Mercy Corps

Evaluation and Assessment of Poverty and Conflict Interventions

Indonesia Case Study Report

Photograph: Thatcher Cook for Mercy Corps

Abstract

This case study is part of a USAID-funded research grant that examines the relationship between economic development and stability. In many parts of the world, Mercy Corps implements programs that combine economic development and peacebuilding. The *Evaluation and Assessment of Poverty and Conflict Interventions* project – implemented between July 2009 and December 2010 – had three main objectives: 1) to develop indicators and data collection tools that measure the impact of programs at the intersection of peacebuilding and economic development; 2) to field test these indicators and tools in three countries; and 3) to begin to assess several theories of change that inform Mercy Corps' programs. This report presents preliminary findings from Indonesia, where Mercy Corps implements the *Maluku Economic Recovery Program II* in Maluku Province. Preliminary findings highlight the complex relationship between economics and conflict in a post-conflict environment while providing evidence of economic incentives to maintain peace.

Contents

Acronyms

EAPC   Evaluation and Assessment of Poverty and Conflict/Fragility Interventions
M&E   Monitoring and Evaluation
MERP II   Maluku Economic Recovery Program II

1   Executive Summary

A significant body of knowledge exists on the relationship between poverty, conflict, and state failure. In his influential book *The Bottom Billion*, Paul Collier shows strong statistical support for the claim that conflict is clustered in the worlds' poorest nations. He also shows that unless economic growth takes place post-conflict, a nation has a 44% chance of slipping back into violence. Columbia scholar Macartan Humphreys confirms that as per capita GDP decreases, the probability of conflict increases.[1] Driven in part by these findings, donors and their partners are implementing increasing numbers of economic development programs in conflict and post-conflict environments, based on the assumption that these will contribute to both poverty reduction and conflict management.

To test this assumption and improve the quality of programming in conflict environments, USAID funded a series of research grants that explored the relationship between economic development, conflict, and state failure. The *Evaluation and Assessment of Poverty and Conflict Interventions* (EAPC) project is Mercy Corps' contribution to this larger research effort. Mercy Corps' research project had three key components. First, it articulated several hypotheses or theories of change that inform Mercy Corps' economic development and peacebuilding programs. These are:

1. If we build economic relationships across lines of division, then we will promote stability by demonstrating tangible, concrete benefits to cooperation.
2. If we strengthen livelihoods opportunities in high-risk regions and/or for high-risk populations, then we will promote stability by reducing competition for scarce economic resources.
3. If we use a community mobilization approach to economic development, then we will promote stability by encouraging community self-reliance and by building productive relationships to local government.

Second, the research team developed indicators and data collection tools that were specifically tailored to these theories of change. Third, the team ran field tests of these measures and tools in three Mercy Corps programs in Uganda, Ethiopia, and Indonesia to see if they could capture key relationships between economic variables and stability.

This document presents the findings from the Indonesia case study. In Indonesia, the research team developed a survey and two participatory assessment tools to measure the impact of the *Maluku Economic Recovery Program II* (MERP II), a two-year New Zealand Aid-funded program that Mercy Corps is implementing in the Maluku region of Indonesia. The MERP II program seeks to strengthen livelihoods and develop peaceful dispute resolution capacity in conflict-affected communities in the Maluku region of Indonesia. Data collection for the EAPC research project occurred in July and August of 2010, during MERP II's economic mid-term and peacebuilding baseline assessments.

Maluku's post-conflict context – where levels of violence are low, perceptions of peace are high, and community members are reluctant to discuss lingering tensions – posed a challenge to examining the relationship between economics and conflict. Preliminary findings suggest that economic development, like any social change, can exacerbate underlying tensions, and initial results from the survey do not provide strong support for the hypothesis that increased economic interactions and stronger livelihoods promote peace. However, the findings also show that community members

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[1] For a good summary of recent research on the relationship between conflict, state failure, and poverty, see Andrew Loomis, "Poverty and Civil War," Brookings (June 2009)

recognize the economic benefits of peace and feel a strong incentive to maintain that peace. The findings point to important considerations in peacebuilding program design, including the necessity of crafting economic development interventions in way that promotes mutually beneficial cooperation rather than competition and the relevance of trust-building measures to develop the relationships that permit trade and business to flourish. Further research to explore the role of different economic activities and the conditions under which economic development may promote peace is needed.

