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Conflict Transformation

**How International
Assistance
Can Contribute**

Policy Paper 15

International assistance cannot by itself prevent or end conflict. Neither can it “make” peace. People acting in their own societies must create and maintain their own conditions for living together and pursuing shared goals. In spite of this, international donors regularly engage in policy discussions about how to prevent or mitigate violent conflict. They review their own and others’ work to learn how best to use aid to support peace.

Behind these policy discussions and programme reviews, however, certain fundamental questions persist. How effective can development or humanitarian assistance that is provided by donors from outside a conflict be as an instrument for transforming that conflict? What must we know to ensure its effectiveness? What is in the purview of international donors and what can they actually achieve in this respect? In this paper, we explore these questions.

We begin in Section I by reviewing two issues that are central to our discussion, namely what is known about the interactions of international aid and conflict in general and what is known about how “normal” conflict turns to violence and warfare. This review sets the context for an exploration, in Section II, of the possibilities for international donor actions in areas that are at the heart of con-

flict escalation (the media, security sector and corruption) and, in Section III, of actions that can be effectively undertaken through international assistance once active, widespread and violent conflict has erupted. This paper focuses on the design and implementation of development projects, that is, at the level where major policy guidelines need to be translated into activities, processes, management strictures and tools, rather than on levels of policy formulation.

Before we proceed, it is important to note that conflict, in the form of disagreements and, even serious intergroup disputes, exists in all societies. Handled constructively, conflict is a force for positive social and political change and, under most circumstances, does not result in violence or warfare. However, serious disputes have the potential to and too often do turn into open, widespread destructive violence. Our concerns in this paper are two-fold. First, we consider how development cooperation can support those forces in recipient societies that handle conflict constructively and, second, under conditions where open conflict is violent, how international aid can be provided so as not to worsen conflict but, again, to support processes by which violence is controlled and constructive conflict management reinstated.

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I. Two Central Issues: How Aid and Conflict Interact and Why Wars Happen

THE INTERACTIONS OF AID AND CONFLICT. The first central issue that donors of aid must understand is how aid's resources actually interact with conflicts in recipient countries. The Local Capacities for Peace Project, a collaborative effort involving a number of international donor agencies, NGOs and local partners, has collected a wide range of field experience and, from this, identified the patterns by which aid lessens or worsens intergroup disagreements, disputes, suspicion and hatred.

The basic lesson learned is that in the midst of all conflict between groups, there are many ways in which people on the differing sides of the conflict remain connected to each other. These include, depending on the circumstances, such things as markets, infrastructure, common histories, shared values, language, attitudes of acceptance and the like. These connections are important in the constructive management of conflict. More surprising is the fact that they are active and important, also, in situations of open violence. In such situations, they are sometimes explicit and retained by choice (such as friendship ties, trade relations, etc.); sometimes they are scarcely recognized but present nonetheless (such as admiration for the same national historical heroes or shared value placed on the right of children to health care). (cf. Mary B. Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Supports Peace—Or War*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder and London, 1999.)

When international aid is provided to groups where conflict exists, it either feeds into and exacerbates those things that divide them, or it reinforces and strengthens those things that connect them. Careful design of all international assistance to be conscious of building on connectors and reducing intergroup divisions is the most direct way in which international development cooperation can contribute to the prevention and reduction of conflict in all situations. These effects occur in all “stages” of conflict. They occur when development cooperation is under-

taken in conflict prone societies; when humanitarian assistance is provided in times of open warfare; and when development aid again supports post-war reconstruction after a cease-fire.

The impacts of aid on conflict occur both through its intent and, most directly, through the transfer of resources (food, construction materials, training, health care, etc.) that assistance provides. Aid's purpose is very often to alter existing power relationships, supporting social and economic reforms that reduce exclusion and favor the poor. Aid's resources, provided in conflict-prone or active conflict areas, are seen by the antagonists to represent both wealth and power and, thus, can become both spoils and instruments of conflict. Aid—the very stuff that is delivered on the ground—depending on *how* it is provided, always affects intergroup relations, either negatively or positively.

THE CAUSES OF WARS. There is a growing and useful literature about the causes of recent wars and the societal factors that put nations at risk of violent conflict. Many of these are directed towards enabling us to anticipate whether and where intergroup violence is likely to occur in the belief that, if we could know this, we could take preventive action. International donors recognize that it is far better to address the causes of war *before* it erupts than to pick up the pieces of human suffering and infrastructural damage after a war has torn a society apart.

