

INTERSECTORAL PARTNERSHIPS AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POST-CONFLICT GOVERNANCE

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Abstract. The central theme of this paper is the use of intersectoral partnerships as an instrument of post-conflict governance. It focuses on relations among government institutions, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, businesses, and civil society institutions. The study draws on scholarly publications from 2023 to 2026 concerning Somalia, Iraq, Palestine, Azerbaijan, and other post-conflict settings. The methodology is a qualitative comparative analysis of secondary data. Three indicators of partnership effectiveness are identified: resource complementarity, partner participation in decision-making processes, and the creation of joint institutional mechanisms. The Somalia case shows that a high level of implementation of externally funded programs can be achieved without adequate integration of financing into the national system. Research on Palestine indicates that some NGOs depend on donor agendas. Sustainable outcomes can be achieved through the transfer of skills and knowledge to public authorities and the active participation of local communities.

Keywords: Intersectoral Partnerships, Post-Conflict Governance, Collaborative Governance, Public Policy, Civil Society, Institutional Design, Post-Conflict Reconstruction

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Introduction

Post-conflict governance requires the restoration of public services while simultaneously rebuilding the capacity of state institutions to make and implement decisions. In Iraq, following the adoption of the 2005 Constitution, the formal restoration of institutions did not eliminate problems of corruption, ethno-sectarian tensions, and the provision of basic services; the 2018 protests in Basra were associated with disruptions in water and electricity supply [2].

Resource shortages expand the role of non-state actors. In Somalia, international health programs included more than 170 projects totaling USD 73.5 million, with an implementation rate of approximately 95.6%, while

private providers delivered about 80% of healthcare services [3]. This model maintains access to healthcare but increases external dependence.

The purpose of this paper is to identify the conditions under which intersectoral partnership becomes a policy instrument rather than a temporary substitute for weak state institutions. The research question is: what forms of interaction among the state, NGOs, businesses, international organizations, and local communities simultaneously address reconstruction needs and strengthen the autonomy of the governance system?

Literature Review

Studies published in 2023–2026 show that post-conflict governance cannot be reduced to the restoration of formal state institutions. R. V. Parma compares data from 101 countries and 106 political systems and demonstrates that power-sharing institutional arrangements produce different outcomes [1]. Formal representation of groups does not automatically eliminate conflict when local mechanisms for reconciling interests remain weak. This position provides the starting framework for the analysis of intersectoral partnerships: what matters is not the number of institutions created, but the capacity of different actors to jointly address specific public problems.

The problem becomes more visible in the case of Iraq. H. M. Alwan links the difficulties of post-conflict reconstruction to corruption, weak judicial mechanisms, and persistent ethno-sectarian tensions following the adoption of the 2005 Constitution [2]. In 2010, government formation took nine months, while the 2018 protests in Basra were associated, among other issues, with disruptions in water and electricity supply [2]. Here, institutional deficits are manifested through the quality of services. Accordingly, partnership between government and civic/professional organizations is relevant only when it helps solve the problem rather than creating additional layers of intermediaries.

The study on Somalia shifts this problem from the political/legal level to measurable governance terms. In 2020, 96.8% of donor funding for the health sector was allocated off-budget; NGOs managed 61% of these funds, UN organizations 30%, and government organizations 3% [3]. At the same time, more than 170 projects totaling USD 73.5 million were implemented, with a fund implementation rate of 95.6% [3]. This demonstrates a distinction between a partnership network's capacity to deliver services and a high implementation rate, which does not necessarily imply the development of governance capacity within the state.

