



Working to prevent
violent conflict

Saferworld issue paper 2

Addressing conflict and violence from 2015

Issue Paper 2: What are the key challenges? What works in addressing them?

In this series of three issue papers, Saferworld examines existing evidence and arguments - and poses key questions - to help inform a productive global conversation about the place of conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the post-2015 development framework.

With discussions on the post-2015 development framework underway, Issue Paper 1 looks at the impact of conflict and violence on development – in particular efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Issue Paper 2 follows on to ask ‘what are the key challenges to peacebuilding and development in conflict-affected and fragile contexts?’ and ‘what works in addressing them?’ Issue Paper 3 then broadens the scope of the debate by considering the perspectives of new global actors on issues of conflict and peacebuilding.

The papers are working drafts prepared for the ‘Conflict and Fragility and the Post-2015 Development Agenda’ Global Thematic Consultation, 28-30 November 2012, Monrovia, Liberia. They are not intended to be comprehensive, nor do they put forward a particular Saferworld agenda. Issue Papers 1 and 2 summarise the findings and conclusions of studies that identify lessons from multiple countries and contexts, together with policy positions that are significant due to their wide circulation, endorsement or innovation. Issue Paper 3 represents a summary of original research by Saferworld and leading experts on rising powers.

All comments are welcome and should be sent to lattree@saferworld.org.uk

Introduction

With discussions of the post-2015 development framework underway, *Issue Paper 2* asks two key questions: ‘what are the key challenges in peacebuilding and development in conflict affected and fragile contexts?’ and ‘what works in addressing them?’ It thus explores the qualities of resilient states, capable of achieving sustainable and accelerated long-term development. It is designed to support a discussion on what issues should be prioritised in the post-2015 framework. Part I looks at the challenges and solutions, focusing on five key issue areas around state-society relations, security, justice, economy and livelihoods, and equality. Part II identifies selected lessons from past peacebuilding experiences that can help inform the shape and functioning of the post-2015 framework.

Civil society and several governmental and multilateral stakeholders from the global North and South are now united in calling for a post-2015 framework that prioritises addressing the drivers of conflict and violence – both as an end in itself and as a necessary precursor for development progress.¹ There is no consensus on any single most important factor that drives conflict: instead, research evidence shows us a number of overlapping issues that recur and interconnect to drive conflicts and violence in many contexts around the world. These include state-society relations, security, justice, economy and livelihoods, and inter-group relations and equality.

Part I – Key challenges and what works in addressing them

1 State-society relations

There is significant convergence in the literature on the central importance of state-society relations in fostering less violent, more sustainably peaceful societies. Paffenholz, the Crisis States Research Centre

(CSRC) and Stewart all stress the importance of *how* societies are governed, the type of institutions that exist, and the emphasis placed on gaining societal trust.² Backing this up, World Bank research has found that better governance reduces the risk of civil war by 35-45%.³ The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) has come to a similar conclusion through analysis of 300 cross-country datasets and its own Global Peace Index for 153 countries.⁴

For both the World Bank and the OECD, legitimacy is crucial for peaceful rule and a transition out of fragility.⁵ This idea is echoed by the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, which recognises constructive state-society relations being at the heart of successful peacebuilding and statebuilding.⁶ A global civil society consensus has also emerged that peace and development can be best upheld by states that are inclusive, responsive, fair and accountable.⁷

Four sub-areas are widely acknowledged to be critical elements of healthy state-society relations: state reach and functioning; managing natural resources; providing services and meeting public expectations; and rights, democracy and participation. These are examined in turn below.

