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Photo: USAID Somalia Transition Initiative

CONFLICT, STABILIZATION & PEACEBUILDING

DAI leverages expertise and adaptive operating models in countries amidst conflict, instability, or political transition to build resilient communities, empower local leadership, advance inclusive civil society, and support responsive institutions.

DAI
Shaping a more livable world.

Lessons Learned and Applied Across Geographies

DAI contributes to stabilization, peacebuilding, political transition, and stabilization initiatives worldwide. Through continuous strategy assessment, pause-and-reflect sessions, and cross program learning, DAI has identified important learning to apply across geographies. Our work reflects learning and adaptation in volatile or fragile environments to holistically approach intractable challenges, integrating conflict sensitive, trauma informed, multi-stakeholder responses. Here we highlight examples of lessons applied to advance programs in different contexts.





Parlimen Digital is a youth-led initiative to organize a virtual parliamentary sitting to propose recommendations to address the economic and health crisis in Malaysia. Photo: MARI.



Sofia Gedi, head of Wajir Human Rights Watch, speaks at the launch of the Wajir County Action Plan to Counter Violent Extremism. Photo: Hank Nelson/Kenya NIWETU.

SELECTED CASE STUDIES FROM ASIA

Using Social Network Analysis to Inform Programming

The **Malaysia Reform Initiative (MARI)** presented a unique window of opportunity to accelerate the Government's anticorruption agenda and advance participation and advocacy in a nontraditional donor country following a historic election. After assessing the operating context, the start-up team and the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID/OTI) agreed that a more detailed landscape assessment was needed to design tactical activities through the right actors and entry points. The client then decided to invest in a full social network analysis. The MARI team used the network map as a visual guide that catalyzed coalition-strengthening activities. When operating in a new or complex environment, a social network analysis can provide critical insight on the type and nature of relationships between key stakeholders in fragile or transition environments and inform strategic implementation.

Malaysia: 2019–2022
Client: USAID/OTI

Re-framing Traditional Structures for Culturally Viable Gender Inclusivity

In Pakistan, approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) and promoting peace and tolerance have traditionally focused on males. The **Pakistan Community Resilience Activity-South (CRA-S)** sought to leverage women's perspectives in decision making and conflict resolution through culturally appropriate mechanisms. The program had successfully collaborated with traditional community-based peace assemblies, called *wasaiib aman kaths* (WAKs), to serve as platforms for male community leaders to convene, identify, and mitigate VE issues. The project hypothesized that women-only WAKs could provide platforms for their voices. Initially, the initiative failed to gain traction or enhance women's agency in community security discussions as the WAK institution was culturally associated with men. In response, CRA-S re-branded the women's groups with a new local name, while engaging the male-dominated WAKs. The adjustment led to a rapid increase in participation and a grassroots demand, supported by male leaders, to participate at the policy level. We identify viable entry points by taking proactive steps in supporting alternative spaces that advance participation and build trust with community leaders.

Pakistan: 2017–2023
Client: USAID

SELECTED CASE STUDIES FROM SOUTHERN & EAST AFRICA

Complexity-Aware Systems Approach to CVE

Kenya NiWajibu Wetu (NIWETU) devised and fully operationalized a systems-based approach to CVE to strengthen capabilities of Kenyan stakeholders, establish linkages among CVE actors, and encourage communities and government actors to design and implement CVE initiatives. DAI worked closely with USAID to adapt the Office of Learning Evaluation and Research's Complexity-Aware Monitoring Discussion Note into a Complexity-Aware Planning Cycle Framework that included most significant change, process monitoring of impact, stakeholder feedback, participatory systematic inquiry, network mapping, and outcome mapping. The framework became the centerpiece of the program methodology and supported advance their nuanced understanding of VE drivers, track key actors, and capture actionable lessons from pilots. NIWETU operationalized the array of complexity-aware methods and observed outcome harvesting and sentinel indicators were most useful for identifying real-time changes on the ground. On other programs in volatile or evolving environments, DAI utilizes a core action-research model to generate the most operationally relevant insights.

