



# **CONFLICT PREVENTION AND DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION IN AFRICA: A POLICY WORKSHOP**

## **SESSION 11 PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER**

### **CONCLUDING COMMENTS<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> This overview note is not an agreed record of Conference deliberations. It is for individual participants to judge the extent to which it captures a broad sense of the meeting.

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The current policy consensus of the aid community needs reconsideration in order to deal effectively with the challenge of abject poverty and chronic insecurity in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is a region where the share of people living in absolute poverty is rising; where aid dependency is high; where 32 of the region's 47 countries have experienced an armed conflict since 1980; and where low intensity conflict is rampant. Since the end of the cold war, the number of major violent conflicts has declined (both globally and in Africa). But armed violence is on the increase and the risk of recurrence of major conflicts remains high<sup>2</sup>. This is because, following a peace agreement; the fundamental claims of belligerents are rarely settled and, more often than not, the structural antecedents of war remain in place.

**The armed conflict-development nexus**

There is little doubt that development is needed to redress the impact of war. Equally, development is needed to tackle the conditions that make countries conflict prone, But not all patterns of development are supportive of peace building. War has been termed 'development in reverse': it destroys lives, infrastructure and institutions. But war creates some winners along with many losers and the aggregate impact varies from country to country: half of the wars in Africa have not prevented the national economy to grow.

The linkages between conflict and poverty are indirect, numerous and complex. They are also context specific: just as Tolstoy's unhappy families are all different, each violent conflict has its own history and rationale. Accordingly, there is no standard way to resolve violent conflict let alone prevent it. But this does not mean that lessons from past experience cannot be drawn and used for peace building.

Wars result from political dynamics gone awry but it is the social and economic context in the country concerned that provides the enabling environment within which grievances accumulate; entrepreneurs of violence emerge and the incentives that facilitate the recruitment of combatants are shaped. Statistically, poverty reduction and economic growth reduce risks of war but some development patterns increase rather than reduce the risks of violence. These risks are determined by history (e.g. of past conflicts), location (e.g. 'bad' neighbours), precipitating events (e.g. natural disasters) and structural factors (e.g. high levels of horizontal inequalities, a youth bulge, overdependence on mineral resources; chronic unemployment, etc.). Similarly, democratic regimes tend not to fight one another but the path to democracy is fraught with instability and risks.

Until conflict assessments were mandated by some donor agencies in fragile states traditional assessments of country development prospects did not normally focus on the political factors that influence domestic transformations. Nor were the structural conditions that make conflict more likely (or more destructive) routinely addressed in the

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<sup>2</sup> Since 1995, twenty cessations of intra-state warfare in Africa lasted less than ten years.

design of development strategies. Similarly, conventional policy approaches to security and conflict have been state centric. They have neglected development considerations while privileging military and political factors. By contrast, a human security strategy would require an integrated approach that addresses explicitly the major impacts and causes of war so as to consolidate the peace and prevent the recurrence of conflict. In particular, regional approaches would be adopted where spillover risks associated with 'bad neighborhoods' have been identified.

### **The neglect of conflict prevention**

Against this background, Mme Ogata's keynote speech set the scene for the Conference by bringing out inconvenient truths about the international community's inability or unwillingness to react in a timely way to obvious signals of economic, social and political deterioration - as happened in Rwanda when the world failed to act and prevent the genocide despite warning signals, including mounting ethnic strife, rising political tensions and refugee flows. Here as in many other trouble spots, external engagement was late, uncoordinated and blind to the looming risks of intra-state conflict. Business as usual prevailed until the tragedy unfolded: based on conventional indicators Rwanda's development progress was given high marks well after the social and political climate had taken a turn for the worse.

This case illustrates why a lack of a legitimate and flexible crisis management capability at the international level puts a premium on conflict prevention. Yet, the responsibility to prevent and the responsibility to react are getting short shrift. At the national level, excessive preoccupation with military options dominates external engagement strategies. And given the frequent gridlock of international decision making regarding military intervention, the international community frequently fails to live up to its solemn pronouncements about its 'responsibility to protect' (e.g. in Darfur). This is causing egregious human rights violations, forced displacement of affected populations, widespread armed violence and large scale diversion of resources from development work to humanitarian and peace keeping activities.

The country studies and background analyses presented at the Conference confirm that much remains to be done for developing systematic approaches to conflict prevention in national development policies. This neglect is embedded in the key instruments that set policy priorities at global and national levels. The Millennium Development Goals lack security objectives and indicators. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers in war-affected countries are largely silent regarding the impact and causes of armed violence. Nor do PRSP guidelines, currently under review, mandate a systematic analysis of conflict factors. In brief, both national governments and donor agencies have tended to turn a blind eye to armed violence in setting priorities.

