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**Preventive Diplomacy and Development:
Right Direction on an Unpaved Roadway**

UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Towards a Working Definition of Prevention

Conflict in all societies and communities is inevitable. However, when contending parties to a dispute seek to resolve their differences by violent means, economic growth and production are disrupted; political institutions are threatened and may fail; and the population suffers. Increasingly, conflicts in the Post Cold War era are characterized by their intra-state nature.

Preventive diplomacy refers to actions that public and private actors take to resolve disputes between contending parties through nonviolent means, if possible. It involves using political, humanitarian assistance, and development tools to prevent the violent resolution of conflicts and to address the root causes of conflicts before chaos ensues. An underlying assumption of this approach is that prevention is more cost-effective than responding to humanitarian emergencies as exemplified by our experiences in Rwanda and in Burundi today.

Preventive development refers to the conscious use of relief and sustainable development resources to strengthen conflict-prone societies' capacities to resolve conflicts nonviolently. Sustainable development initiatives in the areas of humanitarian assistance, economic growth, democracy and the environment are designed--in such a framework--to address the root causes of conflict in violence-prone environments. Special care is also given to ensure that sustainable development initiatives are designed and implemented in a manner that do not exacerbate or create disputes that are likely to become violent.

The Nature of Conflict in the Post-Cold War Era

Experts estimate that the average life of a conflict is between 10 and 15 years. The causes associated with a conflict in its earlier stages lose their significance, and new causes emerge as the dispute escalates. With the end of the Cold War, conflicts are increasingly taking on an internal character. Women, children and the elderly--all traditional noncombatants--comprise the majority of the casualties. In addition to disrupting production, implosive disputes cause more vulnerable segments of the population to become numbered among the internally displaced and/or classified as refugees in neighboring states. Leaders of competing factions often recruit their troops, along ethnic and/or religious lines, from the ranks of unemployed youth. Hence, culturally-based alliances have replaced Cold War/super power affiliations in this post-Cold War period.

More is known about the latter stages of a conflict than is known about its formative stages. Many experts believe that it is in the early stages that development and humanitarian assistance resources can be used as cost-effective tools for prevention.

The proliferation of this new type of conflict can result in failed states--i.e., in Liberia and Somalia. It can threaten the very survival and viability of neighboring states. We and our partners are faced with the Herculean task of attempting to respond to the humanitarian needs and development requirements of those rendered most vulnerable by these internal wars. We are confronted with this task at a time when foreign assistance resources for relief and development are dwindling.

In light of these realities, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and our partners in the international community are seeking to fashion policies and programs that will facilitate our efforts to respond effectively to prevent the violence that too frequently accompanies disputes in conflict-prone societies. The USAID's roles and responsibilities with regards to prevention are important to United States Government's efforts work in collaboration with the international community to prevent and resolve complex human emergencies.

Presented below are five major policy and programmatic issues related to USAID's and other development assistance agencies' roles in prevention. The initial four policy issues address the development of appropriate responses to mitigate and/or avert conflict. The last policy issue discusses AIDS as a substantive area that is often overlooked by those seeking to develop policies and programs for prevention. It is included to illustrate the point that a preventive approach to development should not be limited to conflict but should be applied to other development problems as well.

Policy Issue #1: Early Warning and Timely Action. Early warning systems can be major tools for prevention. However, information generated through such systems is useless unless decision makers are willing to use it to inform timely and appropriate responses to prevent and/or mitigate violent conflict.

All readily recognize the fact that the international community possesses a wealth of information that can be useful in tracking certain aspects of a conflict and the manner in which it is resolved. All agree that conflicts must be monitored and resolved before large scale violence becomes imminent. However, considerable debate still occurs regarding the time frames for monitoring and for responses.

Diplomatic and military agencies may place emphasis on enhancing early warning and response capacities in the latter stages of a conflict--one to three to years before a major implosion or explosion is likely to occur. While a three year time frame may be appropriate for political and some military interventions, it is far too inadequate a time frame to inform the preventive initiatives and humanitarian responses of development assistance agencies. *Do we, in the donor community, possess the will to develop an early warning capacity that charts and monitors conflict from its formative stages to its conclusion in conflict-prone environments?* Without developing an early warning capacity to identify the critical causes of conflict in its earlier stages, donors will not be able to ensure that our development programs are designed with prevention in mind.