Although this is not the place to review all the literature about the causes of war, it is important for our task to recognize that cumulative research challenges common assumptions about these causes on which much previous development assistance has been based. In particular, debates as to whether it is “greed or grievance”—that is, whether wars reflect predatory motivations of leaders who seek personal wealth and power or an outpouring of grievance by groups who have suffered social, economic, political and other exclusion or some combination of both

Aid's Impacts on Conflict

1. **THEFT OR DIVERSION.** Aid's resources are often stolen or taxed by (military) authorities who use them directly, or sell them, to support their agenda for conflict. Aid can be provided in ways that avoid such diversion and, thus, do not worsen conflict.
2. **DISTRIBUTION EFFECTS.** Aid is given to some people and not to others. Insofar as the groups included and excluded match or overlap with those in conflict, aid reinforces the conflict; insofar as it is provided in ways that reinforce the common interests and interdependence of groups, it lessens the likelihood of conflict.
3. **MARKET EFFECTS.** Aid's resources influence wages, prices and profits. Some people gain; others lose. Incentives are affected. These impacts can either reinforce interdependence and civilian economic activity or they can reinforce intergroup divisions.
4. **SUBSTITUTION EFFECTS.** When international aid agencies assume responsibility for civilian survival in conflict areas, this can free up internal resources for the pursuit of conflict. Aid can also be provided in ways that elicit the increasing allocation of internal resources for peaceful, common purposes.
5. **LEGITIMIZATION EFFECTS.** How aid is given legitimizes some people and some activities and de-legitimizes others. These impacts can reinforce group connectedness or divisions.

these motivations—reveal both the range of factors that may contribute to violence, as well as the degree of variance among conflict locations. Similarly, although “ethnicity” has clearly been a part of much recent violence, there is a great deal of discussion about how fixed or historical these subgroup identities actually are. Are people motivated to engage in conflict with the “other” from a fixed, historical identity, or has ethnicity been used by putative leaders as a mechanism for eliciting support when other factors (such as declining economic welfare or changes in systems of governance) increase general insecurity? Other factors are correlated with the likelihood of open conflict, including: the recentness of previous war; access to resources with which to wage war; the degree of governmental authority and control and, even more important, the degree of change occurring in forms of governance; and generalized poverty. (See, for example, Peter Wallensteen, Report to the OECD, September 2000; Paul Collier, “Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and Their Implications for Policy”, The World Bank, June 15, 2000; and Frances Stewart, “Crisis Prevention: Tackling Horizontal Inequalities,” Working Paper Number 33, Queen Elizabeth House Working Paper Series, February 2000.)

All of the research on the causes of open conflict leads to the conclusion that the causal connections between economic, social and political factors and the emergence of situations of violence are diverse and layered. Many issues have relevance. None is a full predictor. Three categories or “clusters” of causes illuminate this diversity and layering:

Structural factors such as economic, political or cultural disparities, or the denial of access to resources for certain groups, are always troubling. Societies with such disparities frequently are also poor. Of the societies that experience intergroup violence, more are poor and unequal than rich and without disparities. However, many societies where there is both poverty and inequality do not engage in open intergroup conflict.

Triggering or dynamic factors that are related to changes in patterns of economic or political distribution have to be distinguished from structural factors. These may include changes generally thought of as positive such as elections, land reform or reform of a judicial system or negative changes such as loss of employment opportunities, disadvantageous price shifts, coups d’etat or other abrupt governmental changes. Both “positive” and “negative” changes can trigger intergroup competition or discontent among subsectors of the society (such as unemployed youth) and can become factors that ignite violence. However, as noted above, in other situations, such change can signal the correction of long-standing injustice and, thus, reduce tensions and the likelihood of violence.

A third cluster covers the *strategies* that are used for dealing with a given conflict, as these also contain the potential to turn important differences into violence. Dangerous strategies can be found in the attitudes and behaviors of political agenda-setters to build, or safeguard, their interests. These include organizing constituencies around subgroup identities, explicitly raising fears of dominance

by the “others” and insecurity about outcomes of shared power; interpretations of economic and political possibilities in “zero-sum” terms; and calls to violence for protection of one’s rights vis à vis others.

These three categories of causes—though not predictive of violence—help to capture the complexity of the societal forces that are associated with destructive conflict. What does this research tell us that may be of use for development cooperation? Four important “lessons” may be drawn.

First, the findings caution us not to assume that the causes of war are always structural. In the past, much international development assistance has been based on the assumption that, because economic and/or political exclusion are “root” (structural) causes of conflict, any effort to overcome poverty or to support the establishment of democracy will, *ipso facto*, help reduce the likelihood of violent conflict. The evidence that many recent conflicts are only weakly correlated to these factors suggests that aid’s focus on poverty alleviation and the reduction of intergroup disparities, although important in the long run, is not likely to be as effective for avoidance of violent conflict in the immediate term as efforts that address dynamic and/or strategic causes.