1.1 State reach and functioning

Many studies and policy documents reflect the point that the reach and functioning of the state is critical to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and violence reduction. The Center on International Cooperation (CIC) states that 'weak financial administration and coercive capacities are a better predictor of the onset of civil war and extreme violence than other aspects'.⁸ Other research has drawn on the cases of the Philippines, Colombia, Afghanistan and DRC to illustrate how a weak or absent state can be a driver of conflict.⁹ The German Development Institute (DIE) also asserts that diminished authority also reduces a state's ability to keep its citizens safe.¹⁰

Addressing the challenges

Some of the most important state functions identified are the monopoly on violence (DIE), presence of state institutions in remote areas, ability to discipline those who don't play by the state's rules (CSRC), and the ability to raise and spend revenues effectively (OECD, New Deal, UNDP).¹¹ It is important to note that those who emphasise the importance of state reach and functioning rarely do so without emphasising the importance of participation, inclusion, legitimacy, confidence building, responsiveness to public expectations and accountability. In the absence of these elements, state authority can of course drive conflict and violence.¹²

Key issue: the ability of states to manage revenues and perform core functions effectively and accountably

1.2 Managing natural resources

The evidence that natural resources of different kinds have a critical role to play in conflict dynamics is extensive.¹³ While there are debates over the degree to which availability and dependence on primary commodity exports, as opposed to scarcity of resources, can drive conflict, qualitative studies of countries such as Angola, Sierra Leone and DRC affirm that natural resources are central to the dynamics of many conflicts.¹⁴

There is also consensus that the state has a determining role to play in constructive handling of natural resource-related problems. According to the OECD, Collier and others, without effective governance and rule of law, conflict over resources is likely.¹⁵ Research by the IEP highlights that two indexes focusing on corruption (Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) and the World Bank's World Governance Indicator on Control of Corruption) correlate very strongly with the Global Peace Index – demonstrating a very strong link between corruption and conflict.¹⁶ Having natural assets can have a corrosive effect on control of corruption, but there is also evidence that democratic forms of governance can lead to more constructive management of natural resources and conflicts related to them.¹⁷

Addressing the challenges

At the national level, IEP's work suggests that the fight against corruption is a key way to address conflict.¹⁸ UNDP has also argued that reducing extreme dependence on a narrow range of exports can help.¹⁹ Collier claims that democracy and the quality of elections is a key factor affecting both levels of corruption and, as a result, how well natural resources are managed.²⁰

At the global level, both the OECD and Collier have suggested that measures to curb corrupt practices by governments and businesses are vital.²¹ NGOs have also argued that higher standards of conflict-sensitive behaviour by companies are needed – and make sound business sense.²²

Key issue: transparency, accountability and controls on corruption

The Kimberley

Process is an example of an international approach that has helped stem the sale of conflict diamonds. However, overall, well-resourced regional approaches to reducing the challenges posed by poor natural resource management and illicit financial flows are lacking (WDR 2011).²³

1.3 Providing social services and meeting public expectations

A range of actors including the OECD and IEP have made the case that providing social services, and meeting public expectations is a key element of the constructive state-society relations that underpin less violent, more sustainably peaceful and resilient states and societies.²⁴ Although the link between inequality and conflict is not accepted by all scholars, and inequality can be seen as relevant to all aspects of state-society relations and inter-group relations, inequalities in social service provision are viewed by many as a significant driver of conflict.

According to Gurr and Stewart and Goodhand, the erosion of people's entitlements contributes to growing grievances that can lead to open conflict if triggered by external shocks.²⁵ Paffenholz also notes that inequality and poverty can act as a breeding ground for mobilization and revolt.²⁶ A survey of citizens in six countries has backed these views up, highlighting poverty/poor education and justice/inequality/corruption as the two primary drivers of conflict in the countries surveyed.²⁷ This reflects OECD views on marginalization as well as evidence compiled by Geneva Declaration.²⁸

Addressing the challenges

Unsurprisingly, there is considerable consensus among different policy communities that, beyond providing social services, *ensuring fair access to them* among different groups in society, is a key priority for conflict prevention, violence reduction and sustainable peacebuilding. Indeed, in the most fragile states rapid socio-economic gains are needed to build confidence.²⁹ This includes basic goods and services which are typically seen as equal access to health, education, water, sanitation, communications and infrastructure, as well as justice and security.³⁰ The importance of fair service delivery is also strongly emphasised by the g7+ group, and reaffirmed in the New Deal, which prioritises the need to 'build capacity for accountable and fair service delivery' as part of the fifth peacebuilding and statebuilding goal.