There may be incentives in traditional development assistance approaches to promote investments in areas that possess the greatest economic potential. However, such strategies may not include incentives that systematically call for donors to use our development resources for peace.

Also related to early warning, but often ignored, is the *fact that many development agencies may not have included the perspectives of those being impacted by conflict in their assessments.* As a result, our responses may be too late and/or inappropriate from the perspectives and cultures of those likely to be rendered vulnerable by violent conflict. Lack of inclusion of such viewpoints severely impedes international efforts to understand culture's role in conflict escalation and resolution. Without such information we cannot strengthen constructive roles for cultural institutions in prevention. Including the perspectives of populations likely to be impacted by conflict affords an opportunity to learn about "root causes" from their vantage points. It also challenges USAID, as well as other international partners, to fashion development strategies in such areas to address locally defined priorities that may differ significantly from ours. *Are we, as development and humanitarian assistance providers, willing to amend our programmatic priorities in conflict prone and transition environments to address the root causes of conflicts as identified by local leaders and populations? Are we willing to invest in communities where the economic potential may be limited in order to promote peace?*

Policy Issue #2: Preventive Diplomacy and Development as a Cross Cutting Concern for Development Assistance Agencies. The tool kit for prevention includes many and varied utensils that cut across traditional boundaries of diplomacy, development and humanitarian assistance (HA). Tools (preventive strategies and their component parts) range from the increasing reliance on cultural institutions to mediate conflicts at the grassroots

before they become national disputes, to addressing poverty, to protecting the environment, to assisting countries prone to cyclical conflict in their efforts to build more transparent institutions of government, to protecting human rights of the vulnerable, to demobilizing and reintegrating soldiers, to supporting peacekeeping and peacemaking forces, to high level international mediation, and more. The appropriateness of the response is often determined by the cultural, economic, and political milieu within which it is applied. An appropriate response (tool) at one stage of a conflict may lose its relevancy as the nature of the conflict changes. Therefore, it becomes very important for USAID and others engaged in prevention to treat prevention as a cross-cutting and dynamic field.

Sustainable development strategies may be designed without serious attention being paid to the extent to which they complement one another and/or contribute to the goals of prevention. Economic reform strategies may be developed without serious consideration being paid to their potential impact on conflict, the economic opportunities of more vulnerable populations, the environment, or political liberalization. Will economic reform initiatives increase competition for scarce resources and opportunities that will heighten conflict? Will such programs inadvertently dash the hopes of the multitudes that believe that democratic reforms will be followed, in the short term, by expanded access to economic opportunities?

Democratic initiatives may also be designed and implemented without a full appreciation for their potential impact on conflict. Environmental policies that are fashioned without regard for their potential impact on conflict may include measures that heighten competition over scarce water or land resources. Humanitarian assistance strategies may be designed and executed without serious attention being given to strengthening and utilizing local capacities to manage emergency responses designed to address manmade disasters. Such issues and questions should be given serious consideration in conflict prone environments. *We, in the donor community, must be willing to address these and similar issues when assessing our policies and programs. Are we willing to treat prevention, an instrument to promote peace, like participation as a cross-cutting issue throughout our programs?*

Policy Issue #3: Coordination--an Essential Organ of Prevention.

Responding in a preventive manner presents new problems and exacerbates old ones for all actors engaged in prevention. *Coordination problems impact the efforts of traditional bilateral, multilateral, and regional actors; and those of well established relief and human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the increasing number of new conflict resolution NGOs.* During the Cold War, preventive diplomacy was within the sphere

of foreign affairs (political) bodies. It was in the realm of bilateral and multilateral affairs, and was primarily political and military in nature. Issues related to coordination were more clearly defined and aligned along Super Power spheres of influence.

