Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in conflict-affected contexts

Sharon Bell
s.m.bell@massey.ac.nz
@SharonBell_NZ
Outline

• Achieving the SDGs in conflict-affected contexts
• The context of Shan State, Myanmar
• The development of alternative health system capabilities
• Contradictions in partnership and limitations of context
• Conclusions
Achieving the SDGs in conflict-affected contexts

• “Conflicts remain the biggest threat to human development” (United Nations, 2015).
• “By 2030, well over 60% of the global poor will be in fragile contexts” (OECD, 2016).
• “No low-income, fragile state has achieved a single MDG” (World Bank, 2011).
• 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
• Does an international focus on state- & peace-building activities help achieve the SDGs?
Shan State, Myanmar

- Myanmar is defined as a “fragile state”.
- The standard of living is worse in conflict-affected areas of Myanmar.
- Didn’t achieve any of the health-related MDGs.
- Infant mortality 40/1000 births.
- Ongoing conflict.

(Burke et al., 2017, p. 30.)
The development of alternative health system capabilities

• Sen’s capabilities approach – health workforce capabilities to achieve SDG 3.
• RCSS/SSA-S support structures for medics is a key resource.
• Partnership between the INGO and the SSA-S is a crucial conversion factor.
• Hybrid civil-military health system.
Contradictions and limitations

• RCSS/SSA-S exhibits “state-like qualities” in the provision of healthcare services (South & Joll, 2016).

• BUT limited financial resources & understanding of healthcare despite management of medics.

• SSA-S confers protection AND endangers medics.

• Reduction in international donor funding constrains activities of RCSS/SSA-S and the INGO.
Conclusions

• International community must find appropriate ways to engage with NSAGs in conflict-affected contexts to achieve the SDGs.

• Ongoing conflict hampers transition to civilian alternative health system.

• Recognise alternative development partnerships and work with “alternative capacities” provided by NSAGs (Denney et al., 2017).

• Prioritise programmes that focus on the SDGs, not only state- and peace-building.
Thank you

Funded by Massey University Travel Abroad Bursary

Sharon Bell
s.m.bell@massey.ac.nz
@SharonBell_NZ