

RAPID RESPONSE FUNDS - EVALUATION

The Rapid Response Concept

The Rapid Response Fund (RRF) concept recognises that in a conflict situation you need to act quickly and that people on the ground have the best knowledge of how and where money needs to be spent. With this in mind, the RRF was set-up to provide local committees with money which they could spend without prior approval by a donor. This approach eliminated the delay of requesting funds from overseas funders and gave committees, made up of well-informed and capable local people, executive decision making over conflict interventions.

Independent evaluation of the RRF's has now been completed and overall the RRF has been seen to be a positive intervention and the main criticism is not so much with the concept itself but the way it was managed and especially recorded. It has proven to be difficult in all cases to adequately identify the impacts of the RRF and information has been lost. As such, the true impact and activity of the RRF has not always been reflected in the evaluations and this needs to be addressed in the future.

Full details are available by clicking here (and then go to rest of this and two separate reports on Kenya & Nepal)

The RRFs have proven to broadly achieve the initial concept and have served to be a highly reactive and, indeed, rapid mechanism for response. Peace Direct's experiences and lessons learnt from evaluations in Nepal and Kenya have confirmed that RRF has its place as a tool for conflict resolution but as a stand-alone tool has its limitations. Taking on-board these lessons, the current RRF activities in Sudan and Nepal have been adapted to incorporate some of these lessons.

Peace Direct's Funding of Rapid Response to Date

Peace Direct has supported Rapid Response Funds since 2005, mainly in Kenya and Nepal. To date approximately £90,000 has been spent on them as follows:

Spent to Date:

Kenya = £57,500

Nepal = £31,700

On-going:

South Kordofan = £22,000

Blue Nile State = £6,000

Nepal = £5,600

Below is an outline of some of the key lessons learnt followed by a more rounded approach for future Rapid Response Funds.

Key Lessons Learnt from Nepal and Kenya

Obviously, the contexts in Nepal and Kenya are very different, both in terms of the conflict and our partners. However, the evaluations have identified some shared lessons, although Kenya stands out as needing a more rigid and formalised RRF mechanism. Below are the key lessons from both:

- The flexibility in approach and speed in assistance of the RRF are important in a conflict situation

- RRF money can secure livelihoods and reinforce trust, lending support to credible institutions
- There can be a disjuncture between putting out flames and addressing root causes of conflict
- Rapid response often builds on existing structures or interventions which makes it very difficult to separate and evaluate
- Action should not be confined to periods of tension
- Information needs to be shared to avoid duplication with other efforts
- Guidelines and criteria are needed for RRF but it is essential that this does not detract from local decision making or the speed to respond
- There needs to be greater monitoring and evaluation of RRF interventions
- Voluntary staff have their limitations
- Short term work (rapid response) can have a huge impact on long term change

Narrative Summary

In general, each evaluation has agreed that RRF is a useful tool but (especially in the Kenya case) it is only one in the toolbox and as a stand alone tool it is simply firefighting. Whilst firefighting may only stop conflicts escalating rather than actually resolving them, the findings do suggest that RRF is a good way of entering into longer term responses to conflict - what Dekha Ibrahim in Kenya refers to as 'strategic' rather than 'reactive' Rapid Response. For example, by having a 'reactive' response to a conflict, contact with those in the conflict is made and trust between the parties and the rapid response staff is built. This then presents an opportunity to work with the conflicting parties further and to identify and address the root causes of the conflict. Had no RRF been available, that initial contact would not have been made.

The nature of RRF requires the use of the funds to have few limitations and restrictions, certainly in terms of bureaucracy to ensure a timely application of the money. This has led, understandably, to few restrictions by Peace Direct. However, it is evident that, at times, RRF money has needed some criteria and a slightly more formalised and rigid structure. This includes the flow of information, the involvement of all committee members in decision making and the payment of salaries for key staff. It is also necessary to have more monitoring and evaluation and more record keeping of what the intervention was, what the outcome was and how much it cost.

Recommendations for the future

Based on the lessons above, all future RRF activities will:

- Be attached to a more defined project addressing the root causes of the conflict
- Be accompanied by guidelines and criteria for intervention
- Will have a quorum for decision making committees
- At a minimum, have one paid position responsible for documenting the intervention, cost and outcome and reporting to Peace Direct

Already, we have taken these lessons on board. Our newest RRFs are in the Blue Nile State and South Kordofan State in Sudan and each RRF is secondary to a more defined project on election sensitisation amongst local communities. As part of the sensitisation process, elected committees have been created through which to channel RRF money. Therefore, the projects now have defined objectives (election awareness) whilst creating a mechanism for 'strategic' long term solutions to conflict (the committees). This is then complimented by the availability of a RRF which enables the committees to respond to conflict whilst at the same time strengthening their credibility within the communities which they work.