Since most of today's conflicts are internal in nature, we are faced with the task of dealing with all parties to a dispute. An increasing number of current civil wars have more than two contenders for power. Wars are no longer fought along "communist" versus "free world" lines. Violent disputes are now waged along a number of fronts--from ethnic, to class and caste, to religious, to economic lines, or a combination thereof. For example, Liberia's civil war has a number of contenders for power. Factional leaders recruited and organized their troops along both ethnic and religious lines. Hence, responding to the emergencies in a coordinated fashion has become a nightmare for all laboring to resolve conflicts before violence occurs and before chaos ensues.

In this post-Cold War period, the international community finds that prevention has become a more complex undertaking. It is confounded by the need to consider and recognize the significance of conflict and its resolution. It is further complicated by the necessity address root causes of conflicts at all levels--in the international arena, in the national fora, and at the grassroots.

Another new variable that complicates prevention is the emergence of and need for an *expanded role of conflict resolution NGOs and experts*. NGOs work within conflict-prone environments to mediate disputes at all levels. They are proving to be effective in persuading parties, outside of formal diplomatic channels, to negotiate their differences with their adversaries--i.e., their governments, other political factions, and other ethnic groups. Conflict resolution NGOs are often able to respond swiftly to the changing nature of conflicts. In the formative stages, they can make substantive contributions to efforts aimed at strengthening local capacities in prevention. However, the results realized through investments and training provided by conflict resolution NGOs may not be evident in the short-term.

Even though official actors recognize the significance of the contributions of NGOs engaged in preventive work, bilateral and multilateral institutions simply do not know how to work with and coordinate effectively with such institutions in a systematic manner.

Governments have traditionally viewed diplomacy as their domain. NGOs were supported by donors to provide "traditional" relief or development assistance. Now, multilateral and bilateral institutions are being asked to communicate with and work close with NGOs in the realm of conflict prevention. Everyone engag

in the attempt to coordinate in this area has experienced "growing pains."

Official actors and NGOs are faced with the challenge of attempting to work out information sharing arrangements that provide them with the information required to promote peace; to provide relief; reconstruction and development assistance; and ensure security of their personnel and operations in a manner that contributes to preventive goals. Official actors in prevention are worried about the nature of the information being shared; and NGOs are concerned with maintaining their independence, neutrality, and keeping confidences. This relationship between public and private actors is of great importance to the development and maintenance of early warning systems and the development of appropriate and timely preventive responses.

Several generalizations can be made regarding coordination problems that impact all international efforts at prevention:

Outdated terms of reference guiding international responses to prevention. During the Cold War, definitions of "national sovereignty" and "minority rights" were clearly defined. International rules governing prevention and humanitarian responses were designed and maintained to meet the needs of "refugees" and not those classified as "internally displaced."

Recent experience, in light of new realities, has taught many concerned with prevention that *there is a need to rethink definitions and responses under the rubric of prevention*. Diplomatic debates over such issues played a major role in the international community's tardiness in responding to imminent genocide in Rwanda. It should not take between 500,000 to one million deaths to induce an international response. Outdated terms of references and mandates have rendered many official entities unable to respond to the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs)-- the largest segment of those rendered vulnerable by civil wars.

Imperfect fit between political and military affairs, relief, reconstruction, and development. Preventive diplomacy requires the close coordination of resources of all of these actors at the international level to respond appropriately to today's human crises. *The tool kit for prevention is multidimensional*. It requires that investments in military assistance be linked to diplomacy, relief, reconstruction, and development. Hence, coordination is a must. Yet, the

actual mandates of the programs administered by the international community are often not compatible. Incompatibility in this area translates into unmet needs.

Mandates fashioned for Cold War arrangements and situations are inadequate "fits" for today's realities. The problem of coordination is often confounded by the rules, regulations, and procedures that are used to implement these mandates because these too were formulated for an era in which there were clear and distinct lines between military assistance, diplomacy, relief, transition and development. They were fashioned for an era in which manmade disasters were not draining the international community's resources and response capacities. Then, too, development assistance resources were also more abundant.