These findings are preliminary, and results reflect correlations rather than causation. In addition, data was collected only once during the life of the program and the research project did not make use of controlled comparisons, so these findings should not be taken as evidence of program impact. The goal of the research project was to *develop and test measures and tools that could start to capture relationships between economic variables and stability outcomes*. The findings show that these tools were able to do so and could capture interesting associations between economic and stability outcomes.

Most exciting, while the research project has ended, field teams are continuing to use, refine, and adapt the tools developed through this project and are beginning to show evidence of solid impact. For example, Mercy Corps Kenya adapted the EAPC tools to their youth employment program in the Rift Valley and a recent study of impact was able to show that young people who had some type of employment are less likely to participate in violence.

2   Country and Program Context

In 1999, the Maluku region of Indonesia was torn apart by communal violence. Violence spread rapidly from Ambon Island throughout the province. During the conflict, Maluku's economy collapsed and communities were segregated along religious lines. An estimated 500,000 people – nearly a quarter of the total population – were displaced. Maluku has been relatively stable since 2004 and today is well on its way to normalization. Economic recovery is beginning to materialize in many conflict-affected communities. Rebuilding relationships across previous lines of division is becoming a priority for individuals seeking to restore access to trade and transportation.

Since 2000, Mercy Corps has provided humanitarian aid and economic recovery throughout Maluku. With support from New Zealand Aid, the *Maluku Economic Recovery Program II* (MERP II) aims to strengthen local capacity to address key causes of conflict through economic development projects and peacebuilding activities that bring divided communities together. The program uses a community mobilization approach to economic development that is implemented by a team that includes both Muslims and Christians. Key activities include supporting community-based livelihood groups, providing technical assistance to strengthen livelihoods, and supporting peaceful dispute resolution.

Three theories of change linking economic activity with stability outcomes underlie the program:

1. By building economic and social relationships across lines of division (ethnic, religious, regional), stability will increase because people believe they will incur economic losses if fighting breaks out.
2. By building economic relationships across lines of division (ethnic, religious, regional), social cohesion will increase and communities will resist provocation.
3. By strengthening livelihoods in conflict-affected communities, stability will increase because community members recognize that their economic welfare benefits from peace.

3   Methodology

Data for the research project was collected as part of the program's economic mid-term and peacebuilding baseline assessments, which included two components:

1. A household survey, conducted in July 2010, which sampled nearly 400 respondents (10% of all project households) in 21 of 22 beneficiary villages.[2]
2. A participatory assessment, conducted concurrently in July 2010. Mercy Corps conducted a total of 48 focus group discussions using two participatory assessment tools: Disputes & Dispute Resolution and Scored Community Relationship Mapping.

By the time Mercy Corps received the EAPC research grant, the MERP II program had already started, and there was time to collect data only once in the life of the research grant. In addition, data collection did not include the use of control groups. Therefore, the findings from this study are not able to assess program impact. Rather, the research grant gave Mercy Corps the opportunity to 1) develop more rigorous measures and tools around the theories of change discussed above; 2) apply them in a field context; 3) assess the extent to which the tools were able to show correlations between economic and stability measures; and 4) develop tools that will be used to assess impact in future

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[2] A recent Mercy Corps Positive Deviance study was conducted in Hatu village and results from that study were compared with overall project findings.

programs. Challenges in data collection included the translation of the tools and data, ensuring accuracy given the sensitivity of the topics, and reluctance on the part of community members to discuss violence openly.

Data Collection Tools

Survey	124-item individual questionnaire covering livelihoods, security, relationships between divided communities, and dispute resolution.
Scored Community Relationship Mapping	Participatory assessment tool that identifies communities and external actors involved in conflict and describes relationships and social and economic interactions between actors.
Disputes & Dispute Resolution	Participatory assessment tool that identifies actors involved in local dispute resolution, evaluates effectiveness of local dispute resolution, and identifies common types of local conflict

Photograph: Elizabeth Sullivan/Mercy Corps

4   Preliminary Findings

Maluku is showing signs of recovery. Livelihoods are improving and every village described itself as being in a state of peace. This post-conflict context – where levels of violence are low and perceptions of peace are high – made it difficult to examine the relationship between economic activity and conflict. Moreover, communities were reluctant to discuss any lingering tensions. This made it difficult to determine if the self-ascribed state of peace is an accurate depiction of Maluku today, or if it hides underlying vulnerabilities that could be exacerbated by accelerated political, social, or economic change. This highlights the necessity of developing better measures and tools to assess latent tensions and underlying cleavages in communities that no longer confront open violence.