The work of R. Al Jayousi and Y. Nishide complements this conclusion from the perspective of civil society. The authors conducted 20 interviews and 18 surveys of leaders of Palestinian organizations across 12 sectors and identified three interconnected institutional traps [4]. In 8 of the 18 organizations, board members simultaneously served on the boards of other organizations [4]. Such a structure increases professional interconnectedness within the sector but also creates a risk of closed networks and limited representation of local groups; therefore, NGO participation does not necessarily mean citizen participation.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Intersectoral cooperation is defined as sustained relationships between at least two sectors in which the parties share resources and shape the process of implementing a public decision. The first criterion is resource complementarity, including financial resources, expertise, infrastructure, data, or access to the target group. The second criterion is joint decision-making before project parameters are approved. The third criterion is institutionalization—that is, a situation in which, after project procedures are completed, data and oversight mechanisms remain within the public sector.

This approach is based on a comparative qualitative analysis of scholarly literature published in 2023–2026. In this study, the unit of analysis is the interaction mechanism. Each case is examined in terms of the participating actors, the nature of the resource, participation in decision-making, accountability, and the delegation of functions to the state/local institution. Qualitative information extracted from the selected studies was analyzed within the comparative framework described above.

Results and Discussion

Four parameters are used to compare the cases: the composition of partners, a confirmed empirical fact, the principal governance risk, and a criterion that can be used in subsequent research. The comparison is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 — Comparative Characteristics of Intersectoral Partnerships in the Cases Examined

Case	Participants	Empirical Fact	Governance Risk	Criterion for Further Analysis
Somalia	State, donors, NGOs, UN	96.8% of donor funds outside the budget system; 61% managed by NGOs, 30% by the UN, and 3% by government organizations [3]	Parallel financial and information systems	Share of functions and data transferred to public institutions
Palestinian organizations	NGOs, donors, local groups	20 interviews, 18 surveys, 12 sectors; overlapping board membership recorded in 8 of 18 organizations [4]	Closed networks and limited representation	Actual participation of local groups in setting priorities
Iraq	State institutions, civic and professional organizations	2005 Constitution; government formation in 2010 took 9 months; protests in Basra in 2018 [2]	Gap between formal institutions and service quality	Relationship between partnership and access to a specific public service

Social economy	State, cooperatives, social enterprises, local initiatives	Microfinance, vocational training, and women's and youth initiatives are used [5]	Fragmentation of small projects and weak links to strategic planning	Sustainability of employment and local economic ties
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The first finding is the distinction between service delivery and institutional strengthening. In Somalia, more than 170 healthcare projects achieved a high implementation rate for external financing [3], yet 96.8% of donor funds in 2020 were channeled outside the national budget system [3]. The management structure for part of these funds is shown in Figure 1: NGOs accounted for 61%, UN entities for 30%, and government organizations for only 3% [3]. The partnership addressed the immediate service-delivery task but limited the accumulation of financial and managerial functions within state institutions.