Key issue: fair access to social services and resources

1.4 Rights, democracy and participation

According to existing evidence, deficits in democracy, rights and participation all appear to be fundamental challenges in the area of state-society relations that have a critical role in underpinning conflict and violence. How peaceful countries are is strongly correlated with indexes on a range of measures of democracy and rights produced by organisations including the Economist Intelligence Unit, Freedom House, World Bank, Legatum Foundation, Brookings Institute, ISS, UN Human Development Index and Gallup.³¹ The top ten most peaceful nations in the IEP's Global Peace Index are 'all well-functioning democracies while most of the bottom ten nations are authoritarian regimes or failed states.'³²

Paffenholz and the OECD agree that the degree to which the political settlement is exclusionary rather than inclusive negatively affects peace.³³ They also agree that the role and voice of civil society in building peace is often severely undermined by the behaviour of the state.³⁴ Qualitative research by the CSRC also points to the significance of political factors in spurring violent civic conflict.³⁵

Addressing the challenges

There is broad consensus on how these challenges can be addressed. This is exemplified by the OECD's assertion that 'when political settlement is underpinned by a broad societal acceptance of the rules of the game, it is more likely to be stable'. This highlights the critical importance of accountability and the level and quality of political inclusion and the rules of political participation.³⁶ Evidence from the WDR 2011 – backed up by work from the IEP and Paffenholz's 13-country study – also highlights that 'less coercive and more accountable approaches significantly decrease the risk of civil conflict'.³⁷

Saferworld and the g7+ have similarly argued that inclusive, accountable political settlements are a central prerequisite for long term peace.³⁸ Separately, Keen has drawn attention to research illustrating this by pointing to ethnic mobilization and participation of indigenous groups in mainstream politics in Ecuador and Bolivia which tended to discourage outright rebellion. This is in contrast to Guatemala and Peru, where indigenous groups were largely excluded from formal politics.³⁹

However, the g7+, CSRC and CIC have also emphasised that institutional reform and moves to democracy need to be pursued at a pace that is appropriate for local circumstances – otherwise there can be unintended destabilising consequences.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, CIC has observed that since the end of the Cold War, all countries that have lastingly exited from violence – with the exception of Angola – have done so by adopting an inclusive political settlement.⁴¹

Key issue: voice and participation in decision-making

2 Security

Issue Paper 1 summarised evidence about the impacts of conflict and violence on development. Additional evidence also illustrates insecurity as a driver of further violence, and offers a clearer picture of the nature of contemporary security challenges. There is extensive evidence that conflict and violence are cyclical, with violence breeding more violence.⁴² Both internal and external security factors can drive violence – for example, the fear of internal persecution leading to violent redress, or the threat of invasion, cross-border issues, or refugee flows.⁴³

The WDR 2011 describes contemporary trends in conflict and violence: inter- and intra-state war has reduced, but organised violence poses new security challenges. This includes militias, gang violence, local resource-related violence, violence linked to trafficking, and ideological violence.⁴⁴ This form of crime and violence is particularly symptomatic of the absence of the rule of law.⁴⁵ This also reflects the OECD's conceptualisation of the structural risk factors for armed violence.⁴⁶

Tackling violence and achieving security are linked to the need for police and wider security sector reform – highlighted by the OECD and CIC.⁴⁷ International markets in military goods and security services and international engagement with non-state armed groups are two other global factors with clear implications for security.⁴⁸ A final challenge highlighted by Paffenholz is the way violence limits civil society's role in peacebuilding.