Preliminary results from the survey do not provide strong support for the idea that increased economic interactions and stronger livelihoods promote peace. In contrast, findings from the focus group discussions show that communities recognize the economic benefits of peace and feel a strong incentive to maintain that peace. The findings point to important considerations in peacebuilding program design, including the necessity of crafting economic development interventions in way that promotes mutually beneficial cooperation rather than competition and the relevance of trust-building measures to develop the relationships that permit trade and business to flourish.

4.1   Survey Findings

Livelihoods and Perceptions of Peace

The survey found no relationship between livelihoods and peace. Contrary to the theories of change outlined above, **as livelihoods improve, there is no associated decrease in levels of violence**. However, the survey also indicated that overall levels of violence are currently low, making it difficult to determine how the incidence of violence is impacted by changes in livelihoods. Likewise, the survey found that **as livelihoods improve, there is no associated increase in perceptions of peace**. These findings highlight the need for research methods which can assess underlying tensions and risk of future conflict in locations where there is an absence of overt violence.

Economic Interaction, Trust, and Perceptions of Peace

Given the displacement and balkanization of communities that occurred in the wake of the violence, economic interaction between communities has been slow to restart, and few economic relationships have been formed across lines of division. Where these relationships exist, the data show **no significant relationship between levels of economic interaction across lines of division and perceptions of trust or peace**.

Two interesting findings about economic interaction actually run counter to Mercy Corps hypotheses. First, **increased economic interaction is associated with *decreased* feelings of safety in common settings** such as the market, shared forests and gardens, and agricultural land in other villages. Second, **economic interactions between people from the same region, community, and religion are associated with an increase in perceptions of insecurity and a *decrease* in trust**. It is not clear what is driving these findings. It may be that as economic interactions increase, opportunities for competition and economic disputes also increase. Alternately, tensions may develop both between and within communities as some individuals prosper and others remain poor.

Nonetheless, most respondents indicated a willingness to start a business with a member of another community if the economic advantages were clear, although the majority also indicated that they would exercise caution with their finances with members of a different community. Even if it takes time for a deep level of trust to develop, this suggests that economic interaction is valued as a way of improving economic well-being and that people are willing to work together for mutual benefit.

While inconclusive, these findings suggest that simply increasing economic interaction is not sufficient to rebuild trust and promote peace between previously adversarial communities. Trust-building measures implemented alongside economic development activities may be needed to encourage trade and business relations. Care must be taken to select economic activities that promote mutually beneficial cooperation. Interventions that increase competition between and within communities may provoke tensions and exacerbate divisions. Finally, any real changes in income are likely to create some instability as power dynamics between community members shift.

4.2 Focus Group Discussions

Conflict Incidents in a Post-Conflict Context

Focus group discussions provided rich detail about the types of disputes that commonly arise in Maluku's post-conflict setting, including land and property disputes, alcohol-related disputes, and domestic disputes. Other reported potential threats to peace included upcoming elections, natural disasters, and a conflict similar to the one in the past. Violence appears to be rare, and there is little open conflict along communal lines.

Land & Property Disputes

Every village cited land and property disputes as a common type of conflict in their community. Land disputes tend to be lingering debates about ownership, while property disputes primarily involve accusations of harvest theft, disputes over inheritance, and accusations of crop damage from livestock. While not currently associated with overt violence, if left untreated land and property disputes are underlying vulnerabilities that could contribute to future violence.

