

USAID Performance Monitoring and Evaluation News

Notes . . . Reviews . . . Perspectives

Central Europe's Reforms Outpace Eurasia's

Monitoring Suggests Correlation Between Economic and Democratic Improvements

ROUGHLY A DECADE has passed since the United States began its post-Cold War assistance programs to Europe and Eurasia's formerly communist countries. When USAID took on the challenge of helping establish market systems for command economies that had been in place for 40 to 70 years, the Agency expected the transition to generate an initial economic decline followed by recovery. That forecast more or less came true. But overall progress for those 27 countries (some of them nations for the first time) has been slower than was originally reckoned.

U.S. policymakers anticipated that a few interventions in economic policy reform,

along with selective support for democracy building, were all the help those countries likely would need to move comfortably into market democracy. That recipe worked well for a handful of countries. For the others it has been a much tougher go. USAID's Bureau for Europe and Eurasia performs a regular exercise, published as *Monitoring Country Progress in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia*, to assess what is going well, what is going less well, and why.

STRIKING TRENDS BY SUBREGION

Monitoring shows that the 27 countries are moving toward market democracy at markedly different rates, but they are

Quotable

“Now, 10 years after, we see the world does not appear as we had hoped.”

—MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

increasingly grouped into two categories reflecting varying degrees of reform progress. By chance or by cause, there are striking differences in trends by geographic subregion.

In one group, the central European nations and Baltic States contiguous with
see Reform, page 2

How Can USAID Help Prevent Deadly Conflict?

No One Yet Knows—But the Investigation Begins

MOST WARS nowadays are civil wars. Of the past 27 major armed conflicts through 1999 worldwide, according to the Stockholm International Research Institute, 25 were intrastate. The United States seeks to build a stable international order of countries that can and do cooperate with one another. Intrastate wars destabilize the building blocks of that order. Given that civil war sometimes breaks out in countries where the U.S. government has assistance programs, what might the United States do to help prevent deadly conflict from beginning in those lands?

USAID has recently begun examining that question in earnest. In June, CDIE held a

two-day workshop on conflict prevention management. It aimed to improve participants' understanding of conflict prevention tools and the role USAID might play in identifying countries vulnerable to internal conflict, in preemptively addressing the root causes of conflict, and in establishing appropriate approaches for responding to and mitigating conflict.

CDIE's Krishna Kumar, a senior social scientist, said afterward: "We have only ideas" of what a development agency can do to prevent deadly conflict. "A widely shared theoretical framework providing a basis for international interventions to prevent conflict has yet to emerge."

WHAT (WE THINK) WE KNOW

Workshop participants stopped well short of agreeing on foolproof methods of stopping civil war. They did succeed in launching an Agencywide dialog about conflict prevention.

The development community differentiates among three kinds of countries: those highly vulnerable to deadly conflict, those engaged in civil wars, and postconflict societies. In the past, USAID has concentrated much more on the last two categories. It has done little in the past 25 years to undertake programs in vulnerable societies.

see Conflict, page 8

Central Europe and Eurasia



Steve Metzger: Economic and Social Data Service

Reform

continued from page 1

The Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, and Slovenia have already graduated from bilateral USAID assistance. At the end of this fiscal year the Agency will discontinue assistance for Lithuania, Poland, and Slovakia as well.

In the other group are 7 Balkan nations and all 12 Eurasian countries.* Of this second group, most of the Balkan countries are making reform progress faster than most of the Eurasian states. The six countries lagging furthest back in reforms are the Central Asian republics of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, plus Belarus, Azerbaijan, and the Balkan nation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The first four of these have remained consolidated autocracies with state-run economies. Azerbaijan's oil reserves, a revenue source for the foreseeable future, may be a disincentive for reform. Bosnia, following a decimating war of independence, is still in the fledgling stages of nation building.

The others in this second group are the Eurasian states of Armenia, Georgia,

*Eurasia, as defined by E&E Bureau, consists of the nations of the former Soviet Union, less the three Baltic States.

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine and the Balkan nations of Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, and Yugoslavia. Of these, Bulgaria and Romania appear closest behind the first group; USAID hopes to conclude assistance for this pair within a few years. But all of these nations look more susceptible than the first group to backsliding and more vulnerable to external economic shocks. Witness the Russian financial crisis of 1998 and the repercussions it brought throughout the other Eurasian countries.

From these groupings, are any patterns evident?