Turf wars and mistrust amid preventive efforts within the international community--at all levels--further served to entrench, codify, and cement differences that have rendered this community less flexible in its responses to the Rwandas and Bosnias of the world. Such turf wars either limit the development of appropriate responses, delay critical preventive action and/or encourage those engaged in prevention to duplicate the efforts of the others in the same area.

On the ground and in the theaters of conflict, this lack of coordination makes it easy for *contenders for power to play one international partner against another*. While one international "helper" may seek to curb arms flow in a war torn area, another may be providing the arms to one warring faction or another--thus minimizing the benefits that might have otherwise been derived from a coordinated international effort to limit arms flows into a conflict situation. The short-term quest for profits--that are increasingly going into the coffers of drug cartels and arms merchants--often destroys long-term opportunities for economic growth, democracy, expanded trade, and investment.

Policy Issue #4: Donor Issues Related to Program Integration and Preventive Development--Linking Relief and Development. An inherent ingredient in a preventive strategy to "put meat on the bones" of a development agency requires that all development resources be consciously employed in an integrated manner. Care should be taken by such an agency to ensure that results realized through its programs actually contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Again, this necessitates addressing root causes and strengthening a conflict-prone country's

capacities to resolve disputes without violence. Care must also be taken to guarantee that donor programs are administered in a manner that does not heightens tensions between contending groups in conflict-prone environments.

This issue is a critical concern for all donors. Policy voids between relief and development assistance have long been recognized as major constraints for USAID and our development partners. Consequently, development assistance programs may not include initiatives designed to build on results realized in the emergency phase or with an eye for prevention; and relief assistance strategies that include food aid may not be designed to complement sustainable development efforts that stimulate local food production and/or are administered in a manner that lessens tensions in conflict-prone environments. *Are integration and prevention important enough issues for all donors addressed, in a comprehensive manner, throughout our operations?*

Policy Issue # 5: AIDS, the Catastrophe that No One Will Call a "Disaster," as an Emerging Issue for Prevention. Studies on AIDS in an increasing number of developing nations indicate that this pandemic may warrant additional attention, from different perspectives, in the foreign assistance programs administered by USAID and our development partners. While emphasis is now placed--through health and population initiatives--on AIDS control and prevention, this does not include the need to address *AIDS' impact on the economic growth, development and resource utilization* in developing nations. Also, little attention is paid to AIDS in conflict-prone countries in East and Central Africa.

For example, in these subregions of Sub Saharan Africa, AIDS can rob countries of their most talented and productive groups. Some countries, impacted by AIDS, may possess an ample supply of skilled and under-utilized citizens capable of easily replacing those stricken by AIDS. However, other countries may not possess such reservoirs from which to draw. In the latter case, adopting a strategic approach to planning to meet the human resource development needs--in light of the AIDS pandemic--can be an effective tool for prevention. Planning, of course, must be followed by timely action.

Given the magnitude of the problem, one can expect that the number of AIDS orphans will far exceed the resources and manpower available to educate and socialize them in a number of developing countries. Without appropriate and adequate support being targeted to strategies to meet their current needs, AIDS orphans of today are likely to become the tomorrow's youthful combatants in conflict prone environments. As instruments of war, they could destroy many of the economic and civic gains that are presently being made in developing countries and regions.

Addressing AIDS, aside from its health-related implications, would call for greater emphasis--through our development assistance programs--on human resource development; education, training, and socialization of AIDS orphans; and increased assistance to affected host governments in developing statutes to create and protect the property rights of the women and young members of developing countries.

AIDS is a development issue and not a "disaster" issue in the sense of a sudden event that needs the short-term help. Even though countries are reluctant to declare disasters, AIDS--like many other health problems--could be declared a "slow onset" disaster. Donor support for strategic responses in this area must become a priority. *To what extent are we, in the donor community, willing/able to respond to mitigate the AIDS pandemic's impact on development and the future of AIDS orphans?* These are critical issues that must be addressed, in developing countries impacted by AIDS, if they and their citizens are to manage their economies, development, and political affairs in a participatory and equitable manner.