M&E in Action: Learning from the Disputes & Dispute Resolution Tool

Positively Framing Sensitive Issues

In the post-conflict environment of Maluku, there is strong social pressure not to openly discuss past conflict. In one village, participants were initially reluctant to name disputes that occur within the village. Women feared that discussing disputes was a form of gossip and cautioned the facilitator not to "*cungkel,*" part of an Ambonese Malay expression meaning "do not dig again what has happened in the past." However, the Disputes & Dispute Resolution tool was designed to frame the discussion in terms of what is working to resolve current disputes as they arise rather than discussing root causes of communal conflict. The participatory assessment tool allowed the facilitators the flexibility to navigate cultural sensitivities and provided the necessary space to reassure participants that the discussion was an opportunity to learn how communities manage disputes - not an exercise in revisiting past conflict.

Alcohol Use

Alcohol use and abuse was cited as a major source of tension and a threat to future peace. Community members from 15 out of 19 villages listed alcohol-related violence as one of the most frequent causes of disputes in their communities. Alcohol abuse raises two key concerns for community members: concerns that small skirmishes between youth abusing alcohol will escalate into violence, and concerns that youth and men who abuse alcohol will fail to meet communal obligations and will disrupt the community.

Domestic Violence

Community members – primarily women – in 6 of 19 communities cited domestic violence a common type of dispute. The taboo nature of the subject may have resulted in under-reporting.

Livelihoods and Stability

Focus groups highlighted the economic benefits of peace, providing a more nuanced view of the relationship between economics and conflict than the surveys. For example, **community members describe peace in terms of its economic benefits**. Thirteen of 19 villages provided descriptions of the economic benefits of peace, with several highlighting the ability to do 'daily farming activities' as the most important indication of peace.

The focus groups also suggest an interpretation of the association between improved livelihoods and the decrease in trust found by the survey: jealousy toward those benefiting from improved livelihoods. Jealousy of economic status and unequal distribution of aid were cited as one of the types of disputes faced in 11 out of 19 communities. This echoes some of the drivers of past communal conflict. Though often characterized along religious lines, conflict in Maluku was largely driven by economic and political competition.[3] Strong social pressure on equity and transparency exists today. For example, several focus group participants asked Mercy Corps to make it publicly known that they did not unfairly benefit from participation in the discussion. Jealousy and economic inequity contributed to past-conflict and remain important trends to monitor.

Economic Interaction and Stability

Although the survey did not find a significant relationship between economic interaction and stability, **some communities perceive relationships between communities as benefiting overall peace**. As one participant in the Scored Community Relationship Mapping focus group explained, "Interaction between villagers and traders benefits not only the economy, but also in general. People see this interaction as a good sign of peace in the village." One possible explanation for the different results is that while individual fears may arise from increased economic interaction, there are strong perceived benefits to the group.

Focus groups suggest that **there is an economic incentive to maintain the peace** currently experienced in these communities. Each focus group believed they would incur economic losses if fighting broke out. Reasons cited for these losses included disruption of trade and interaction with other communities, decrease in safety and security, no assistance/support (government or NGO) will reach the village, disruption of transportation, movement, and communication, and disruption of harvest, production, and daily activities.

M&E in Action: Learning from the Disputes & Dispute Resolution Tool

Understanding unforeseen community dynamics

The Disputes & Dispute Resolution tool allowed Mercy Corps to gain deeper insight into not only *what* mechanisms for resolving communal disputes are most effective in each community, but also *why*. Most communities generated very similar lists of key dispute resolution actors that often reflected the traditional village structure. However, discussion and probing revealed dynamics within and between communities that program officers had not previously understood. In several villages, Mercy Corps found divisions within the community regarding trust of a village leader. Despite months of working in the community, the program officer was unaware that many had low confidence in the leader. Discussions revealed unforeseen and divergent views of the village leaders' effectiveness. Using a participatory assessment tool created the space and encouraged debate among participants that ultimately revealed unforeseen divisions within the community.

Peaceful Dispute Resolution

It is notable that every village described a mediation process that is employed to address disputes as they arise. Under this process, disputes are first addressed directly through dialogue between the affected parties and, when necessary, with the assistance of a combination of traditional (Adat), religious and government leaders. In one Christian community, the *Dan Pos*, a Muslim, is cited as the most effective person to resolve alcohol and youth related disputes.