Even in situations where structural causes are critical, such as in the long-standing conflicts in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine and in the more recent crises in Chiapas/Mexico, East Timor, and Papua/New Guinea, the driving forces of actual intergroup violence are often strategic or dynamic. That is, violence occurs and continues when “leaders” excite passions and mistrust or when change raises uncertainties that evoke tensions.

Second, research shows that periods of change in systems of governance or in economic expectations are especially “dangerous.” For aid donors this is important because it cautions against the use of “conditionalities” or the development and imposition of outsider-promoted political or economic agendas for the societies where aid is provided.

Third, it tells us that not all dynamics in the process of escalating conflict are determined by the root causes of the conflict but may emanate from the strategies the disputing parties take up for dealing with differences. The strategies for dealing with conflict are often more important in the actual outbreak of violence than structural, systemic and long-term issues. For development cooperation this lesson is important because it suggests that efforts to mitigate or disarm negative strategies for addressing conflict may be particularly potent approaches for international assistance.

Fourth, and perhaps most important, most of the research about the causes of conflict has one serious flaw. In general, it is focused entirely on what is wrong with societies and fails to provide a framework for identifying and assessing the forces that work, in every society, against conflict. Without inclusion of this analysis, it is impossible to gauge how likely it is that existing cleavages and tensions in a society will result in violence.

II. The Early Stages of Heightening Tension

Against this background, we turn now to our consideration of how development cooperation may be designed to recognize the likely emergence of political crises and conflicts and, thus, be provided in these settings to encourage and strengthen peace.

1. Improvement of Reactions in the Early Stages of Rising Conflict

If development cooperation is to contribute to containing or preventing the escalation of violence, it must be capable of recognizing and assessing the first and early signs of potential crises. Further, it must be able to respond to changes quickly and locally. The main condition necessary for such capability is existence of a system for gaining information on current, dynamic incidents relevant to heightening conflict.

In many crisis regions, open conflict occurs simultaneously in scattered areas without immediately influencing the stability of the whole country. Some localized outbreaks of violence have only local impacts and consequences; others may portend a spreading and engulfing war. Local staff find it difficult to determine whether a single bombing, or the defamation of a specified group in the local media, represents an isolated phenomenon or is a symptom of a larger process, and staff who are not local may be completely uninformed about such events and, thus, in no position to judge their importance as well.

Instruments are needed to relate local events to larger trends. Systems for combining localized incidents with assessments of broader political trends would enable a more accurate prediction of likely violence. When local events are connected to, and driven by, broader agendas, orchestrated by forces with a broader purpose or affected by political influences from other locations, including foreign sources, these would be seen as potentially feeding broader violence. Compilation of events—bombings, hate campaigns, parliamentary decisions, statements of politically rising individuals and/or parties, etc.—could lead to fuller analysis of related trends across geographically distant areas. Similarly, and importantly, systematic documentation of localized responses to volatile events, especially those that are intended to curtail and end them, should be included in systems that monitor the impacts of local actions on broader trends.

Who can develop such systems? Many international donor and operational agencies are involved in developing methods for analyzing crisis potential. UNICEF, UNHCR and the Red Cross have designated political analysis as a constituent part of project planning and

monitoring. Several bi-lateral donor agencies are actively developing practical instruments for assessing proneness to open conflict. However, the question of mandate is delicate. UN agencies are restricted in their attempts to record internal processes in member countries and assess them independently without consultation with the country governments. Such actions are seen to intrude on national sovereignty. Other agencies, such as the Red Cross, see neutrality and impartiality as central to their identity. Political assessments may, some fear, be incompatible with these values. Yet, all international actors also recognize that the quality of their aid and their involvement depends directly on their ability to recognize and respond to localized events.

Recommendations:

Development cooperation agencies should take steps to develop a coordinated system at project level for collecting information from local sources on localized events and tendencies. Attention should be given to three aspects:

1. Existing connectors in society to identify strengths within troubled regions that can be reinforced and supported;
2. Events likely to increase tensions and divisions between groups;
3. Responses to curtail and control such trends.

This can clarify the context in which projects are operating and also help to identify impacts of project activities and the dynamics of peace or conflict in a local context. Assessment of this kind should enable field staff to make limited adjustments at the project level.

On the working level in the field the various donor organizations should regularly exchange their observations and findings. This sharing of information could by itself be part of a process of reviewing perceptions, drawing conclusions and consulting on responses. It therefore needs to be informal and low-keyed not to encourage third actors to rush responses or false interpretations.