Kenya: 2016–2022
Client: USAID

Partnering in Research

As the first USAID program based in Cabo Delgado, the **Mozambique Community Resilience Program (MCRP)** was tasked with undertaking research on the origins and motivations of the violence that had plagued the province since 2017. After several activities, the program learned that local organizations were more familiar with academic research that was not well-suited to researching sensitive dynamics around the conflict. Instead, MCRP learned that it was able to generate insights by delivering a series of small grants with tangible benefits. During the course of activity design and implementation, reliable and nuanced details about the local context and conflict dynamics naturally emerged, leading to greater contextual understanding as well as more relevant and impactful activities. The linkages fostered by these activities also enabled the program to continue to consult with partners on the dynamics and engage in meaningful exchanges of information, leading the program to adapt its strategy in favor of a relationship-based approach. DAI continues to apply this lesson in other contexts, particularly during scope development, as this reflects a more partner-focused and less extractive approach toward research.

Mozambique: 2019–2022
Client: USAID



DAI's Connie Paraskeva and Mayor Atitan Alcalde sign an MOU in San Juan, Guatemala. Photo: Nexos Locales.



Administrator's visit to the municipality of Pristina, Kosovo. Photo: TEAM.

SELECTED CASE STUDIES FROM LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Conducting Analysis in Real Time

The **Honduras Local Governance Activity** was unexpectedly tasked with analyzing root causes of irregular migration and developing an action plan in 45 calendar days. DAI's project team of local experts simultaneously convened working groups to examine assumed migration drivers against realities of local dynamics. The research analyst then facilitated a discussion with the research team to collectively synthesize information to develop actionable insights faster. Implementers with extensive local, regional, and global networks can readily identify information sources to produce hard data and combine that knowledge with their collective experience to contextualize the analysis in real time. DAI maintains a network of research analysts in each region to collaborate with, respond to and integrate new information. Designing engagements to analyze complex political situations in the field with local perspectives enables data-driven decision-making.

Honduras: 2016–2022
Client: USAID

Lay the Groundwork for Inclusion

Nexos Locales developed a first-of-its-kind Cultural Pertinence Strategy to expand on internal processes for increased collaboration with indigenous authorities and gain access to the highly marginalized communities through more culturally sensitive, inclusive, and contextually sustainable programming. The strategy led to three major initiatives to increase project acceptance: the development of animated characters celebrating cultural diversity in 50 online learning videos; the production of videos for a transparency smartphone application in multiple Maya languages; and the delivery of an all-staff cultural pertinence training. The successful engagement of indigenous groups also relied on investments made during start-up including establishing offices outside the capital and a diverse and representative team. Community members, in turn, perceived the project as unbiased and as representing the area's collective interests. By building trust and enhanced cultural pertinence investment produces dividends for both the program and key communities, beyond the initial engagement.

Guatemala: 2014–2023
Client: USAID

SELECTED CASE STUDIES FROM EUROPE

Identify the Right Catalyst

Kosovo Transparent Effective and Accountable Municipalities Project (TEAM) improved procurement transparency. TEAM encouraged municipalities to publish contracts on municipal websites to enable public oversight. Despite training sessions and intensive outreach to officials, key partners were slow to adapt ingrained behavior. TEAM staff pivoted to support the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network to produce a televised debate on public procurement, fact-check elected mayors' statements committing to publish procurement contracts and publish an online "Krypometer" that rated officials' follow-through. TEAM used the Krypometer and pressure from a coalition of civil society organizations to generate transparency support. In collaboration with TEAM, a key municipality proceeded to make contracts public on its website for the first time and, with the positive coverage the mayor received in the press and civil society, other mayors followed suit. This original failure demonstrates the importance of identifying catalysts to be the faces of desired project outcomes. DAI consistently leverages actor mapping to highlight individuals who can be truly catalytic in influencing broad audiences where change is slow to come.

Kosovo: 2017–2022
Client: USAID

Leveraging Shared Interests Across Political Divides

The **Moldova Agricultural Competitiveness and Enterprise Development** project was the first enterprise development activity in the break-away region of Transnistria. The project began during charged times—when a Moldovan was shot and killed at a checkpoint, and the U.S. Ambassador was barred from entering the region. DAI built cross-Nistru connections by framing activities in apolitical terms of financial benefit to individual citizens in the form of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise development. In practice, activities intentionally created cross-Nistru person-to-person and business-to-business ties to improve social fabric across the line of conflict. The cross-Nistru economic ties proved to be a useful confidence-building tool for opening dialogue and building trust among citizens and the private sector. DAI maximizes neutrality and facilitates engagement across political parties, ethnic or linguistic groups, and geographies by establishing a foundation of trust that enables bridging divides over time.

Moldova: 2011–2016
Client: USAID