Addressing the challenges

Central to all current thinking about what works is the idea – expressed succinctly by the g7+ – that 'without security there can be no development'.⁴⁹ The OECD and World Bank have both reaffirmed this view.⁵⁰ The CSRC also stresses that security is a precondition for governance reforms, from competitive elections to decentralisation, devolution, and security sector reform.⁵¹ However, Saferworld has argued that postponing political reform may only exacerbate existing deficiencies in the security and justice systems, reducing options for substantive reform.⁵² The OECD adds that the political interests that have resulted in the current status quo need to be addressed.⁵³ One way to do this is to empower civilian populations to articulate their needs for security and justice and to develop solutions for the challenges they face.⁵⁴

Objectives for improving security and justice provision include democratic oversight and accountability and civil society empowerment; reform of defence, intelligence and security services, police, justice and prisons; and border management.⁵⁵ CIC concludes that peacekeeping has been shown to be effective in reducing violence, whereas the effectiveness of current approaches to disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and police reform is much less clear.⁵⁶

The WDR 2011 puts forward evidence on the importance of focusing on delivering simple security benefits to citizens and demonstrating change to build confidence. It also stresses the importance of involving women in security, justice, and economic empowerment programmes.⁵⁷ The OECD has suggested addressing global factors like trafficking should be a priority, through changes in national and international regimes.⁵⁸

Key issue: reducing violence and making the public feel secure

3 Justice

There is a fair degree of consensus around the challenges related to justice in driving contemporary violence and conflict. The OECD highlights impunity, ineffective criminal justice systems, as well as inequality, poor governance, and corruption – with UNDP providing a very similar list.⁵⁹

Analysis of 280 country surveys in Latin America and Africa backs this list up, showing that countries that are not fragile or overtly affected by conflict have significantly higher levels of trust in the police, the justice system, and parliament.⁶⁰ In another multi-country survey injustice/inequality/corruption was named as the primary driver of conflict in five of the six countries surveyed.⁶¹ As noted previously, research by the IEP also shows that the higher the levels of corruption a country has, the less peaceful it is.⁶²

Addressing the challenges

The OECD and WDR 2011 agree that successful transitions to peace have rarely been achieved without prioritising justice because it is an important factor for a government to be seen as legitimate and accountable. A peacebuilding and statebuilding goal on justice has also been endorsed by 42 countries and organisations as part of the New Deal.⁶³

Strengthening justice systems should include developing fair laws; making courts, prosecution services and informal justice services efficient, fair, and answerable to the parliament and the people; ensuring and improving access to justice, and protecting human rights.⁶⁴ Tackling corruption and establishing the separation of powers – to check against abuse – is also critical.⁶⁵ A multi-donor evaluation of conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the DRC also highlights land and property rights as an important driver of conflict that effective legal regulation can address.⁶⁶

The WDR 2011 also offers a number of important lessons on what works in achieving justice. These include demonstrating that national resources can be used for public good before dismantling patronage systems; drawing on traditional/community mechanisms; including political and electoral reform within efforts for longer term systemic change; and prioritising actions that will demonstrate transparency. It argues that successful programme design could include supporting local justice and dispute resolution; focused anti-corruption initiatives that demonstrate that new initiatives can be well governed; and joint processes to investigate and prosecute corruption, such as Haiti-US and Nigeria-UK initiatives, which can build capacity in weaker jurisdictions.⁶⁷

Key issue: ending impunity and ensuring access to justice

4 Economy and livelihoods

Several studies from Collier, Paffenholz and others have highlighted a correlation between economic underdevelopment, employment and conflict – with 32 of the 46 countries at the bottom of the UNDP's human development index conflict-affected or fragile.⁶⁸ Since 1990, over half of all conflict-prone countries have been low income, or least-developed countries, and two thirds of all armed conflicts have taken place in African countries with the highest poverty rates.⁶⁹

The WDR 2011 also notes that an economic decline of 5% increases the likelihood of conflict by 50% for the following year, and that lower GDP per capita is linked to large-scale political conflict and high rates of homicide – a point echoed by the Millennium Project and the Geneva Declaration.⁷⁰

Mack, Gates, Goodhand and Tschirgi have carried out research interrogating the link between economic growth and conflict – illustrating that peace depends on more factors than just economic development, and that rapid economic changes can be destabilising.⁷¹ However, based on a range of global indexes, the IEP argues that a sound business environment and equitable distribution of resources are associated with peaceful environments.⁷² The OECD has also set out a number of structural factors raising the risk of armed violence which include unemployment, economic grievances, rising expectations, urbanisation, and demography (particularly male youth bulges, which research by Urdal has also linked to violence).⁷³ Research findings from Brett and Specht, Auty, de Sousa, Karl, Fearon, Ross, and Svensson, and the World Bank, have also highlighted economic reasons for participation in violence.⁷⁴