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[3] For further reading, see International Crisis Group 2000. "Indonesia's Maluku Crisis: The Issues." Indonesia Briefing. Jakarta/Brussels: International Crisps Group. (2000), pp. 1-10.

4.3   Recommendations

Challenges faced during data collection included: 1) reluctance to discuss violence openly due to fear that this would re-start conflict or cause bad feelings; 2) the difficulty of measuring underlying tensions rather than overt violence; 3) and survey fatigue on the part of communities. Recommendations to address the challenges faced during data collection are:

- Consideration should be given as to whether questions about violence are more appropriately asked in a confidential one-on-one interview or in a small group discussion. Additional methods to triangulate data should be favored, including records of violent incidents maintained by local authorities. Additionally, positively framing sensitive issues is an approach that seemed to be effective and could be repeated.
- As described in the preliminary findings, it was difficult to ascertain underlying tensions that might give rise to future violence. Multiple methods could be helpful in the future, including observing over time the type of language used by leaders or community members to characterize various in-groups or out-groups. Implementing a more focused set of instruments could facilitate further exploration into particularly sensitive areas of post-conflict settings, such as land and property issues, to determine imbedded threats to peace.
- To avoid survey fatigue, in addition to placing an emphasis on community learning and ownership of knowledge, tools should be paired down to ask only the most essential questions. Use of existing analyses should be exhausted to determine whether additional research is required.

Two of the most difficult challenges faced during data analysis were related to complexity. A broad range of nuanced and multilayered questions were included in the survey tool and the participatory tools. Not only did these make coding and data analysis time consuming, they also seemed to generate inconsistent data, suggesting that respondents experienced difficulty in disentangling the subtle distinctions within questions. Recommendations for improved data analysis include:

- Focus on a limited number of more precise, less nuanced questions to reduce error in both survey and focus group data.
- Simplify participatory tools and survey so that they take less time to administer, more interviews can be conducted, and sample size can increase.
- Favor forced choice questions in the survey instrument. This can be done by developing and testing a primary survey instrument, identifying the most frequently cited responses to a particular question, and then directly asking yes/no questions about each listed item.

5   Indicators

Indicators varied in their ability to capture accurate information and their relevance to the changes in conditions that evaluators were trying to measure. Where feasible, indicators were included in multiple data collection tools to see if different data collection methods yielded different results.

5.1   Indicator Analysis

1: Strengthening Livelihood Opportunities

Livelihood opportunities were measured by asking survey respondents to estimate total income from all livelihoods activities. The potential for under-reporting for questions regarding livelihoods and

income is high, as individuals view Mercy Corps as a potential source for livelihood strengthening and see a benefit in demonstrating continued need for support. In the future, it would be worthwhile integrating measures to triangulate changes in livelihoods opportunities, such as observations of well-being as indicated by ownership of material goods or level of activity in the marketplace.

2: Level of general economic interaction

The survey and the focus groups revealed higher levels of social interaction than economic interaction between communities. For example, the most frequently cited types of interaction were sporting events (55% of respondents) and religious events (49% of respondents), with employment only named by 6% of respondents and other forms of economic interaction rarely mentioned.

This finding is of interest on two levels. First, it is notable that in these communities with a history of tension, there appears to be a high level of social interaction, which could be indicative of improvements in social cohesion. While there are inconclusive connections between increased social cohesion and a reduction in violence in the peacebuilding literature, additional research on this subject is merited.

Second, the *MERP II* project divided economic development and peacebuilding interventions, providing them in a sequential manner rather than as an integrated approach. Peacebuilding and economic projects are best designed in an integrated fashion, instead of sequentially. Integrated poverty and peacebuilding projects enhance economic cooperation among communities, promoting economic interdependence and thereby providing an incentive for actors to work together in their economic interests. This includes an incentive towards maintaining peace so as to avoid negative impacts on their economic well-being. It should be noted that markets were completely divided during the conflict and then reintegrated. Further research into perceptions of the quality of interaction between the communities during times of stability could clarify whether these communities perceive economic interaction as purely transactional.

3: Participation in economic associations

Economic associations are a formal type of economic interaction and are assumed to create economically interdependent relationships. Fewer than 20% of survey respondents affirmed participation in an economic association with other communities. More focused analysis determining the extent to which these associations reflect economic cooperation between communities with a history of tension is necessary to determine the impact of this form of economic interaction. There is no association between membership in formal economic associations and perceptions of stability.

