dialogue: the Mozambican way (English) and

Reconstruindo pelo dialogo: o caminho de Moçambique (Portuguese)

published in association with CEDE (Mozambican Centre for the Study of Democracy and Development)

A companion volume on the WSP project in Northeast Somalia is under consideration.

WSP in practice was prepared by June Kane, with contributions from WSP staff in the CCU and country projects.