External shocks such as security pressures, income shocks, and climate shocks can also overwhelm institutions and cause a decline of economic growth – with knock-on effects for conflict.⁷⁵ Recent joint work by the OECD, Saferworld and Cranfield University has pointed to economic liberalisation policies and measures, international barriers to exports, and the effect of aid on post-conflict growth as three key factors influencing conflict risk and fragility.⁷⁶

Addressing the challenges

Economic growth remains a key part of reducing conflict risk. On average, per capita income increases by US\$3,100 for every ten places that a country rises up the Global Peace Index. The IEP argues that this 'underscores the positive interdependence between peace and economic growth'.⁷⁷ The OECD and G7+ similarly argue that facilitating economic development is a critical capability of effective states.⁷⁸ Within this, research showing that the lower a country's male unemployment rate, the stronger the likelihood of a lower homicide rate, suggests that tackling male unemployment might be considered a priority.⁷⁹

Recommendations from the WDR 2011 for achieving job creation in conflict-affected and fragile contexts include: large-scale community-based public works, such as those in India and Indonesia; simplifying private sector regulation and addressing infrastructure bottlenecks; investing to bring producers and markets together; multi-sectoral community empowerment programmes; providing access to finance; encouraging women's economic empowerment; and action for the economic inclusion of marginalised

groups.⁸⁰ IEP research adds ensuring access to education and training to this list as a fundamental priority not only for job creation but also for conflict prevention more broadly.

However, it is crucial to stress the paramount importance of pursuing economic progress in context-sensitive ways to ensure economic growth does not inadvertently exacerbate horizontal inequalities and lead to instability.⁸¹

Key issue: shared economic growth and opportunities for decent livelihoods

5 Inter-group relations and equality

We have already noted in the various sections above how inequality can be a key dynamic affecting development and state-society relations. Evidence from the Geneva Declaration, OECD and IEP highlights further the importance of strengthening not only equality but also inter-group relations – and suggests this could be a priority in any new global development framework.⁸² Evidence from the IEP in particular links levels of peace with a number of recognised measures of cohesion, interpersonal trust and equality from the ISS, UN and World Economic Forum – highlighting in particular a link between peace and gender equality.⁸³

Kaplan also highlights that ‘unstable environments [such as ethnic or social divisions] encourage polities to split along the most profound cleavages’, but this in turn ‘prevents states from fashioning a robust nationwide governing system, yielding instead a host of chronic problems, ranging from state illegitimacy to high transaction costs, to corruption.’⁸⁴ A forthcoming UN PBSO/Columbia/Saferworld research paper will examine in more detail the link between inequality and conflict – including access to different types of public good such as security and justice.

Addressing gender inequality

The policy consensus on addressing gender inequality as a driver of conflict and violence is set out in two UN Security Council Resolutions. UNSCR 1325 affirms the role of women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, stressing their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security, including in decision-making. It recognises that this can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. UNSCR 1820 further stresses that sexual violence can significantly exacerbate conflict and impede the restoration of peace and security. It affirms that steps to prevent and respond to sexual violence can significantly contribute to peace and security.

Research by IDS, Womankind and ActionAid on women's roles in peacebuilding in five countries led to four key recommendations: long-term support and investment for women's participation in peacebuilding; improving women's access to justice; creating safe spaces for participation; and promoting recognition of women's rights and gender equality in all peace processes, agreements and transitional governance structures.⁸⁵

DFID has also identified four types of intervention that work to prevent and reduce violence against women and girls. These include empowering women and girls, changing social norms, building political will and legal/institutional capacity to prevent and respond, and providing comprehensive services.⁸⁶