In hindsight, these strategic deficits were evident in the pattern of external support accorded to 'aid darling' countries such as Rwanda in the mid 1990s. It also characterized donor support to the Ivory Coast and to Uganda. Neglecting to address regional exclusion from the fruits of economic growth and failing to encourage the resolution of group grievance made violent conflict more likely. Here as elsewhere, (e.g. Mozambique) the

'halo effect' of rapid economic growth concealed the lack of employment creation and social inclusion.

Many donors have mandated conflict assessments in fragile states but these assessments are frequently innocent of policy research findings and independent evaluations suggest that conflict insensitivity remains deeply rooted in aid practices. In particular, an overwhelming preoccupation with the coercive potential of national defense organizations and a lack of emphasis on democratic controls still characterize donor countries' engagement with conflict prone states and security sector reform interventions.

### **Why is armed conflict prevention neglected?**

If greater priority to violent conflict prevention is to be achieved, the main causes of the current neglect should be identified. Four challenges lie ahead: (i) overcoming the difficulties of early detection; (ii) mastering the dilemmas of collective action associated with multilateral interventions; (iii) tackling the resistance of warlords to compromise (especially in the late prevention stages when war is perceived to be the most profitable option for hardened belligerents); and (iv) sustaining external engagement long enough to consolidate the peace in the face of a sudden drop in public support as soon as the 'CNN effect' lapses.

These challenges are amplified by chronic imbalances between needs and resources in conflict situations (the 'lion and mouse' problem). They make pooling of resources an imperative. In turn, collective action hinders and retards decision making: it takes time to reconcile the diverse interests of donor countries and reach agreement on appropriate burden sharing. And since conflicts prevented are invisible, public support for early prevention is hard to generate. The analytical reluctance or incapacity of the knowledge establishment to provide precise, timely and targeted advice does not help either. All in all, it is not surprising that the creation of a global culture of prevention remains an elusive goal.

### **Role of the civil society**

Peaceful resolution of the numerous conflicts that inevitably arise in the process of economic advancement and social change is the acid test of effective governance. When resolved constructively, conflict can lead to social innovation and economic progress. The civil society plays an essential role in the mediation of conflict. Conceived as a complex and dense network of voluntary and community organizations, youth groups, professional associations and academic institutions, the civil society provides a public space for principled policy debates that facilitate the prevention of violent conflict.

More generally, the civil society acts as an incubator of social entrepreneurship, a shock absorber for the implementation of policy changes and an oversight mechanism for the social contract that links the state to its citizens. At its best, it helps ensure that exclusive ideologies and identity politics do not capture the dynamics of governance and that the monopoly of violence of the state is respected and operates under democratic control. But the civil society cannot be a substitute for state action or private entrepreneurship. And it too can be captured by divisive ideologies that promote violence.

### **Acting globally as well as locally**

The proliferation of problems without passport (including security threats associated with the arms trade, transnational crime and terrorism) as well as the increases in inequality associated with the asymmetric processes of global market integration have led to the advocacy of global policy reforms that level the playing field of the global economy, correct 'laissez faire' policies and favor the poor (MDG8+).

Equally, judicious decentralization of governance within poor countries can facilitate the transition to more effective and equitable allocation of resources. Thus, devolving more autonomy and authority to local government can help conflict prevention by amplifying the voice of neglected groups, improving the delivery of social services and reducing horizontal inequalities. Strong and responsive local government can also facilitate the advent of effective public-private sector partnerships able to improve the welfare of local communities affected by their investments.

### **Adapting economic management to conflict situations**

Tailor-made, flexible development cooperation strategies that provide policy space to economic decision makers in poor countries help to prevent conflict. While post conflict situations open windows of opportunities for institutional reform, judicious sequencing of reforms is needed since 'big bang' policy adjustments often increase horizontal inequalities, inflame social tensions and retard the economic recovery.

Fiscal policy is a critical aspect of the social compact. When properly designed it helps to reduce aid dependency, turns the natural resource curse into a blessing and acts as a control for the Dutch disease. Towards such ends, conflict sensitivity in public expenditures management means emphasizing reforms that promote transparency, accountability to citizens and horizontal equity. It also means favoring youth employment, inclusive access to social services and judicious revenue-sharing with local communities.

To facilitate improved fiscal management, development cooperation should emphasize prompt debt write offs, predictable aid flows and aid delivery practices aligned with domestic processes. In contrast with conventional economic management doctrines that favor improved efficiency, increased output, higher savings, targeted poverty reduction and increased connectivity to the global market, post conflict economic strategies should be designed to reduce uncertainty, increase employment, raise investment, address horizontal inequalities and reduce external vulnerability.

### **Addressing exclusion and equity**

There is ample evidence that current development policies do not take adequate account of the need to tackle group inequalities and discrimination. A comprehensive approach that combines to the full extent feasible universal access to social services and more equitable access to economic opportunity is the key to effective conflict prevention.

In particular, development cooperation should be sensitive to the dangers of ethnic and religious disputes spinning out of control. Weak judicial systems, corrupt police establishments and unregulated private security services solidify the inequities and rigidities of the social order. Where oppression and elite rule undermine the human rights of citizens, political reform should be encouraged especially when warfare has undermined local communities, weakened the civil society and eroded the social contract. Affirmative action, employment programs and credit systems should be deliberately geared to the reduction of group and regional inequalities.