ECONOMIC, DEMOCRATIC REFORMS PROCEED AT SIMILAR PACE

It is an oversimplification to say that the closer a country is to Western Europe, the swifter has been its progress toward freedom and economic stability. But proximity to the West does seem to have something to do with it.

Hungarians and Poles during the Cold War had more opportunities to interact with Western Europeans than did citizens of the communist states farther east. The

precommunist market economies of Czechoslovakia and Hungary were fairly advanced. The three Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania also draw on traditions of independence. These factors may have provided some useful experience.

There is a close correlation in these 27 nations between democratic and economic reforms. Contrary to early concerns that democratization might actually retard economic transition, experience has shown, according to one E&E Bureau study, "that democratic elections and growing civil societies strengthen the resolve and robustness of economic reforms and that credible rule of law is key to economic growth." In many places—such as Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan—declines in democratic freedom have been matched by declines in economic indicators.

But this belies the historical experience. Historically, countries usually have been economically progressive first and then

see Reform, page 3

USAID Performance Monitoring and Evaluation News Notes . . . Reviews . . . Perspectives

Joseph Lieberman—editor in chief
Ross Bankson—managing editor
Michael Hopps—senior editor
Morrison Chen—graphic designer

USAID Performance Monitoring and Evaluation News is a publication for the development community. It provides information on recent evaluations and related policy issues. It is produced by the Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE), with assistance from Conwal Incorporated for writing, editing, and production support. The views and interpretations expressed herein are those of the authors and should not necessarily be attributed to the Agency for International Development.

For address or name changes on subscriptions or to order, contact the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse, 1611 North Kent Street, Suite 200, Arlington, Virginia 22209-2111, telephone (703) 351-4006, fax (703) 351-4039, e-mail docorder@dec.cdie.org.

Reform

continued from page 2

democratic, or the other way around, or one without the other, or neither.

IS CORRELATION ACCIDENTAL?

Is there something about E&E countries that causes democratic and economic reforms to occur at roughly the same pace over the medium term?

The length of time these countries have been communist appears to have retarded or facilitated their progression since the Cold War ended. The central European and Baltic nations did not come to commu-

nism until the 1940s. What's more, rudimentary institutions and movements such as Solidarity in Poland, rule of law in Hungary, the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia, and the Catholic Church kept many central Europeans living under communist rule in recent decades tethered to civil society. By contrast, 70 years of communism in Eurasia had the effect of obliterating civil society there.

Further, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary brought their own revolutions. And most of the people who came to power there were both democratic and economic reformers—people committed on both axes. Those nations are more likely than Eurasian and most Balkan

countries to be progressing in either democratic or economic reform.

Some analysts expect that by 2005 the more advanced countries of formerly communist central Europe will be assisting the transition of other countries in the region. Poland, for example, has already become a donor to its neighbor Ukraine, the second largest country in the region. In the Balkans and Eurasia, future USAID programs will place greater emphasis on developing the human resources and institutional capacity required for fiscal sustainability.

—MICHAEL HOPPS

Global Alliance Aims to Immunize Every Child

GAVI Works to Make Vaccines Affordable to World's Poorest

FOR EVERY THREE CHILDREN whose lives are saved by immunization programs, five others die from diseases that could be prevented with currently available vaccines.

That's 1.5 million children's lives saved annually and 2.5 million lost, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), depending on whether each child has been properly vaccinated before disease strikes. A host of private and public partners find that ratio unacceptable. So together they have formed the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations, or GAVI, with the mission of protecting every child in the world against vaccine-preventable diseases. Among GAVI's ambitious milestones is to help every country routinely immunize at least 80 percent of its children with all cost-effective vaccines by 2005.

The alliance "is one of the most exciting new initiatives to come along in quite a while," notes USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator (Population, Health, and Nutrition) Duff Gillespie. "It has captured the interest of many major policymakers and is an example of how new partners can join forces to energize the efforts of

traditional developmental groups in untraditional ways."

PARTNERS STEP UP LEVEL OF EFFORT

GAVI is an expansion of the earlier Children's Vaccine Initiative, which worked well enough to make its participants imagine what could be accomplished by bringing on the World Bank, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the vaccine industry as fully engaged partners. Launched this past January, GAVI also includes WHO, UNICEF, governments, bilateral donors, technical institutions, and the Rockefeller Foundation. All of the partners have supported immunization programs to fight childhood diseases before. So what's new? The intensity of their effort and the extent of their reach. Together the alliance aims to

- Accelerate research and development of new vaccines against diseases especially prevalent in developing countries, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis
- Make immunization coverage a centerpiece in the design and assessment of international development efforts

"For only \$17 per child," says Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, WHO director general and head of the alliance, "we can provide lifetime protection against the six historical scourges" (polio, diphtheria, tuberculosis, pertussis, measles, and tetanus). "For not much more," she adds, "we can extend the protection to include hepatitis B, yellow fever, and *Haemophilus influenzae* type B."