Lastly, a paper from CDA Collaborative Learning Projects highlights evidence of women's ability to work across divides, build networks and prepare the ground for peace, for example through non-violent protest. The research found women's organisations were playing a leading role in civil society movements preparing for and consolidating peace, and that when given the opportunity, women are responsible for shifting attitudes and putting neglected issues on the agenda. However, this has not always resulted in a fundamental shift in cultural perceptions of the role of women, or in the systems of power that perpetuate the structural causes of conflict and marginalisation.⁸⁷

Key issue: ensuring equality between social groups – especially between men and women

Addressing other challenges from inter-group relations and equality

There is considerable consensus that creating more cohesive societies is a key way to reduce the risk of conflict associated with inter-group relations and equality. The CSRC, for example, argues that measures to consolidate national identity, institutions of citizenship and inter-community communication are needed.⁸⁸ In a similar vein, Kaplan suggests successful approaches could include:

- promoting national integration
- supporting teaching and use of all major indigenous languages

- prohibiting political parties based on ethnicity, religion, or region, and maintaining an ethno-regional balance in the political sphere
- apportioning the profits from natural resources in a fair and transparent manner, ensuring that social spending is impartially distributed, and reducing economic inequities between rival groups
- promoting social and cultural bonds across groups
- cultivating cultural programmes that can foster complementary or multiple cultural identities
- reconciling inter-group wounds through reconciliation programmes.⁸⁹

The CIC suggests that it will be challenging to improve knowledge of effective approaches to addressing inequality/injustice because some of the most widely used surveys fail to differentiate by identity group.⁹⁰ To overcome this challenge, civil society organisations have argued that any indicators used to measure progress within the post-2015 framework should be disaggregated by sex, age, geography, ethnicity, religion, caste and income group.⁹¹

Key issue: reconciliation and tolerance between different social groups

Part II - Lessons from past peacebuilding efforts

Past conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts have generated some important lessons. Below we highlight lessons that could shape and inform the development of a post-2015 framework.

Prevention not reaction

When it comes to conflict and violence, given the cyclical, recurrent nature of contemporary conflict and violence and their disastrous impacts for development (see WDR 2011 and *Issue Paper 1*), prevention is far better than cure. However, many actors recognise that their efforts have remained reactive and fragmented – that they have struggled to mainstream a coherent preventative agenda in situations vulnerable to conflict. This has been highlighted in a multi-donor assessment of conflict prevention and peacebuilding in DRC 2002-2010, and in an EC evaluation of the conflict prevention and peacebuilding effectiveness of all support it provided from 2001 to 2011.⁹²

The post-2015 framework provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to define and prioritise the upstream prevention of conflict at a strategic level, including for those countries not currently considered ‘conflict-affected’.

Key lesson 1: we remain more reactive than proactive - the post-2015 framework is a rare chance to shift to upstream prevention

Coherence and integration

International engagement in fragile and conflict-affected states will necessarily continue to involve working across a number of sectors, geographic regions and levels of government. However, there is growing evidence that coordination and synergy needs to be improved. For example, the Dili Declaration criticised the preponderance of overlapping plans among international actors engaging in fragile states without any unified vision for change.⁹³ Meanwhile the European Commission has reported that coordination between peacebuilding actors has often been limited to information sharing and has failed to adopt a common approach that recognises the interdependence of development and security.⁹⁴

Work by the OECD, the EC and IEP all underscores the special importance of integrated efforts: neglect of any one conflict driver – or any one state function – may undermine both progress towards other goals and the overall prospects for peace.⁹⁵ The EC argues for a more integrated approach to development and security which includes mainstreaming; short and long-term support; efforts at local, country and regional level; and more strategic coordination on the ground.⁹⁶

Research by Muggah and Wennemann, also suggests integrated initiatives are most effective and should promote both security and wider development outcomes, which are mutually reinforcing.⁹⁷ Both the WDR 2011 and the OECD also highlight the need for complementary efforts at national, regional and global levels on issues that cross borders and can become external shocks.⁹⁸

Above all, the evidence suggests that what works is addressing multiple drivers of conflict in joined-up, mutually supporting efforts with a shared sense of purpose among those who are committed to peace and development. The negotiation of the post-2015 framework is an opportunity to agree on a shared vision that can bring coherence to fragmented efforts that are missing the mark in conflict-affected and violence-prone contexts. It is also a chance to strengthen global cooperation and find innovative approaches to address hitherto neglected global factors that drive conflict.

