

**Submission to DFID White Paper Consultation**  
**Fragile and conflict-affected countries and international institutional reform**  
2 April 2009

**Rationale: strengthening HMG's infrastructure for conflict prevention and peacebuilding**

1. The UK has made conflict and fragility a key priority and has taken important steps to improve its response. Yet there is a pressing need to do more and to do it better. HMG's systems to respond in a strategic, timely and appropriate manner remain under-developed or under-utilized.
2. With its extensive bilateral and multilateral reach, the UK is well placed to play a vital role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. But support needs to be appropriately conceived, implemented and resourced. This requires clear understanding of effective peacemaking, as well as nuanced understanding of the local context and motives of those involved. HMG must be mindful of its own reputation and relations with the parties, understanding the roles it is best situated to play and encouraging influential others to undertake roles it cannot play well. This needs to be translated into coherent strategies and operational plans for specific at-risk situations.
3. Central to effective peacebuilding is a willingness to find effective and appropriate ways of engaging with all parties to a conflict and working across conflict divides. Consistent and principled engagement is likely to deliver better results than politically expedient alliances. The credibility and efficacy of HMG's conflict response can be undermined if it is seen to turn a blind eye to violations by governments.
4. Well-designed and resourced external engagement can increase the likelihood of those in conflict making peace. Yet effectiveness could be enhanced if the goal of helping to advance a peace process is at the core of a shared international strategy, rather than ancillary to other objectives. This might help to prevent mixed or contradictory policies from undermining the prospects of conflict resolution.
5. Greater emphasis needs to be given to building the capacities of people in fragile and conflict-affected societies to prevent emerging crises, resolve ongoing disputes and engage in the state-society negotiation that can underpin responsive states. Supporting these capacities amongst state and non-state actors – including women's, youth and minority and indigenous groups – should be a priority in all countries experiencing fragility. This is an investment in better governance as well as conflict response. We believe this is vital if HMG's other initiatives (including the one thousand deployable civilian experts) are not to overwhelm locally owned responses that may be key to sustainability.
6. The UK should aim to provide political encouragement as well as technical and financial support for more democratic and inclusive peacemaking processes leading to comprehensive agreements that address the root causes of conflict.

**This submission focuses on developing recommendations for implementing these principles. It recommends:**

- **Infrastructure:** Support further development of an integrated global infrastructure for conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding linking local, regional and international response systems.
- **Local capacities.** Prioritize building local capacities to respond effectively to crises and build locally owned strategies to conflict and governance.
- **Strategies.** HMG needs to develop coherent strategies backed by operational plans and programmes for each country at risk to facilitate preventive action and, where relevant to support inclusive peace processes.
- **Structures and resources.** DFID's institutional systems, personnel and funding priorities need to be aligned to achieve these goals.

## I. National capacities for preventing crises, addressing conflict and good governance

### **Sierra Leone: helping to prevent elections-related violence**

With careful engagement and some resources, the energies of at-risk groups can be channelled into constructive activities, even during periods of tension and crisis. CR has worked with the Bike Riders Association and with commercial sex workers in Bo and Kenema, many of whom are ex-combatants and comprise a volatile pool of frustrated youth who are easily recruited for criminality and violence. In the lead-up to the 2007 elections, as tensions mounted along with clashes between party supporters, many feared that these young people would be at the centre of violence. CR facilitated their engagement with public officials to better understand the electoral process. They committed themselves to non-violence and initiated a public campaign for Violence Free Elections – an effort that was acknowledged to help maintain stability during this vulnerable period.