DELIVERY SYSTEMS MUST BE STRENGTHENED

The Gates Foundation pledged \$750 million over five years to establish the Global Fund for Children's Vaccines. The fund will provide money to strengthen systems for delivering vaccines. The systems are

- Improve and expand sustainable immunization services
- Expand use of all existing cost-effective vaccines
- Accelerate the introduction of new vaccines

Immunization

continued from page 3

complex and must safeguard vaccines on their journey through the “cold chain”—keeping them in a temperature-regulated environment from the factory in one land to the clinic in another. The fund will support research for developing new vaccines. It also will work with vaccine developers to generate incentives to invest in creating and producing reasonably priced vaccines for children in the developing world.

Any country with more than 150 million people and a per capita GNP of less than \$1,000 a year is eligible to receive Global Fund money. They may use it to purchase vaccines and strengthen delivery systems. Of the 71 countries eligible to receive assistance from the fund, more than two thirds already have expressed interest.

USAID has programmed \$8 million of funds in fiscal year 2000 to support immunization programs through regions and missions. Several countries that don't qualify for the Global Fund still have chil-

dren going without immunization. Some money from USAID's Boost Initiative will support vaccine-delivery efforts in such lands.

One past obstacle to providing vaccines to developing countries was that countries and donors regarded vaccines as cost-effective only at a price of pennies per dose. That price wasn't reached until well after the costly research and development stages—that is, until there was an excess supply of vaccines. That could be as much as 15 years from the time a vaccine was first used in Europe and the United States. The alliance is working with industry to develop methods for limiting the delay and to increase awareness of the true value of vaccines—even at a cost of dollars per dose. Immunization

programs, according to the World Bank and others, are among the most cost-effective health interventions.

Limited early use of new vaccines in developing countries provided little incentive for manufacturers to develop new vaccines specifically for the diseases prevalent in such lands. Historically there has been no indication that such products would be purchased for use in the developing world and thus no credible assurance to industry that it could recoup the investments needed to develop and manufacture such products. The alliance is already creating an incentive, because the ability to guarantee significant demand for newer vaccines is there for the first time.

—MICHAEL HOPPS

Automated Directives System Modified

Section Revised on How to Plan, Achieve, Assess Results

THE AUTOMATED DIRECTIVES SYSTEM—the document that guides USAID's policy, practices, and operations—has undergone its most significant revision since the ADS first took effect in 1995. Specifically, the PPC Bureau has clarified and provided additional guidance on the original ADS 200 Series chapters and added an overview chapter to more clearly identify the overarching principles and values that frame the Agency's Managing for Results orientation. Of the system's six series, only the 200 Series directly affects how the Agency does its business. Concomitantly, the series affects USAID partners as much as it affects Agency employees. It covers how to plan,

achieve, and assess—and how USAID learns from its mistakes.

Agency officials felt the ADS had several gaps, especially in elements of operations and in Chapter 202 on achieving. Users noticed disconnects between USAID practices and intended reforms; actual experience with reforms revealed regulations that simply did not apply. Owing to the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993 and new cost-accounting practices, the Agency has stepped up its concentration on accountability. Thus, Agency guidance on how to ensure accountability was needed.

Agency bureaus have vetted the new material rigorously. Once PPC incorporates the last review comments, the new ADS is expected to be finalized by early August. The review draft is at www.dec.org/partners/mfr/ads, while the current ADS document is available at www.usaid.gov/pubs/ads.

Widespread review and feedback were obtained from throughout USAID. A decision board carefully reviewed each comment, resolved any remaining issues, and prepared the final clearance draft.

WHAT'S NEW

PPC has rewritten the 200 Series to conform with the Office of Management and Budget's Plain Language requirement.

ADS

continued from page 4

Users will find the new document relatively free of jargon and easier to follow. It provides more than just rules, also offering “how to” guidance missing from the first version.

