

## CONFLICT, PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE 21ST CENTURY

*A Policy Statement by  
Development Ministers, Aid  
Agency Heads and Other  
Senior Officials Responsible for  
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Violent conflict in developing countries engages the basic values and interests of our societies. Together with others in the international community, our countries are committed to finding better ways to help prevent such conflicts at their roots – before the toll of human and material destruction spirals and before an international response becomes vastly more difficult and costly.

We have made it a priority for the DAC to work out policy guidelines to help chart and improve our development efforts and participation in the multilateral system in this complex field. On the basis of proposals from a special task force set up for this purpose, we have now endorsed these

Guidelines<sup>1</sup> for use in work with our development partners around the world. They should be seen as a work-in-progress since there are many aspects of this work where further learning and exchange are needed.

### Principles and Goals for our Action

In our 1996 report, *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation*, we outlined a shared approach to development co-operation. This approach can play a vital role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Work in war-torn or conflict-prone countries must be seen as an integral part of the co-operation challenge. Wars have set back development severely in many countries, including in some of the poorest; excessive military expenditures have too often taken priority over more productive public investments and responses to complex emergencies have come to represent a major claim on development co-operation budgets. More basically, helping strengthen the capacity of a society to manage conflict without violence must be seen as a foundation for sustainable development.

We have seen that humanitarian assistance cannot substitute for sustained political commitment and action to avert crisis and support peace. Humanitarian agencies increasingly have

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1. DAC Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation.

encountered moral dilemmas as they have attempted to respond to the needs of vulnerable populations in conflict situations. Development co-operation, as well, must play its role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding alongside the full range of other instruments available to the international community: economic, social, legal, environmental and military. All the instruments the international community can bring to bear on the root causes of these crises are required. The humanitarian community cannot be the sole vehicle for response to complex crises. There is a clear need for international responses that are more co-ordinated, coherent and integrated – between governments, and inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

**D**eveloping countries are ultimately responsible for their own development. This cardinal principle of development co-operation must be respected – even in countries in crisis, and even when division is rife and local capacities are severely weakened. The task of international assistance is to help strengthen a country's indigenous capacities. This must be done in ways that are even-handed and that encourage broad participation throughout society. This also means ensuring that programmes address the special needs of women, children and youth who often bear the brunt of the consequences of conflict.

**W**e know that prolonged economic decline can be a source of conflict. On the other hand, economic growth alone does not prevent or resolve violent conflict, and can sometimes even intensify tensions in society. Development co-operation efforts should strive for an environment of "structural stability" as a basis for sustainable development. This concept embraces the mutually reinforcing objectives of social peace, respect for human rights, accountable military forces and broadly-shared social and economic development; supported by dynamic and representative political structures capable of managing change and resolving disputes through peaceful means.

**D**evelopment assistance will have the most impact in conflict prevention when it is designed and timed to address the root causes of violent conflicts, as well as the precipitating factors, in ways that are relevant to local circumstances. These may include the imbalance of opportunities within societies, the lack of effective and legitimate government, or the absence of mechanisms for the peaceful conciliation of differing interests within society at the local, national and regional levels.

**D**evelopment co-operation efforts should recognise the important role played by women in conflict resolution in many regions of the world. Emphasis should be given to the empowerment of women in peace efforts and in the mobilisation of support for conflict resolution, mitigation, and prevention. Integrating women fully into all phases of the process will enhance the opportunities for building a just and equitable society.

## **Roles of Development Assistance in Different Phases of Conflict and Peace**

**E**xperience has confirmed that deep-rooted societal conflicts do not follow any standard, predictable patterns or cycles. Many of the measures for conflict prevention and peacebuilding may also be useful in reaching durable peace after a violent conflict. Bearing in mind the need for flexible approaches, it is useful to chart here some of the main lines of action for development co-operation

in different phases of conflict. A primary objective of development co-operation in every phase is to enhance the rule of law and promote popular participation in democratic processes. (Critical areas of assistance are outlined in the Guidelines.)

*Before conflict flares* Within overall efforts by the international community to promote peacebuilding and conflict prevention, development assistance programmes will find their most important role in promoting the democratic stability of societies. Where tensions have not escalated into violence, a great number of possible measures can be geared to help defuse the potential for violent conflict. These range from more traditional areas of assistance, such as economic growth and poverty reduction programmes, to democratisation, good governance (including justice and security systems) and respect for human rights. There is growing interest in innovative activities to strengthen mechanisms for enhancing security at lower levels of armaments and military expenditures.