7. **Local capacities.** In every society, there are people – often in key societal positions – who are committed to preventing violence and finding constructive ways to address contested issues and build more resilient states and societies.<sup>i</sup> Yet they may need support to ensure their perspectives are heard and that external actors do not undermine their initiatives.
  - a. DFID should prioritize support to national and community-based peacebuilding and civic initiatives to promote more capable, accountable and responsive governments. It can sensitively work to find ways to support them – financially, politically, or technically – without overwhelming ‘home grown’ efforts or displacing them with other priorities.
  - b. DFID should channel its understanding of these opportunities and dynamics into the development of HMG and internationally coherent strategies to support peace and statebuilding.
  - c. It is important to have standing capacities in local organizations to initiate and to respond to conflict, a strength that can only be built-up over time. When appropriate, capacity building assistance could be offered through experienced national, regional or international peacebuilding NGOs.
8. **Strategic complementarity.** DFID personnel developing policies and programmes for countries / regions at-risk should aim to improve strategic complementarity between external actors with different access to and relationships with the various parties to a conflict. This might require a standing forum for joint analysis and response. They should prioritise regular dialogue with relevant civil society actors and analysts, including those with access to non-state armed groups. Where relevant, these forums can become mechanisms to support a mediation or wider peacebuilding effort (such as official or unofficial ‘friends’ group).

## II. HMG and DFID: enabling strategic, appropriate and timely responses to conflict

9. **Strategies.** We believe that the UK will be more effective if it develops locally-informed, cross-departmental strategies to better harness its various policy, programmatic and engagement measures to exert more coherent influence. Strategies should align HMG’s diverse policies towards a country (such as its human rights, trade, energy, or counter-terrorism priorities) with its development, diplomatic, and military capacities to positively influence conflict parties’ engagement in peace initiatives. This might include the use of carefully crafted incentives and sanctions. As such, it would need to go beyond the strategies developed by the Conflict Prevention Pools (CPP) – though, where applicable, these could provide an important foundation. In particular, there is a need to:
  - a. Translate early warning analysis into a joined-up strategy with operational plans and programmes to promote urgent preventive action; and
  - b. In all contexts actively experiencing armed conflict, HMG should develop an overarching peace process support strategy that guides how HMG engages with all the stakeholders to the conflict.
10. **Specialist capacities: expanding the conflict adviser cadre.** DFID’s in-country and regional conflict advisers are ideally situated to make a bridge between understanding the local context and the ‘capacities that exist’ with the development of HMG’s strategies and specific programmatic measures. They are also a potentially invaluable interface with regional bodies and international

institutions. As such, they can be linchpins of the conflict response infrastructure. We therefore recommend that DFID:

- a. Increase the conflict cadre to include in-country advisers for all fragile and conflict-affected states;
- b. Expand their remit to develop local peacebuilding capacity and supporting peace processes;
- c. Consider re-conceiving 'conflict' advisers as 'peacebuilding' advisers to help refocus the remit; and
- d. Ensure they inform and contribute to developing cross-HMG and international conflict strategies.

11. **Analytical tools: incorporating a 'peacebuilding and statebuilding lens'.** The analytical tools used by DFID and HMG should be revised to better incorporate assessment of the motives of conflict actors, identifying the people and forces that can contribute to peace, as well as to better understand the dynamics of the existing political settlement and the prospects for renegotiating it. Programmes and strategies could also benefit from ready access to lessons learned from comparable experience. These elements can help to better inform strategies for peacebuilding and statebuilding.<sup>ii</sup>
12. **'Peace process'-sensitive development.** In addition to ensuring DFID 'does no harm', staff crafting development and aid packages should assess how assistance is likely to affect conflict parties' engagement in a peace process, paying attention to the gender dimension and other areas of exclusion. They should consider how these packages may be interpreted by the parties as incentives or sanctions – regardless of whether conditions are explicitly attached – and thus create inducements or barriers to their constructive engagement.
13. **Cross-border and sub-regional initiatives.** The causes and dynamics of conflict are rarely confined to a single country and fragility can be contagious. Yet conventional development assistance is often allocated on a country basis, constraining support for cross-border and sub-regional strategies and programme. DFID should develop modalities for addressing this gap – a factor that has been made all the more important with the contraction of the CPP funding.
14. **Strategies for disputed and unrecognized entities.** There is a need for effective strategies and programmes to work with these entities, recognizing that isolation often strengthens hardliners while engagement and conflict-sensitive development assistance may be key to longer-term conflict transformation and stability.
15. **Medium-income countries.** While DFID should continue to prioritise fragile LICs, in its conflict prevention work, it is important the HMG does not ignore at-risk MICs – especially those that currently fall in a gap between both DFID and CPP priorities (eg, in Latin America, Southeast Asia).
16. **Funding.** Appropriately resourced support for CP/PB is vital and widely acknowledged as cost-effective relative to other conflict responses.
  - a. Funding streams need to combine both: (i) increased funds for security to medium-term programmes and core support to key institutions with (ii) a flexible fund to support initiatives for rapid response to emerging crises.
  - b. While the CPP's have contributed to both objectives in the past, developments this year show how vulnerable they remain. In the future, budget mechanisms for civilian conflict prevention and peacebuilding should be ringfenced and not tied to budgets for peacekeeping.