Progressive taxation and anti-discrimination laws as well as integrationist policies respectful of cultural identities should be considered to help reduce social grievances. Inclusive public debate and commitment to gender equality as well as special programs to provide decent work for young men and women should be promoted. In addition, involvement of voluntary organizations as well as state agencies in the nurturing of mutual rights, reciprocal obligations, reconciliation among groups and citizenship education should be integrated within peace building programs.

### **Recognizing the central role of politics**

Political science, the Cinderella of the development system, should be invited to the ball of policy making, especially in fragile states. This imperative reflects the critical role of politics in the implementation of conflict prevention programs.

Addressing issues of horizontal inequality, designing conflict sensitive decentralization arrangements, balancing the dictates of economic efficiency with the need to ensure that major interest groups do not derail the implementation of peace agreements, etc. cannot be done without professional and objective assessments of the political force field.

The decline of area studies in academia, the apparent inability of political scientists to offer crisp and actionable recommendations to policy makers as well as the willful reluctance of international organizations to address the political consequences of their activities (or their inaction) should be reversed.

### **Reconsidering development cooperation**

The principles of effective aid adopted by donors (e.g. commitment to poverty reduction, ownership, partnership and results orientation) are well adapted to peaceful conditions and geared to capable, accountable and legitimate states. But since they were adopted, donors have come to recognize that not all country partners own the governance preferences and poverty reduction objectives of DAC donors.

Furthermore, international stability has been jeopardized by intra-state conflicts and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals has been undermined by the fragility of a large number of partner states. This explains why the aid community has given increased attention to more effective engagement with fragile states.

The Paris Declaration advocates comprehensive reforms of aid delivery arrangements. In particular, it stresses the need to align aid to priorities and processes owned by poor

countries' least domestic capacities are undermined. The Declaration also advocates collective ownership of poverty reduction programs, harmonization of donor practices and close coordination of aid activities. But these principles are exceedingly hard to apply and need re-interpretation in the context of fragile states. To remedy this situation, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has encouraged exchange of views and good practice among donors through learning networks focused on fragile states and conflict prone situations.

Based on worthwhile work by these networks, the DAC has issued principles of engagement that concentrate on aid delivery issues. But they are still highly process oriented and couched in generic terms. As a result, their implementation is not readily 'evaluable'. Design of evaluation principles adapted to conflict prevention and peace building has been slow. No systematic effort has been made to harmonize definitions of state fragility among DAC donors. Nor have the conflict prevention guidelines been updated to take account of the security and development research findings accumulated since the 1990's. In particular, the priority attention to state building recommended by the DAC principles has not been translated into precise policy guidelines.

Among the principles of engagement with fragile states, 'doing no harm' is encouraged through alignment with partner countries' legitimate priorities. Where fiduciary considerations preclude the use of budget support, 'shadow alignment' of aid delivery with emerging domestic budget, procurement and civil service rules is advocated. Other substantive policy contributions of the DAC in the conflict prevention field include good practice reviews centered on judicial reform, security system reforms and DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration) programs. But control over the arms trade has not been addressed and DAC sponsored reviews of the effectiveness of 'whole of government' approaches used by OECD countries in their engagement with fragile states have highlighted major gaps that remain to be addressed.

### **Adopting new metrics**

Perhaps the greatest gap in the existing conflict prevention policy framework lies in the approach that the aid community has adopted in allocating aid. While the recently agreed principles of engagement with fragile states advocate the avoidance of 'pockets of exclusion' and while DAC now monitors the flow of aid to 'aid orphans', a fulsome review of the performance based aid allocation system has yet to be undertaken. Yet, the burden of research evidence points to no significant association between the effectiveness of aid and the policy indicators currently used to assess performance.

To complete the existing global development framework, a set of international objectives centered on the promotion of security, peace and stability (taking full account of the United Nations High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change report) would be a desirable complement to the Millennium Development Goals. Generated through a participatory and legitimate process, such Millennium Security Goals if universally agreed would put the capping stone on the global security and development architecture presaged by the Millennium Declaration that was endorsed by all heads of state at the turn of the century.

What does not get measured does not get done. Selecting the right indicators and reaching agreement on them at the global level would be a major step in enhancing the coherence of security and development policies. To make a difference in terms of ‘results on the ground’, it will be important not only to set targets but also to adopt policy emphases and implement priority programs at global and national levels so as to induce accelerated progress towards the combined Human Security Goals.

Ultimately, the unit of account for measuring security should be the individual or, as an intermediate step, the household. This is where the ultimate burden of armed violence lies – whether it originates at the global, regional, national or local level. Eventually, independent monitoring and evaluation arrangements would need to be set up to measure Quality Adjusted Life Years in order to track progress towards universally agreed Human Security Goals at country, regional and global levels.