4: Perceptions of peace and security

All communities who participated in the Disputes & Dispute Resolution focus groups described their communities as being in a state of peace. In contrast, the survey revealed more nuanced responses to perceptions of peace. Approximately 50% of communities, for example, describe their communities as "somewhat peaceful," and approximately 20% of respondents reported that their communities are "neither peaceful nor violent." This discrepancy may be due to the varying assessment formats. Individuals may be more comfortable giving honest replies during a one-on-one interview than those responding in group-based discussions, particularly given the importance of communal goodwill and saving 'face' in these communities. When asked whether the level of violence in the target village/neighborhood increased, decreased, or stayed about the same compared to last year, there is

evidence of a positive trend, with nearly 55% of respondents indicating there was a decrease in violence over the past year.

5: Freedom of movement

This indicator presents a challenge in terms of determining what is meant by % change in freedom of movement. Ideally, field teams would break this down in a way that makes sense for their particular program. In the case of Indonesia, the question that was posed on the survey to assess changes in freedom of movement was, "Do you feel safe in the following locations in your villages? Do you feel safe in the following locations in other villages?" In terms of assessing safety of movement in their own villages, only 7% of interviewees identified any area within their own villages where they do not feel safe. Of those that named a location where they feel unsafe, forest and agricultural land was the most frequently named. This is unsurprising, given that in the focus group discussions, disputes over land and property were the most commonly reported types of disputes, with theft of produce being a frequent type of dispute.

There is quite a contrast to perceptions of safety when in other villages, with nearly 25% of respondents indentifying an area where they feel unsafe in other villages. While people describe their communities as being in a state of peace in the focus group discussions, the survey revealed that the peace might have geographic bounds, with a perception of decreased security in other villages. In both their own villages and in other villages, the area cited with the most fear of movement is forest/garden/agricultural land, which was identified in 66 instances.

A distinction should be made between perception and behavior, as the questions assess perceptions of safety rather than actual changes in movement. The indicator reveals rich information, particularly when one looks carefully into the differences in safety perceptions within and between villages as well as actual locales. Interestingly, focus group discussions universally described their communities as peaceful. This contradiction may suggest that individuals separate perceptions of individual safety in terms of freedom of movement and the level of peacefulness at the community and village level.

6: Number of reported incidents of violence

Individuals had dificultly remembering incident numbers on both the survey and in focus groups. Numbers reported through the survey varied considerably within a given village. This could reflect differences in knowledge of incidents from one individual to another or could reflect reluctance to report violence. Using the Disputes & Dispute Resolution tool, participants were asked to report the number of times each type of dispute occurred in their communities in the last three months. Generating an exact number was very difficult. Most respondents used vague descriptions such as "often", "frequently", or "occasionally," so this might mean the question would be better posed with these type of forced choice responses, rather than asking for particular numbers of incidents of violent incidents.

Participants were then asked how often the dispute led to violence. This approach generated rich qualitative data on types of disputes that most frequently escalate into a violent incident, but did not strengthen the general indicator of number of reported incidents of violence. Given these challenges, monitoring forms that track incidents as they occur may be more reliable than asking someone to reflect back over a given period of time. Regular monitoring of incidents of violence through other means, such as police reports or community-based records, would allow triangulation.

7: Attitudes toward peace and violence

This indicator was measured in both the Disputes & Dispute Resolution tool as well as in the survey. Attitudes toward violence were consistently disapproving, with all focus groups asserting that violence is never justified, even in communities reporting incidents of violence.