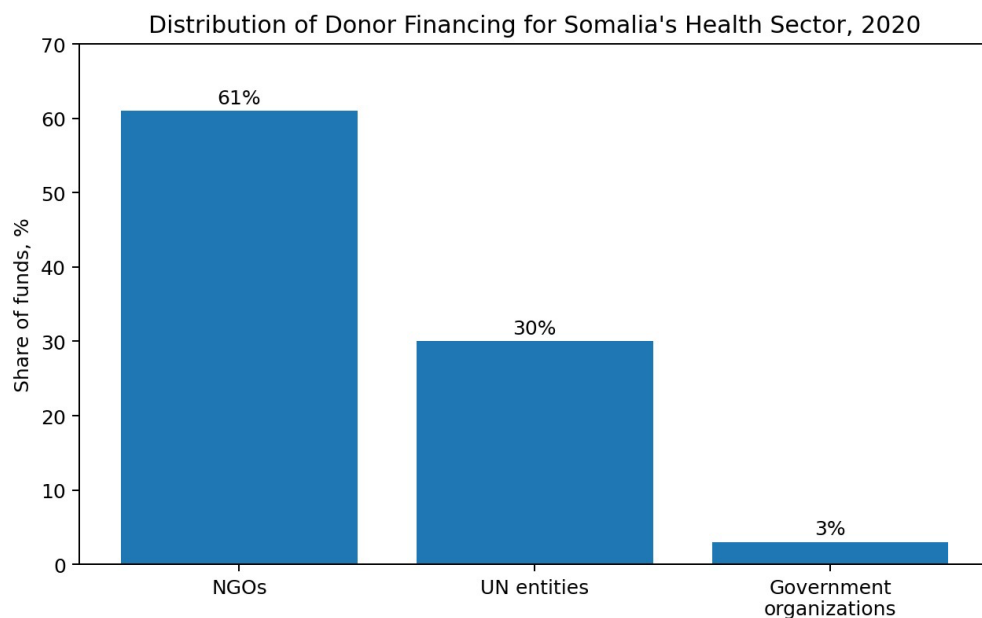


Figure 1 — Distribution of Donor Financing for Somalia's Health Sector Among Major Recipients in 2020, % [3]

As Figure 1 shows, most external financing was concentrated among non-state and international actors: NGOs accounted for 61%, UN entities for 30%, while government organizations managed 3% of the funds [3]. This distribution confirms the paper's central problem: intersectoral interaction can produce strong short-term results, but without transferring financial procedures, data, and competencies to public institutions, it preserves the system's dependence on external actors.

The second finding concerns civil society. Research conducted in Palestine showed that an NGO network can contribute to donor dependence as well as secrecy [4]. In post-conflict policymaking, it is necessary to distinguish between professional NGOs and local communities: the former possess organizational capacity, while

the latter possess information about the population's actual needs. Representation of local interests requires participation.

The third conclusion concerns the timing of partner involvement in the process. An analysis of three cases of disputes in urban planning showed that community participation at the early stages of the process makes it possible to incorporate interests before the conflict takes on a destructive form [6]. This strategy can be applied during reconstruction in the allocation of housing and land, the provision of social services, and job creation.

The fourth conclusion concerns economic recovery. Social entrepreneurship, cooperatives, microfinance, and vocational development programs engage people through employment and entrepreneurship [5]. These mechanisms are particularly important when businesses have little interest in undertaking low-profit projects.

Comparing the cases, three types of partnership can be distinguished: the resource level, where a partner compensates for shortages of money, services, or competencies; the procedural level, where participants jointly determine priorities; and the institutional level, where procedures become part of the public governance system and continue beyond the project period. In Somalia, partnership is strong at the resource level and weak at the institutional level [3]; in Palestine, there are certain limitations in representation [4]; and the literature on local community participation confirms the need for early community involvement [6].

A pragmatic approach to evaluating partnership can include five questions: who controls the budget; who owns the core data; who can make changes to the project; who represents the local population; and which functions remain in the public sector after external financing ends? Even where effectiveness is high, dependence exists if the budget, core data, and key competencies belong to an external actor. This framework can be used by other scholars as a minimum set of variables for comparative analysis of governance in post-conflict societies. It makes it possible to code cases according to five testable criteria: budget control, data ownership, the right to modify the project, the form of representation of local groups, and the retention of functions after financing ends.

This approach makes studies of donor assistance, NGOs, the social economy, and local participation—which are usually examined separately—comparable. For empirical testing of the model in subsequent research, these characteristics should be recorded at the start of a project and again one or two years after external support has been reduced.

Conclusion

Intersectoral partnerships produce sustainable effects when they address a specific resource deficit while simultaneously increasing the capacity of public institutions to perform the corresponding function independently. Somalia demonstrates that a high level of program implementation does not guarantee institutional sustainability when off-budget channels predominate [3]. The Palestinian case reveals the limitations of formal NGO participation in the absence of sufficient local accountability [4]. A more sustainable solution is to involve partners

in the process before important decisions are made, using integrated information and establishing a clear allocation of responsibilities. The social economy offers an expanded solution through employment, cooperatives, and small-scale projects [5], while local community involvement reduces the risk of decisions being made without adequate consideration of the balance of interests [6]. Partnership success should be assessed not by the number of partners, but by the resources and capacities that remain within the governance system.

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