Key lesson 2: we remain incoherent – the post 2015 framework is a chance to make a decisive move towards coherence between actors and sectors and between local, national and global solutions

Context specificity and sequencing

The post-2015 framework is an opportunity to help focus international cooperation on addressing the key challenges driving conflict and violence around the world. However, there is also wide recognition that a one-size-fits-all approach is inappropriate for addressing conflict, and can undermine state-society relations.⁹⁹ The CSRC also argues that external actors need to value the factors that contribute to state resilience even when they have involved the allocation of inefficient rents and socially questionable elite privileges. Overly rapid change that upsets existing political settlements can therefore be counter-productive.¹⁰⁰

Similarly, joint research by the OECD, Saferworld and Cranfield University points to economic liberalisation policies and measures as a global factor impacting on conflict and fragility at the national level.¹⁰¹ These arguments are backed up by research findings from Paffenholz, Bussman and Schneider, and Paris.¹⁰²

These reflections tell us that conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes must be delivered in a way that is responsive to the specific dynamics of each conflict context. The new international framework should offer robust commitments and targets to work towards a holistic long-term vision for sustainable peace and development. However, the pace and sequence of strategies to reach these commitments must then be defined through local, national and regional consultation and planning processes, to engender best-fit-to-context strategies for reaching a more clearly-defined vision of progress over the long term.

Key lesson 3: what brings peace to most countries can bring conflict to some – alongside setting robust long term targets in the right areas, the post-2015 framework should allow for context-specific priority setting and sequencing

Development – a technical or political process?

Recent studies have pointed to a tendency among development actors to prioritise technical approaches to statebuilding, security and economic reform that neglect the political questions and interests affecting prospects for progress. For example, the WDR 2011 highlights the lack of focus on shifting political interests and the incentives to work towards peace among political elites.¹⁰³

The OECD, CSRC and others have called on international actors to better recognise that peacebuilding and development efforts in conflict-affected contexts are deeply political processes that must be founded on understanding of local political economies.¹⁰⁴ For example, strengthening the police, judiciary, and public financial management all affect fundamental political interests and alter the status quo.¹⁰⁵ Governance reforms succeed or fail within the context of 'reigning elite interests at any given time'.¹⁰⁶ The EC has tried to address some of these concerns through its 'Agenda for Change', which aims to prioritise more effective, and better politically-informed, work in fragile states.¹⁰⁷

Key lesson 4: we are ignoring the politics of development – Can we frame targets that affirm the centrality of inclusive, fair, responsive and accountable state-society relations without attracting controversy?

This suggests that a post-2015 framework that avoids sensitive, but critical issues would fall well-short of what is required to overcome the challenges underpinning violence, conflict and fragility. Finding agreement on global commitments that help to motivate progress towards more inclusive, responsive, accountable and fair state-society relations would, on the other hand, offer a decisive step forward.

Questions for the global thematic consultation

- Western research and policy institutions have tended to dominate the research and policy agenda on conflict and violence – do perspectives from elsewhere tell a different story? (See also Issue Paper 3)
- Amid such a range of challenges, are the challenges outlined in this paper really the most significant?
- How do we prioritise the most critical challenges to address?
- Does the state of our knowledge as to 'what works' allow us to set priorities and targets for the post-2015 framework?
- How can goals, targets and indicators be crafted that uphold the right vision of progress towards sustainable peace and security?
- Will political consensus on including commitments on peace and security be possible in the post-2015 framework?

About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe that everyone should be able to lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from insecurity and violent conflict.

We work in over 20 countries in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. We have staff based in Bangladesh, Georgia, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Pakistan, Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen and Uganda, as well as in London, Beijing, Brussels and Vienna.

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