ADS Chapter 200, “Introduction to Managing for Results,” is entirely new and provides an overview to the 200 series. It covers the Agency’s overarching principles. It explains and integrates USAID’s core values (managing for results, customer focus, teamwork and participation, empowerment and accountability, and valuing diversity). The chapter offers context and overall guidance related to strategic-objective teams. Users will find a complete list of references—now hyperlinked—and a glossary for chapters 200–203.

The revised “Planning” chapter, 201, provides much more detail on developing strategic plans and places more emphasis on setting ground rules before plan

preparation. It has a new section on interim strategies for dealing with transition countries. Users will find information specific to large and small missions and to nonpresence programs. USAID has dropped its strategic support objectives, leaving only strategic and special objectives. The chapter now provides clearer details on “activity” planning: a specific set of outputs needed to achieve agreed-upon results and the means for achieving them as well as a detailed description of how to address preobligation requirements. The chapter includes clearer operational guidance such as the proper submission of a document, whether it can be shared with a contractor, and who can see it at specific stages. Users will find a new section on team definition and formation.

The revised ADS Chapter 202, “Achieving,” offers detailed guidance on activity management and instrument selection. It includes details from ADS 300 on acquisition and assistance, such as the roles of contract officers and cognizant technical officers within strategic-objective teams.

It clarifies how SO teams should be managed (including who should be on the core team) and distinguishes between roles of the full team and those of the core team. The chapter integrates new Agency conflict-of-interest guidelines on contracts and clarifies use of SO agreements and other instruments.

ADS Chapter 203, “Assessing and Learning,” also revised, broadens and puts into effect concepts previously defined as “monitoring and evaluation.” The chapter concentrates on performance management, refines the role of performance monitoring and programmatic evaluation, and addresses how information is used throughout planning and achieving. It details a new approach to data quality and collection, supporting the evolving GPRA-related standards developed by USAID and the Office of Management and Budget. Users are advised to read carefully the new section on Results Review and Resource Requests, or R4s.

—TONY PRYOR
program analyst, PC

Measuring Progress Is an Imperfect Science

APR Shines, but Agency Still Faces Challenges Gauging Performance

THE AGENCY for International Development received the highest grade—52 out of a possible 60—in a recent congressional study rating 24 federal agency annual performance reports. The study, which examined the first-ever performance reports required by the 1993 Government Performance and Results Act, found USAID’s 1999 APR as best in its transparency and quality of reporting.

Indeed, USAID has made enormous progress in sharpening its emphasis on results and improving its performance measurement. Agency staff have become more adept at developing sound indicators across all goal areas, understanding data limitations, and using participatory

practices to incorporate customer and partner input. The annual Results Review and Resource Request (commonly called R4), initially an onerous reporting and review process, is more streamlined now than in past years.

But measuring results is an imperfect science at best. How can we define meaningful performance indicators that capture what it is we expect to achieve? And where can we get data we can trust that will tell us what we want to know? Even once we find them, how do we know (or how can we show) that we were the ones responsible for achieving the result? Those are only a few of the questions that professionals in international development continually struggle with.

The performance measurement challenges still facing the Agency are many. Among them:

- *Viewing performance measurement more holistically.* Performance monitoring should not be viewed as an isolated measurement tool but must be used within an overall approach to assessing performance. Evaluation, analysis, observation, and other tools are every bit as important in giving us a complete view of progress and performance.
- *Obtaining quality data and demonstrating that we know and understand the quality of the data*

see Gauging Progress, page 6

Gauging Progress

continued from page 5

we collect. These efforts will entail planning for and verification and documentation of data quality; they will no doubt place additional demands on our time. As Agency staff learn appropriate methods and techniques, we should become better and more efficient at ensuring data quality.

- *Making strategic and performance measurement planning more meaningful, relevant, and useful to day-to-day management.* Planning for results and measuring performance must be grounded in the reality of what USAID's programs are to accomplish. The monitoring of projects and activities needs to be better integrated with strategic-level monitoring.

- *Balancing needs for annual performance assessments and reporting with goals for long-term, sustainable results.* We cannot let the requirements for reporting and demonstrating results on an annual basis overwhelm our longer term perspective for gauging progress toward sustainability.

- *Demonstrating that results are attributable to USAID's work.* Performance indicators can tell us only if a result was accomplished, not how, why, or by whom. This is another reason why our strategies are so important: our plans present the case that the work we support is linked to the higher level results we hope to achieve.