5.2 Measuring Indicators: Data Collection Tools and Questions

The indicator numbers in the following table correspond to the indicators in Section 5.1

Indicator	Tool	Question
1	Survey	"How much are your average monthly total earnings from all of these sources of income? How would you compare your financial situation to last year? What explains the difference? Have you adopted any new livelihood related techniques/skills this past year?"
2	Survey	"How do you interact with other communities? "If yes, how did you interact?" *trade/at the market, cacao trading center, livelihood association, borrowing or lending money, employment, other*
	Scored Community Relationship Mapping	"What type of interactions are there between A and B?"
3	Survey	"Do you have any economic associations that also include members of X community?"
4	Survey	"In relation to levels of peace, where does your village belong? Compared to last year, has the level of violence in this village/neighborhood increased, decreased, or stayed about the same?"
	Disputes & Dispute Resolution	"How do you define the word 'peace'? Describe what happens in their community when there is peace. How do you know when there is peace between these communities? Does your community feel that there is peace now? What issues, if any, do you worry might threaten the current peace?"
5	Survey	"Do you feel safe in the following locations in your village? *school, place of worship, market, police station, government office, port, bus, terminal, forests, gardens, agricultural land, other*"
	Survey	"Do you feel safe in the following locations in other villages? *school, place of worship, market, police station, government office, port, bus, terminal, forests, gardens, agricultural land, other*"
6	Survey	"To your knowledge, have there been any incidents of violence in your village in the last 3 months? If yes, about how many incidents occurred?"
	Disputes & Dispute Resolution	Ask the group to estimate the number of times each type of dispute occurred in the last 3 months. Aske if the dispute ever led a violent incident.
7	Survey	"Are there any situations in which you think violence is justified? If so, please describe which situations and why."
	Dispute & Dispute Resolution	"Are there situations where you think violence is justified? If so, what situations? Why?" You may probe further by asking questions such as "What if your property or livelihood is threatened?"

6 Data Collection Tools: Challenges and Recommendations

6.1 Individual Survey

The survey allowed the researchers to collect enough data (n = 338) to conduct statistical analysis with significant results. Challenges included:

- The length of the survey (124 items) made it time-consuming. The instrument attempted to achieve multiple objectives: a) assess impact of program activities, b) establish baseline measures for the peacebuilding component, and c) test tools and indicators for the present study. In hindsight, fewer questions may have resulted in higher quality data with less 'noise.'
- Using multiple sub-questions made data analysis very complex and time-consuming.
- Questions that aimed to capture increasing nuance provided little additional data.
- It was difficult to translate key concepts into the local languages.

Recommendations: Remove questions that are duplicative, focus on key research questions, and remove nuance, all of which will ideally provide more succinct answers over a shorter time period. Build in more time for translation of the surveys during the training period.

6.2   Disputes and Dispute Resolution

The Disputes & Dispute Resolution tool measured the perceived effectiveness of different types of dispute resolution actors within a community, the frequency and impact of types of disputes, and determined a baseline for "peace" at the community level. Challenges with this tool included:

- In Maluku, there are currently few incidents of overt violent conflict and the Disputes & Disputes Resolution tool was explicitly designed to discuss *current* conflict. Therefore, communities tended to discuss social disputes, such as domestic violence or violence associated with alcohol use. This tool was not able to capture underlying tensions between communities or potential triggers of violent conflict.
    - o *Tested Improvement:* Mercy Corps sought to establish a community-generated indicator for peace and disputes. This will serve as the baseline against which field staff will compare disputes and peace in the future.
    - o *Tested Improvement:* Mercy Corps wanted to ensure that issues of land tenure and natural resources were explicitly addressed. If these issues were not mentioned as a type of dispute, participants were asked if these issues occurred within and between communities. Doing so opened discussion of these conflict drivers that the general discussion of disputes did not generate.
    - o *Tested Improvement:* Mercy Corps posed specific questions addressing livelihoods-related disputes, including: "Is your economic well-being better off in times of peace? Are there situations where you think violence is justified? If so, what situations? Why? What if your property or livelihood is threatened?"

M&E in Action: Learning from Participatory Assessments

Gender and Group Dynamics

In Maluku, Mercy Corps felt it was important to separate focus groups by gender. Initially, two facilitation teams were designed to lead separate focus groups: a male facilitator and note-taker team for the male focus group and a female team to facilitate the women's group.

In practice, participants appeared more comfortable and willing to discuss sensitive topics when separated by gender, but the gender of the facilitation team was less important. The two facilitation teams developed strengths in administering one of the two participatory assessment tools and found that switching groups actually increased participation and kept respondents engaged longer. In several cases, the male facilitation team fostered very honest discussions of social and domestic disputes with female participants. Similarly, the female facilitation team was often better able to encourage participation with the male group. Fostering an open and honest environment built on trust was more important than the gender of the facilitation team.