### III. Regional and sub-regional capacities for conflict prevention and peacebuilding

17. While highly context specific, regional organizations are potentially well-placed and capable of responding to conflicts in their 'neighbourhood'. As a part of its push for international institutional reform, where appropriate the UK should encourage the development of regional capacities for dispute resolution, CP/PB and statebuilding. In some regions, this might involve supporting bodies dedicated specifically to the early stages of conflict prevention and with a remit for addressing cross-border issues. They could:
  - a. Assist with resolving disputes and developing joint strategies for addressing the effects of climate change, water and resource management, ungoverned spaces, war economies, rule of law in border zones and other key issues. They might also be a regional interface for peace process support and / or facilitating dialogue on regional dimensions of conflict.

- b. Engage with the range of stakeholder in-country who can play roles in building peace and serve as an interface for linking them with other parts of the international system.
- c. Act as the hub for country/conflict-specific information: work with NGOs, researchers, and policy institutions to collate expertise. Promote comparative learning, through facilitating transfer of knowledge and experience within and between regions to stimulate solutions to similar sorts of challenges and models for good governance.
- d. DFID could support initiatives aimed at capacity building for regional bodies playing these roles.

#### IV. United Nations and affiliated bodies

18. The UK should use its distinctive role and resources to encourage the UN system to give greater priority to developing coherent, inclusive and gender-sensitive strategies to prevent violent conflict and support peace processes.
  - a. Peace process support strategies should be reflected in (or at least not undermined by) UN Security Council resolutions and reflected in integrated country plans.
  - b. Departments and affiliated agencies, including the UNDP and the World Bank, should ensure that their country programmes and strategies help to promote conflict prevention and peace processes.
  - c. Yet to enhance sustainability, the UN should consider how its mediation, good offices and support to peace processes can put a greater premium on longer term statebuilding objectives, including by fostering processes and substantive agreements that help to underpin the development of capable, accountable and responsive (CAR) states.

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<sup>i</sup> For example:

- The Citizens Constitutional Forum was key to public engagement in Fiji's constitutional reform and then to championing constitutional democracy after successive coups - [http://www.cdainc.com/publications/rpp/forging\\_a\\_formula\\_for\\_peaceful\\_co-existence\\_in\\_fiji\\_a\\_case\\_study\\_on\\_the\\_citizens\\_constitutional\\_forum.php](http://www.cdainc.com/publications/rpp/forging_a_formula_for_peaceful_co-existence_in_fiji_a_case_study_on_the_citizens_constitutional_forum.php)
  - Catholic Bishop Quezada Toruño's facilitate national dialogue that helped end the war in Guatemala - <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/public-participation/contents.php>
  - The Mano River Women's Peace Network made important contributions pressuring for settlement of war in Liberia - <http://peoplebuildingpeace.microhost.nl/thestories/print.php?id=142&typ=theme>
- <sup>ii</sup> CR drafted previously a memo outlining issues for revising DFID's Strategic Conflict Assessment tool to better incorporate peacebuilding and peace processes and will be happy to forward it on request.