- *Telling the Agency's story.* Indicator data alone cannot describe USAID's accomplishments. Indeed, numbers

and statistics can populate a table, but data alone are insufficient to form a thought, express an emotion, or convey a message. The well-received 1999 Agency Performance Report no doubt helped this cause, but we still must do better in using a variety of people and information sources to help others understand what we are achieving.

Each of these challenges deserves further discussion. In the meantime, Agency efforts in measuring performance will undoubtedly continue to move forward and push the state of the art.

—JOHN T. HAECKER
program analyst, CDIE

Development by the Numbers

New Agency Web Tool Serves Up a Wealth of Useful Statistics

EVER HAVE JUST 15 MINUTES to construct a statistical overview across all development sectors of Peru for a country-team meeting? Ever need to know immediately for a sector-review meeting how various African countries compare in achieving USAID's goal of reducing infant mortality to fewer than 75 per 1,000?

All Agency staff with Intranet access now have a powerful Web tool. It enables them to pull together statistics on these and a broad range of other development questions in but a few moments. All it takes is a few mouse-clicks to organize the data in formatted tables or graphs for use in Microsoft Word documents or PowerPoint slides. No applications programming, no database management, no electronic spread-sheeting skills are required.

Moreover, data users can now draw from one vast reservoir of developing-country

statistics that USAID maintains in an electronic database assembled from a broad range of U.S. and international sources, including

- The World Bank
- The International Monetary Fund
- The U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Commerce
- The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
- UN organizations such as UNESCO, the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, and the UN Development Program
- U.S. nongovernmental organizations such as the World Resources Institute, Heritage House, Freedom

Foundation, and the U.S. Committee on Refugees

Sponsored by CDIE, this Web-based "desktop development data" service responds to the Agency's growing need for statistical information. In recent years, USAID's strategic planning, annual program reviews, and reporting requirements to Congress have dramatically expanded the Agency's need for timely, accurate, transparent, and easily understood measures of developing-country progress. Easy-to-use Web-based tools have thus become essential to getting at the data required to carry out USAID's mission.

It was not always that way.

Thirty years ago, everyone in USAID knew where to go for the statistical data then available: the reference collection in the USAID library maintained by CDIE. But compiling and analyzing data meant relying on remote and inaccessible main-

see Numbers, page 7

Clicking Your Way to Data Nirvana

Crunching numbers, even for the techno abecedarian, is a piece of cake with the desktop development data service. As a tutorial, let's see how five African nations are faring in the Agency's health sector goal of reducing infant mortality to fewer than 75 per 1,000:

1. From the @USAID home page on the USAID internal Web site, use your Netscape or Microsoft browser to click on CDIE from the Tools menu.
2. Click on Statistics at the top of the CDIE Online home page.
3. Select Query the Database from the left menu bar and Search by Development Sector from the next window screen. This will take you to a list of the development sectors conforming roughly with the Agency's program goal areas.
4. Click on Health & Nutrition; that's where the data needed for the tutorial are organized.
5. Highlight Mortality rate, infant (per 1,000 live births) from the list of health and nutrition statistical series.

Click on the Submit button, which will take you to the Countries and Years menu screens.

6. Holding down the Control key, highlight, in this case, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Hold down the Control key again and highlight the years 1998, 1997, 1992, 1987, 1982, and 1977. Select Create HTML Table.

7. Your computer will cogitate a few seconds, and *voilà!*—the data points you requested are at your service. At a glance, we can see that Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, and South Africa have made progress in reducing infant mortality since 1977, whereas Zimbabwe has slid back.

The number of ways you can slice, dice, grind, and filet these and other data is virtually infinite. In addition to the HTML table, the site allows you to create a Word table and an Excel spreadsheet with which you can analyze the data online, create graphics, and export your work into a PowerPoint slide or Word document briefing presentation.

—ROSS BANKSON

Numbers

continued from page 6

frame computers that ran obscure data-processing programs and that had to be fed with data keypunched on cards.

CHANGING TIMES

By 1995 the situation was almost reversed. Just about everyone had a computer on his desk, but the data were less accessible, coming in large electronic databases in obscure file formats. Moreover, the Agency's need for country data had mushroomed as it moved into new development assistance sectors, such as environment and natural resources in the 1980s and democracy and governance in the 1990s. All this was happening at a time when USAID was losing its technical staff members faster than they could be replaced.