Generally, women's focus groups generated a lively debate between participants whereas the all-male groups often established an informal hierarchy within participants from the outset. Facilitators recognized these dynamics and developed strategies to ensure total group participation, including calling on each participant by name for their opinion, using humor to put the group at ease, and managing participants who dominated the conversation respectfully.

- Using counters encouraged participation and stimulated discussion between participants, but did not generate precise quantitative measures of violent incidents. When asked how often a specific dispute occurred in the past three months, respondents often struggled to provide an exact number and stated that they did not know how often specific disputes occurred. Instead,

respondents tended to answer in vague terms such as "occasionally" or "frequently," rather than provide exact numbers.

Recommendations: Ask a series of questions about types of disputes that may occur between villages and communities in order to better capture underlying tensions. Use counters to stimulate participation and to visually represent magnitude, not to generate exact numbers of violent incidents.

6.3 Scored Community Relationship Mapping

This tool generated information on the quality of relationships between influential actors and conflict-affected communities, explored why these relationships were good or bad, and asked participants to explain what could improve bad relationships and promote peace. This tool generated a list of types of interaction that were context sensitive and can be used in future tool development. It also helped program staff understand how communities perceive interaction. Typical social interaction centered on religious activities, communal projects, and cultural events whereas economic interactions included activities related to trade and assistance from NGOs and governments. Challenges of this tool included:

- Open rivalries between communities and villages are not well known nor are they regarded as meaningful indicators of stability today. Given the role of external actors on local conflict dynamics, the Scored Community Relationship Mapping tool was modified to focus on relationships between influential external actors and communities rather than focusing on conflicts between communities. This modification generated a discussion of a broader range of influences without fear of discussing past conflict. It also prevented limiting the scope to past rivalries that would have failed to accurately capture current community dynamics.
  - o *Tested Improvement:* Each focus group began with a discussion to first define "community." Respondents were then asked a series of questions to establish what defined in-group and out-group identities throughout Maluku. Additional questions included: "Who are the different groups in your community? Who are the different groups in neighboring communities?"
- Communities were reluctant to discuss negative relationships. Respondents rarely named actors who negatively impacted the community or described a relationship as negative.
  - o *Tested Improvement*: Respondents often categorized relationships as good or very good, but rarely bad or very bad. In these cases, the facilitators asked a series of follow-up questions to understand why these relationships were positive. Questions included: "Should the frequency of interactions between A and B increase, stay the same, increase or decrease? What benefits do you receive from interaction? What activities/influences help build trust between A and B? In the last year, how has this relationship changed? What accounts for this change?" Ultimately, relationship scores were less informative than the insights generated by discussing the nature of each relationship.
- Respondents may have disproportionately discussed the benefits of economic interventions if they believed it would influence economic programming in their communities. Reliable data depends on respondents' willingness to honestly share their perspectives and not simply provide what they believe to be the correct answers.
  - o *Tested Improvement:* Mercy Corps asked additional questions to address the links between livelihoods and interaction, including: "What economic benefits do you receive from interaction? Will A incur economic loses if fighting breaks out?"
- Communities found it challenging to describe relationships between outside actors, because these are relationships that don't involve their community. These discussions were time consuming, generated little useful data, and were less engaging for participants.

Recommendations: Questions should focus on the relationships between the target communities and other communities/external actors involved in the conflict, as these are most readily evaluated by community members.

7   Conclusion

These findings present a range of interesting correlations that point towards future research. While these findings are very preliminary and cannot be taken as evidence of program impact, the central objective of *developing and testing measures and tools that start to capture relationships between economic variables and stability outcomes* was met. Most exciting, while the research project has ended, field teams are continuing to use, refine, and adapt the tools developed through this project and are beginning to show evidence of solid impact. For example, Mercy Corps Kenya adapted the EAPC tools to their youth employment program in the Rift Valley and a recent study of impact was able to show that young people who had some type of employment are less likely to participate in violence.

You must be the change
you wish to see in the world.

~ Gandhi

Be the change