For recording localized events and assessing these in relation to larger national and regional trends, a reporting system should be designed at headquarters to compile and evaluate information from various local environments. Together with additional analyses particularly from human rights NGOs this would be useful to inform policy makers and program staff simultaneously, enabling both to be more creative and timely in designing responses that link with and support existing efforts to avert and avoid violence.

2. Promising Fields for Development Cooperation

The question which approaches and instruments in development cooperation are suitable for tempering political conflicts and preventing crises characterized by violence has generated widespread discussion. Which approaches are to be recommended depends chiefly on the specific features of the actual conflict situation in question. Rather than describing the whole range of possibilities, we single out three areas that have significant relevance in the early phases of conflict escalation. These are: the media; public security; and the fight against corruption. All three areas are directly and functionally related to the development and management of conflict. At the same time they shape the context in which aid is provided. This is especially true for the fields of public security and corruption; they impact on development activities on a daily basis. By ignoring them aid agencies may not only risk impairment of their own efficiency but may also reinforce tendencies of societal disintegration.

Exploiting the Potential of the Media as a Means of Promoting Peace and Curtailing Violent Conflict

Media, particularly radio and television, are used all over the world as an efficient means of ensuring the rapid dissemination of information and political messages. Media significantly influence how people perceive political processes and the individuals who direct them. The Media contribute to the definition and change of social norms, values and attitudes, basic to both the waging, and resolution, of conflict.

In poor societies where development cooperation is active, radio (and, increasingly, television) occupies a special place. It reaches most people, it connects rural and hinterland areas to political centers, it constitutes a part of many people's daily routine, it represents entertainment and intellectual activity. Political agenda-setters use electronic media to reach their publics and to set, and reinforce, their agendas. The power of radio to demonize and polarize groups in society was seen in the notorious case of the Rwandan radio "Mille Collines."

Media can play an equally decisive role in constructive conflict management. They can reinforce connectors in societies, strengthen shared values, ensure common and accurate knowledge of events, provide transparency regarding political trends, support trust and understanding among groups, offer alternative viewpoints and broaden experience. There are many ways for international donors to support the peace-supporting impacts of the media. In several places external donors promoted special radio programmes to inform the public about positive developments in the region and examples of sustained links between members of the warring factions. In areas without operational systems of communication that cross lines, development cooperation can help set these up. In other localities, media organized telephone connections between friends and neigh-

bors who were separated by violent situations. Their conversations about their war experiences and sufferings as well as their hopes for the future were then transmitted to the public in the usual radio programs.

In a number of conflict-prone areas, development cooperation has supported "soap opera" initiatives through which a listening public is engaged in story lines that identify cleavages in the society and address them through portrayal of the consequences of violence and the possibilities for cooperation. Such shows open taboo areas for general discussion and provide a rationale for people to express views that may be, in tense situations, otherwise unsafe to voice. The financing and support of such innovative programs through which media are made into an instrument of peace education, trauma-healing and mediation can be an effective contribution.

The enhancement of existing technical capacities and professional standards of journalism is another important field for engagement. Training programs for journalists can not only improve the peace building role of the media but also become venues for reporters from conflicting sides to meet and interact or to undertake direct efforts to counter cleavages and reinforce collaboration.

Recommendations:

Understanding the power and prevalence of media in promoting both conflict and peace, development cooperation should seek opportunities to make active use of the media as a means to support peace and unity in society and reinforce fair and free media in the countries where aid is provided.

Journalists in conflict areas should be supported through:

- Training in human rights law, methods of human rights monitoring and reporting;
- Access to international networks and media services;
- Assistance for the development of a code of conduct for journalists that specifies and clarifies both content and approach impacts;
- Training for talk show hosts, news broadcasters, editors, journalists, publishers and others in issues of prejudice-formation, defamation, stereotyping, etc. Such training could also include guidelines for reporting in crisis situations, countering propaganda and arranging thoughtful public debate.

Where projects of international organizations are set in a politically tense environment, efforts should be made to establish or intensify, collaboration with local media. The population should be given regular information about the aims and operation of aid projects and about all the actors involved, both external and local. This improves understanding of the role of projects and staff amongst the population and can therefore act as a counter to any attempt at political exploitation.

Finally, international donors should seek appropriate ways to counter deliberate political misinformation offered within societies by local authorities. They should engage at all levels of development cooperation and diplomacy to hold purveyors of hate messages accountable.