*In open conflict* In situations of open conflict, other policy instruments such as humanitarian assistance, diplomatic initiatives and political or economic measures tend to move to the forefront of the international response. Contrary to many past assumptions, we have found that a sharp distinction between short-term emergency relief and longer-term development aid is rarely useful in planning support for countries in open conflict. Development co-operation agencies operating in conflict zones, respecting security concerns and the feasibility of operations, can continue to identify the scope for supporting development processes even in the midst of crisis, be prepared to seize upon opportunities to contribute to conflict resolution, and continue to plan and prepare for post-conflict reconstruction.

*In fragile transitional situations* Where organised armed violence has wound down but where it is still unclear if the situation will again deteriorate, it is important to move beyond saving lives to saving livelihoods, and at the same time help transform a fragile process into a sustainable, durable peace in which the causes of conflict are diminished and incentives for peace are strengthened. Where ethnic or even genocidal violence has occurred, concerted effort will be needed to help overcome the enduring trauma, promote reconciliation, and help prevent renewed outbreaks of violent conflict.

*After conflict* Post-conflict reconstruction is much more than just repairing physical infrastructure. When civil authority has broken down, the first priority is to restore a sense of security. This includes restoring legitimate government institutions that are regarded by citizens as serving all groups and that are able to allay persisting tensions, while carrying out the challenging and costly tasks of rebuilding. Efforts by developing countries and international assistance must fit within the context of a sound, even if rudimentary, macroeconomic stabilisation plan. Post-conflict situations often provide special opportunities for political, legal, economic and administrative reforms to change past systems and structures which may have contributed to economic and social inequities and conflict. Initiatives for participatory debate and assessment of the role of the military in relation to the state and civil society have been productive in post-conflict settings. In the wake of conflict, donors should seize opportunities to help promote and maintain the momentum for reconciliation and needed reforms.

## **Key Actions Needed**

The new DAC Guidelines, represent our collective view and commitment on basic changes in the ways in which the international community responds to the need for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Drawing upon the many detailed points addressed in these Guidelines, we would emphasise the following ways in which development co-operation can better respond in the future:

- ♦ Recognise structural stability as a foundation for sustainable development and help advance public understanding of peacebuilding and conflict prevention objectives and strategies as explicit parts of co-operation programmes.
- ♦ Strengthen our agencies' means to analyse risks and causes of violent conflicts in partner countries at an early stage, and to identify opportunities for aid efforts to help address these root causes. The overriding objective of this work is to enhance the capacities of partner-countries themselves – civil society and government at all levels – for peacebuilding and conflict prevention.
- ♦ Work with colleagues within our governments to ensure that all our policies – including in the areas of security, political and economic relations, human rights, environment and development co-operation – are coherent in fostering structural stability and the prevention of violent conflict. This includes support for the provisions of cease-fire agreements, UN arms embargoes, and work to help prevent illegal arms supplies from fuelling conflicts. Harmonised and responsible behaviour with respect to the supply of military goods, especially the supply of small arms, is critical in these situations. Our dialogues with partner countries should promote similar coherence on their part.
- ♦ Strive for greater coherence and transparency in conflict prevention initiatives and responses to conflict and complex emergencies by the international community. This involves early warning that is more closely linked to decision-making and better organised and co-ordinated among the various multilateral, regional, bilateral and non-governmental actors. Wherever possible, a shared analysis should lead to agreed strategic frameworks for action and to agreed responsibilities for leadership in co-ordination, taking into account the local, national, regional and international context.
- ♦ Encourage and support initiatives by countries from regions or subregions where conflicts or tensions are emerging. This should aim to help them to better contribute to conflict prevention and resolution, building on the critical mediation and facilitation roles which they may be in a position to play.
- ♦ Seek to reduce institutional, budgetary and functional barriers between relief assistance, rehabilitation and development co-operation planning, that can produce contradictions, gaps and obstacles to well co-ordinated assistance. Reform of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system – working with the political, military and humanitarian arms and the international financial institutions – must in future strengthen the synergies in the total international response.
- ♦ Work in the appropriate fora for internationally agreed and adhered to performance standards and principles for humanitarian and rehabilitation activities that govern the operating methods of implementing agencies (inter-governmental, governmental and non-governmental).
- ♦ Act on the need for responsive procedures for resource mobilisation and delivery in crisis situations while maintaining essential accountability. This includes building capacity for crisis management and crisis resolution as well as ensuring that assistance does not contribute to prolonging the conflict.
- ♦ Encourage efforts to promote open and participatory dialogue and strengthened capacity to meet security needs at reduced levels of military expenditures, including through strengthened capacity for the effective exercise of civil authority over military forces.
- ♦ Monitor and evaluate performance in the areas of assistance for peacebuilding and conflict prevention, and continue our work, including through the DAC, to refine and amplify best practices in these fields of vital importance for sustainable development.