Social capital and post-war reconstruction: Evidence from northern Mozambique

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Outline of presentation

1. Context: The civil war in Mozambique
2. Objectives
3. Methods
4. Findings
5. Policy recommendations
1. Context: The civil war in Mozambique

1976-1992 (Rome General Peace Accord)

War parties
- FRELIMO (government)
- RENAMO (rebel group)

Most actions of warfare took place in rural areas.

Massive destruction
- 1 million deaths
- 5 million displaced people
- 60% of primary schools destroyed
- 50% of roads impassable
- Landmines
- Number of cows dropped from 1.3 to 0.25 million
2. Objectives

Research Question:
- What is the role of social capital for post-war reconstruction in rural Mozambique?

Conceptual framework
- Positive externalities arise from social capital (Collier 2002).
- Asset vulnerability framework: Focus on a household’s asset base to gain insights into its vulnerability in a crisis (Moser 1998).
- Indicators of social capital used here:
  - trust
  - quality of relationships between community members
  - access to opportunities

Contribution to the literature
1. Highlights the role of soft factors for development.
2. Employs a medium-term horizon after end of conflict.
3. Methods

Qualitative ethnographic research in two rural communities
- narrative interviews with 15 households
- group discussions with local authority holders
- formal interviews with Ministry of Agriculture, district administration, and NGOs

Strengths
- allows grasping the rationale for strategies and behavior
- allows measuring the quality of social networks
- captures rumors, accusations, and perceptions of relative standing

Weaknesses
- results are not representative in a narrow statistical sense
- comparison of pre-war and post-war conditions not possible
Location of field communities
4. Research findings (I): Lack of trust

Theft reported as greatest threat to well-being
“We are cultivating for the thieves.”
– impact on livelihood strategies
– rumors on identity of thieves

Generational divide
“The young men misbehave.”
– young people lost Makua identity
– erosion of authority of the elderly

Mistrust in state institutions
“Bribery is now necessary everywhere.”

➡ Continuing insecurity causes negative incentives for development
4. Research findings (II): Decline in social networks

Rising inequality across households
“Rich people use unfair business or sorcery to get their wealth.”
- accusations of sorcery
- relatively better-off households are accused of neglecting their traditional duties of supporting poorer community members

Decline in social networks
- households lacking capability to reciprocate
- households headed by divorced or widowed women
- the elderly

Shift to the household as unit of risk-sharing
- divide between large and small households

→ Low levels of social capital cause the social isolation of households
4. Research findings (III): Few opportunities

Stagnant agricultural productivity
“Farm practices have not changed over the years.”
- young people did not acquire skills in farming
- break-down of markets for farm-inputs
- increasing land under cultivation is most important strategy

Land-governing institutions are weak
“Buying land is the most realistic option to get new land.”
- large proportions of migrants
- dynamic land markets
- traditional ways of accessing land loosing importance

Crop disease
“Many of the good varieties were lost during the war.”
- food insecurity

→ Unequal access to opportunities and loss of knowledge increase inequality across households
5. Implications for reconstruction policies

(1) Gain people’s trust in state and rule of law
   • improve communication
   • make local level of governance more visible

(2) Mitigate consequences of unequal development
   • public safety nets for the very vulnerable
   • access to microfinance
   • insurance against agricultural risks

(3) Enhance self-help capabilities of rural households
   • make knowledge on farming techniques available
   • stimulate cooperation within communities
     (support the forming of associations)
Thanks for your attention!