Strengthening the Security Sector as a Field of Action for Development Cooperation

Human security in many countries is threatened by a number of factors. In times of political tension, however, people are most frightened by physical insecurity and the presence of militant groups. The security sector, particularly the police and the military, therefore play a crucial role in determining in which way political crises develop. When intra-state conflicts start to become violent, these groups can have an influence on whether the situation escalates or is defused. In post-war situations, their support for and involvement in the implementation of cease-fires and peace agreements are key preconditions for the consolidation of peace.

In many cases, however, the very institutions that constitute the state security-sector—the military, paramilitary, police forces and intelligence services—themselves operate outside the bounds of legality or are used to further the interests of contending groups. They are frequently directly responsible for gross violations of human rights. A security sector with this profile is in itself a source of increased social tension and violence.

Intra-state security systems are not only of special significance within the context of crisis prevention and peace-building. They set a political framework that directly influences the chances of success (or failure) of development cooperation and humanitarian aid. During the last years many international organizations such as the UN, the World Bank, the OECD, and the EU, as well as a number of donor countries, have endeavored to integrate security issues into their development schemes.

The most effective means of improving a population's security-situation is comprehensive reform of the security sector. Ideally, this would entail formation of a democratically controlled state security sector with sufficient size and resources, and an appropriate composition, to fulfill the requirements of crisis prevention and development. A comprehensive scheme would encompass not only reforms in the security institutions (the police and the military) and the controlling political bodies (parliament and government), but also in the legal and the penal systems. It would also address the problem of trade in small arms and the role of civil society.

At present, the international organizations differ widely in their thinking as to which of these components take priority, which actors should be involved, who should do which tasks, and the precise form the process should take.

Despite calls for coordination, international donors of humanitarian and development assistance confront a particular challenge when seeking to work with other governmental bodies on security reform. E.g., Herbert Wulf, Director of the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC), highlights the political sensitivity of such efforts. He points out that reform of the security sector is very rarely geared solely to development-related or violence-prevention criteria. Rather, both local and international actors use security sector reform also to pursue military ends. Further, for successful reform, both governments and security forces need to be integrally involved. However, since reform very often redefines—and, if necessary, curtails—the roles and responsibilities of these bodies, they very often resist each step.

In view of these realities, any development-related involvement in this area should be carefully designed. Several prerequisites have been defined for successful sector reforms, amongst them e.g. a functioning parliament to assure civilian control of security forces and the existence of a vibrant civil society to organize public participation in the reform process. In many cases the reality is different and the chances to implement the whole range of a sector reform are very limited. Aid will probably be more effective if focused on specific, individual facets of a scheme that are directly related to the usual areas and activities of development aid. It should, in general, focus on improving 'human security' below the level of security-sector reform and take the security needs of the local communities as a starting point.

Recommendations:

In order to promote public security, development cooperation can intervene in the following areas:

- Improvement of security sector performance should not only be approached by newly designed types of projects but also understood as a cross-cutting issue. Development projects that concentrate on the executive, legislative, judiciary or state administration are directly or indirectly linked with security sector concerns. Therefore, the issue of public security should be given prominent consideration in projects designed to improve the functionality of parliament, government, of political parties, or of the media.
- NGOs in the human-rights field should deliberately seek contact with security-sector forces and help support the establishment of a more transparent relationship between the population and the security forces. Activities could include organization of joint seminars or round table meetings where the role and duty of police and military as well as the security needs of the people are explained and discussed. NGOs should provide human rights trainings tailored to local situations and scenarios faced by security forces. International police-to-police contacts on their roles, rights and responsibilities in society could have an additional impact.

- Organizations working in development cooperation should make it their business to raise issues of security reform as an integral part of the process of international donor co-ordination. In this connection, they should make explicit the linkages of security and development.
- For an extensive concept of security sector reform donor cooperation is essential. Foreign, security, development and economic policies in the donor countries and between them need to be combined into a coherent approach.

Fighting Corruption is Strengthening the Capacities for Peace

Corruption is one of the greatest challenges faced by development cooperation. Corruption results in the misallocation of human and economic resources and the erosion of public administration. It hampers innovative investment and thereby undermines society's chances of development. Thus, in recent years, development policy has turned its attention to the fight against corruption and to the support of initiatives to address it.

In the context of political conflicts and situations of crisis, corruption acquires a further significance. Three particular effects may be distinguished: corruption can magnify the basic causes of a conflict; it can bar the way to peaceful conflict-resolution; and it can assure the funding of the instruments of violence.