Over the past five years, CDIE set about restoring a balance in both computer and data access by applying some of the same statistical data management tools the private sector uses to make data available to the nontechnical public. The result today

is a system of Web-based menu-driven tools that allow users to query an expansive database of more than 200 countries and 4,000 statistical series. Those series, some of which extend back to USAID's creation in 1961, are constantly being updated.

Sifting electronically through all these statistics to extract specific information has constantly challenged Agency staff. The situation has changed, with familiar Web tools now accessible to most of us. With today's computer applications, nonstatisticians can handily manipulate data. For example, most USAID staff now know how to use menu prompts from one of several Web sites to assemble a flight schedule, by filling in their travel dates and departure and destination cities. The result is a table listing available airlines, flight numbers, times, and prices.

MESSAGING DATA MADE EASY

USAID staff can now use the same Web-based menu-driven tools to select, say, a donor and recipient country and series of years and type of development assistance.

They can then produce a comparable output of annual assistance values in a preformatted table or graph. From the Economic and Social Data Service Web site under "CDIE Online," staff members can save and easily move the table into a presentation graphic, spreadsheet, or Word document using the software on their personal computers. They can assemble statistics in tables and graphs across all development sectors.

Bringing these menu-driven database query tools from the "dotcom" world of the private sector to the "dotgov" world where USAID does business makes electronically stored statistical information as accessible as data in those familiar statistical publications on the USAID library's reference shelves. Only this time, Agency staff, using their computers, also have powerful tools to organize and view the data in an easy-to-interpret form. Our goal is to help Agency decision-makers convert the numbers into knowledge, quickly and easily, making the data just a few mouse-clicks away.

—PHILLIP E. CHURCH, project director
CDIE Economic and Social Data Service

Conflict

continued from page 1

Among the prime socioeconomic factors that contribute to rendering discontent into violence are 1) the lack of strong public institutions, 2) exclusionary practices, 3) unfairly administered justice systems, and 4) high levels of poverty, unemployment, inflation, environmental degradation, and declining standards of living. There also are geographic factors, such as terrain where a rebel group can isolate itself.

But civil war seldom breaks out if the rebel faction is inadequately financed. As World Bank economist Paul Collier proffered at the workshop, a group's ability to prolong rebellion depends on its ability to raise money. Today most groups raise funds from a natural resource such as diamonds or timber, or from illicit activities such as narcotics trafficking—and often from a Diaspora community in the developed world.

WHAT WE SHOULD DO

Interventions USAID should conduct, says Kumar, would be those that

- Develop and strengthen institutional capacity to resolve political disputes and disagreements in a peaceful manner
- Reduce or mitigate systemic problems, such as poverty, that might contribute to deadly conflict

- Contain and resolve conflict
- Reduce the probability of recurrence of a deadly conflict once peace is established

All of USAID's strategic goals aim to achieve many of the circumstances that reduce the likelihood of disorder escalating into deadly conflict. When the Agency helps create economic development, for example, it not only helps solve the problem of poverty but also helps enhance the legitimacy of a country's public institutions. "Conflict prevention is a function of good governance," says Johanna Mendelson-Forman, a PDC senior adviser. USAID's democracy-and-governance promotion interventions support democratic institutions and promote a pluralistic culture.

To identify vulnerable societies, an early-warning system is needed. That would be expensive and might duplicate other government agencies' work. Who would be responsible for creating and managing it? Should USAID use the systems developed by U.S. intelligence agencies? USAID would not be at liberty to share the classified information with its partners.

LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP

There is considerable agnosticism among those who have studied conflict prevention strategies about whether they can actually work. Development is destabilizing. Nearly all war-torn countries in Africa and Latin America, the doubters point

out, had received substantial foreign assistance before their civil wars erupted.

Well-intentioned humanitarian efforts have sometimes prolonged deadly conflicts. Warring parties can divert humanitarian resources for military purposes, for example, or use the resources as an excuse for evading responsibility to meet the needs of the population under their control.

But Mary Anderson, president of Collaborative for Development Action Inc., believes foreign-aid agencies have a special ability to reduce conflict during civil war. "Health workers can move across battlefields," she said at the workshop, "more easily than food deliverers can."

It is the enlightened development agency, Anderson noted, that looks closely enough at the country it assists to understand what holds it together: "If we know enough about the things that connect a society, that's conflict prevention." But aid workers, she advised, should "take a Hippocratic oath: do good, but at least do no harm."

—TOM BUCK and RAY ROBINSON, analysts
CDIE Research and Reference Services