Corruption is both a consequence and a cause of poverty. Capital is diverted to unproductive areas; impoverished groups' access to education and social services diminishes; and disparities within society are rendered more acute. Furthermore, corruption not only leads to the abuse of resources, but also to the manipulation of judicial and political authority. In state institutions such as parliaments, political parties, and courts of law, nepotism and extortion can distort decision-making processes, so that confidence that state mechanisms can reconcile conflicting political interests is eroded. This in turn increases the likelihood that parties to conflict will move to push their interests by force outside the legal structures. Rarely does such an effort result in thoroughgoing reform of corruption. Usually, new rulers themselves adopt corrupt systems for maintaining power once achieved. As political systems are undermined, corruption itself becomes a cause of the violent escalation of social conflicts.

Some intrastate conflicts result from struggles within the state elite to secure access to the key corruption-channels. Power struggles among elites for control of the wealth that corruption brings become incentives for promotion of violent and widespread violence.

What options exist for combating corruption, and what role can development cooperation play in this? A distinction should be drawn between fighting corruption and preventing it. Whereas in the first case, the stated aim is to reduce the overall level of corruption in a country, in

the second case the intention is to obviate the chances of corruption in a particular concrete situation. The responsibility for anti-corruption schemes to fight the general phenomenon must be borne primarily by the governments, businesses, and social organizations of the country concerned. The part which external actors may play in this process is confined to providing support for these developments.

The levers available to development cooperation in this area are to be found on the one hand at the policy level: in both bilateral and multilateral negotiations, states should be challenged to fulfill their obligation of continually and comprehensively fighting corruption. On the other hand, a number of direct opportunities present themselves in project planning, the award of contracts to local partners, and the practical running of projects. Most successes are recorded in the prevention of corruption—that is to say, in measures that help ensure that financial resources and openings for political influence that may arise out of the project-work are not possible in the first place.

Recommendations:

- The political pressure exerted by civil-society groups is an important instrument for fighting corruption. NGOs, especially those that champion civil rights, have a special role to play in supporting and encouraging such pressure from local groups. They may act as a watchdog, monitor financial conduct of state authorities and other official practices (such as issuance of permits, contracts and jobs in state institutions), and demand relevant information. Making this information known among the population at large can enable that population to hold their own authorities accountable.
- Finance-intensive projects pose particular difficulties in areas of high political tension or violent conflict. As noted, the resources of aid can be misused in power struggles by the contending parties. In the case of development cooperation, evidence of broad misuse of resources should entail changes in the control and management of aid and also, in some cases, prompt discontinuation of a project.
- In all projects involving processes of reform—for example in legal, financial, or administrative systems—elements that reduce the chances of corruption can be built in at the planning stage. In the context of decentralization, a key element in procedures that prevent corruption is the establishment of supervisory or monitoring bodies whose membership includes groups from civil society.
- Donor organizations can help promote public awareness by making information about the size of their financial commitment, the ways in which funds are used, and the criteria for selecting project areas and target-groups publicly available, and by involving civil-society groups in the task of monitoring methods and results.

III. Roles and Opportunities for International Assistance in Active and Post-Conflict Situations

International assistance—whether humanitarian or development aid—provided in active conflict or post-war settings must deal both with the initial motivating forces of the violence (structural, dynamic or strategic) and with the results of the violence (destruction, grievance and mistrust). Failure to do so leaves forces in place that can re-emerge in new violence. In addition, experience shows that international assistance can be effective in the de-escalation of violence and the support of systems for constructive conflict management when it is linked to activities and efforts already underway in the recipient society. Aid programmes that recognize where and how forces internal to a conflict are engaged in bridging differences and that reinforce and build on these are far more likely to contribute to long-term peace support than programmes that are invented and initiated from outside.

Of equal importance for international assistance in active and post-conflict settings is recognition of who is committed to warfare and resistant to efforts to end violence. In areas where violence is occurring, international assistance can have direct and indirect impacts on people's incentives to continue, or end, fighting. Here we suggest four areas where international donors can actively engage in open conflict or post-conflict settings to lessen violence and support the recreation of systems for managing differences without war.

SUPPORT FOR ZONES OF PEACE. In most areas of open warfare, some regions are “hot” while in others, people continue to live “normally.” In Somalia, in Mozambique, in Colombia and elsewhere, even when fierce fighting has been occurring in some areas of the country, a number of villages have remained independent from the conflict, establishing themselves as zones of peace. Often, they are able to maintain self-governance, avoid contributing either manpower or goods to the fighting and carry on daily life without engaging in the broader violence. Even where such self-conscious peace zones do not exist, because wars seldom cover an entire country at all times, there are usually areas untouched by violence.

The existence of non-warring areas in the midst of violence suggests an opportunity for international donors. Such enclaves when they are consciously established represent, at a minimum, obvious expressions of disaffection from the prevailing motivations for warfare. They signal the degree of lack of popular support for intergroup violence. They provide an option where local people can gather to organize and consolidate alternatives to violence. Sometimes, such areas are vital, strong and able to resist intrusions of violence; sometimes they are susceptible to external attack and can be overrun by surrounding warfare.

International donors are challenged to find ways to reinforce and help extend such zones. There is no program-

matic response that is always right, but consultation with the residents in these areas may provide insights into how, and under what circumstances, international assistance can strengthen, promote and expand such citizen-level withdrawal from warfare.

PROMOTION OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES. Once war has started, opportunities for non-war employment fall and people may be “attracted” to participate in fighting because it represents one avenue for viable employment. This is particularly true for young men who find not only employment, but also comradeship and identity, in joining militia activities. On the other hand, aid workers report that most people in situations of violent conflict lament their loss of “normal” jobs and long to return to them.

A primary focus of intense development cooperation on the promotion of non-war employment opportunities could provide a powerful alternative for many, including even the young men of a society, to disengage from violence.

To entice young men from war, opportunities that are profoundly engaging to them would need to be created. Objectives of such programmes should focus on immediate, attractive alternatives to war and less on long-term outcomes. That is, training would have to take these young men where they are, build on the knowledge they have, and teach them new skills in ways that challenge and encourage them. Such programmes would not be simple; they would require special funding and expertise; they would not meet usual development criteria. The international aid community has not yet responded with full energy and commitment to this kind of employment challenge.

RECONSTRUCTION OF “NORMAL” LIFE. Research makes clear that the period immediately following the cessation of open fighting is the most “dangerous” in terms of likely new outbreaks of violence. International donors, aware of this, have opportunities for providing focused aid that addresses the challenges of this period.

The faster a return to “normal life,” the more there is that is lost by a return to warfare. Thus, the sooner international aid is provided for rebuilding in a post-conflict setting, the more effective it is apt to be in contributing to future conflict prevention. International support for the massive rebuilding of basic infrastructure and systems that provide linkages among groups could help the local forces who are, themselves, working for peace to achieve a more rapid consolidation of the conditions that ensure its continuation.

In addition, rebuilding provides opportunities for post-conflict employment also easing the transition from a war-based economy. It offers opportunities for people who have been divided by warfare to work together to rebuild things from which all will benefit.

A caution about the focus of post-conflict reconstruction is in order. Aid directed toward rebuilding should be focused on structures and systems that are shared by all groups, rather than on assets that serve or are owned by one group. For this reason, housing reconstruction is often the least good option for the support of aid. There is some experience that, given employment opportunities, families will rebuild their own homes as a first priority. But, they will not be willing to contribute to the reconstruction of public goods until they have taken care of their private, housing needs. Furthermore, since housing is very often targeted as warring groups try to force each other to flee from areas they wish to control, the reconstruction of housing can become a “flashpoint” for memories of recent animus and symbolic of revenge and reprisal. If in the course of fighting, one group has suffered greater housing destruction than others so that donors concentrate on rebuilding first for this group that “has suffered the most,” this is seen as an act of favoritism and bias. Such aid may reinforce conflict rather than relieve it.

On the other hand, international aid focused on reconstruction of shared and linking infrastructure and systems (roads, bridges, canals, public buildings, schools, security systems, markets, etc.) provides employment, contributes to a rapidly returning sense of normalcy, and provides the physical and social means for groups to become re-engaged after a war.

REINFORCEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE. Where groups have previously lived and worked together, or in mutually interdependent ways, opportunities exist for aid donors to help re-establish systems of economic interdependence.

Even where groups live apart from each other (sometimes as a result of migration and movement during fighting) or where they are not ready to work together in joint enterprises because of the levels of mistrust and hatred

generated by war, enterprises can be developed to reinforce and strengthen economic interdependence.

Recommendations:

Development cooperation should develop systems for identifying and assessing the connections that exist among people in conflict zones and target assistance and support those areas that reinforce intergroup cooperation and interdependence. In particular, aid should focus on:

- Providing employment opportunities for young men and others who may be enticed into conflict;
- Providing employment opportunities where people from different groups interact, work together, or recognize their mutual interdependence;
- Supporting the construction of shared, community-owned structures and systems rather than the construction or establishment of individually-owned assets (such as housing) or single-group enterprises;
- Establishing viable enterprises that reestablish economic interdependence of different sectors of the population or regions of a country;
- Providing immediate and sizable assistance to reestablish trade relations, reconstruct shared infrastructure and reestablish “normalcy” in situations where a cease-fire has been negotiated or a treaty signed;
- Identifying the areas and zones of nations at war which, on their own, have found ways to disengage from fighting and, with care, providing support to these areas that will reinforce their survival and, where possible, help them expand.

For each to gain, both had to gain: An example from Tajikistan

In the war in Tajikistan, heavy fighting occurred in Khatlon Province between the Garmi and Kulyabi. Although they had worked together on state farms prior to the war, the majority had always lived in mono-ethnic villages. In the period of post-war reconstruction, most aid agencies assumed that hatred born of the war would make the two groups reluctant to cooperate on rebuilding. These agencies, thus, initiated “self-reliance” projects for economic independence in a number of mono-ethnic villages. Another agency, realizing the limits of this approach, recognized that villages could be re-linked economically, without forcing people to work alongside each other. They developed a wool production enterprise in one village and a carpet production enterprise in another village. The wool producers agreed to supply the carpet producers. For each to gain, both had to gain. Economic interdependence was reintroduced and reinforced.

IV. Conclusion

The challenge for the policy level in international assistance is to remain aware, even in planning overarching programmatic approaches, of the on-the-ground impacts of resources on intergroup relations. Further, the challenge is to develop adequate and dynamic systems for gathering information about generalized conflict trends and local disturbing events. These must be coupled with systems for analysis that integrate the data at macro and micro levels, factoring in the importance of all indigenous efforts to manage conflict constructively and to avoid violence. Although it is important for policy makers in development cooperation to develop such systems for information and analysis, it is even more important for these same people to maintain constant awareness that all international assistance will be effective in conflict prevention and mitigation only insofar as it is linked to, builds on and

strengthens existing indigenous efforts to coexist without violence.

There is no “imported peace.” Nonetheless, when societies experience growing conflict or when violence erupts, many local people welcome international support for their efforts to curtail destruction and manage differences. While donors of international assistance cannot manage or shape others’ conflicts, we must find ways to hear and respond to the forces within societies that have a vision of shared, inclusive justice and mutual, beneficial interdependence. Support of these forces offers opportunities to reduce human suffering that results from conflict and to promote the dynamic processes by which people achieve their goals and dreams.

Policy Paper 15: Summary of the Policy Recommendations

Improvement of Reactions in the Early Stages of Rising Conflict:

Development cooperation agencies should take steps to develop a coordinated system at project level for collecting information from local sources on localized events and tendencies. Attention should be given to three aspects:

- Existing connectors in society to identify strengths within troubled regions that can be reinforced and supported;
- Events likely to increase tensions and divisions between groups;
- Responses to curtail and control such trends.

Exploiting the Potential of the Media

Understanding the power and prevalence of media in promoting both conflict and peace, development cooperation should seek opportunities to make active use of the media as a means to support peace and unity in society, reinforce fair and free media in the countries where aid is provided, and counter deliberate political misinformation. Journalists in conflict areas should be supported through trainings, facilitating access to international networks and through assistance for the development of a code of conduct. Local media should be supported in their function to provide reliable information and play a constructive role in a politically tense environment.

Strengthening the Security Sector

In order to promote public security, development cooperation can contribute. Improvement of security sector performance should concentrate on the executive, legislative, judiciary or state administration that are directly or indirectly linked with security sector concerns. NGOs in the human-rights field should deliberately seek contact with security-sector forces and help support the establishment of a more transparent relationship between the population and the security forces. Organizations working in development cooperation

should make it their business to raise issues of security reform as an integral part of the process of international donor co-ordination.

Fighting Corruption is Strengthening the Capacities for Peace

The political pressure exerted by civil-society groups is an important instrument for fighting corruption. In the case of development cooperation, evidence of broad misuse of resources should entail changes in the control and management of aid and also, in some cases, prompt discontinuation of a project. As prevention of corruption becomes a priority, projects should take up elements that reduce the chances of corruption at the planning stage. Donor organizations can help promote public awareness by making information about the size of their financial commitment, the ways in which funds are used, and the criteria for selecting project areas and target-groups publicly available, and by involving civil-society groups in the task of monitoring methods and results.

Roles and Opportunities for International Assistance in Active and Post-Conflict Situations

Development cooperation should develop systems for identifying and assessing the connections that exist among people in conflict zones and support those areas that reinforce intergroup cooperation and interdependence. In particular, aid should focus on: providing employment opportunities where people from different groups interact; supporting the construction of shared, community-owned structures and systems; establishing viable enterprises that reestablish economic interdependence of different sectors of the population or regions of a country; providing immediate and sizable assistance to re-establish “normalcy” in situations where a cease-fire has been negotiated or a treaty signed; identifying the areas and zones of nations at war which, on their own, have found ways to disengage from fighting.

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