GDI

Approaches to Crisis-Preventing and Conflict-Sensitive Development Cooperation

- *Every year violent disputes occur in the form of domestic and international conflicts in 30 to 50 countries. The attacks of 11 September 2001 have also revealed the dangers of extreme forms of terrorism. Development policy must react both to symptoms of crisis and conflict and to terrorism.*

- *The area of crisis prevention and conflict management has become firmly established in development cooperation in recent years. It is not an innovation dictated by fashion, but a necessary extension.*

- *One important empirical conclusion is that development cooperation has an intended and unintended influence on conflicts. Although the options open to development cooperation for bringing constructive influence to bear should not be overestimated, some are certainly worth considering. Development cooperation can help to remove the causes of conflicts and to create opportunities for non-violent conflict resolution. Suitable country strategies (with account taken of the potential for conflict, etc.), conflict impact assessments and specific measures (such as peace-promoting projects in the education and media sectors) may help in this respect. Practical conflict-sensitive development cooperation is, however, still in its infancy.*

- *Coherent interaction between development cooperation and other policies (especially foreign policy) is very important and should be more easily recognizable in practice. Crisis prevention and conflict management are important tasks for policy as a whole.*

- *The contribution that development policy may make to the fight against terrorism is a new and extremely difficult challenge. Above all, development cooperation may help to deprive terrorist groups of their breeding ground by removing the structural causes of conflict and to increase the legitimacy of government structures and their ability to function.*

Background to the current debate

Crisis prevention and conflict management have been seized upon in the past 5 to 10 years as an issue for development cooperation and taken root as a goal for political action. Although the basic idea that development cooperation always seeks to be a policy of peace is by no means new, what is new is its attempt to make direct contributions to peaceful development in conflict situations. This concern is no longer just an overriding, abstract goal: it is meant to be reflected in specific strategies and measures. The subject gained a new dimension with the terrorist attacks in the USA on 11 September 2001; the debate on crisis prevention and conflict management may provide substantive links in this context.

From the 30 to 50 violent conflicts a year between, but mostly within, countries it is clear how necessary it is to find constructive ways of resolving conflicts. Many countries also find themselves in a grey area between war and peace, in which government is undergoing a process of insidious or overt disintegration. Violent disputes are often the core problem. Besides causing enormous human suffering, violent conflicts reverse past progress – including that achieved through development cooperation – and block opportunities for future development. They are also a major burden on the international community (cost of military operations, reconstruction aid, etc.).

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 too will have tremendous consequences for the developing countries – besides the very serious implications they are having for the USA. The economic effects are likely to lead to a significant increase in the number of poor people in the world.

The causes and triggers of conflicts are complex. The following factors have proved to be especially likely to lead to conflict: socio-economic inequalities, the absence of opportunities for political participation, fragile government structures and inadequate civil structures, political violence and repression and competition for scarce resources (land, water, etc.). How the parties to conflicts perceive such factors is often crucially important. A feeling of being exposed to "cultural hegemony" may encourage the use of violence and help to escalate it. The ethnic or religious instrumentalization of conflicts seems to be a particularly important factor in explaining the attraction of terrorist groups. Ethnic rivalry and dominance, for example, does much to explain the civil war in Sri Lanka and the spiralling violence that escalated into genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

Definitions

Crisis prevention comprises measures aimed at the underlying causes of conflicts (such as economic disparities between different population groups). *Conflict management* seeks to tackle factors of direct relevance to conflicts (e.g. by having a constructive influence on the conduct of actors prepared to use violence). Crisis prevention is thus geared to the long term, while conflict management is predominantly attuned to the short and medium term and relevant in rather tense crisis situations.

In countries where there is no effective state monopoly on the use of force (Somalia, Sudan, Liberia, etc.) groups often have economic motives for perpetuating unstable conditions and violent conflicts. "Markets of violence" form since systematic robbery, hostage-taking, illegal trade (in drugs and diamonds, for example), protection rackets, etc. may be important sources of income.

The international debate on crisis prevention was largely triggered by the violent events in Rwanda, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s and by the questionable reactions of the international community to these events. The more favourable political environment following the end of the East-West conflict permitted a debate on prevention in various areas of policy, whereas most crisis management strategies had previously been reactive. In 1999 UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan therefore called for a "culture of prevention".

Processes of social change and development are always associated with conflicts. In general, the aim is therefore not to prevent conflicts but to find constructive and non-violent ways of resolving them. Basically, a distinction can be made between three phases of a conflict:

- the phase in which a conflict emerges and escalates, where the aim should be to remove causes, to establish conflict management mechanisms and to prevent violence (e.g. Kenya's situation in the 1990s);

- the phase in which the conflict is on-going, where the emphasis should be placed on containing and ending the violent conflict (e.g. the Sri Lankan civil war);

- the de-escalation and consolidation phase, where coping with the consequences of war, reconciliation and the prevention of a renewed escalation of violence are important (e.g. the situation in Guatemala).

Lessons learned from past development cooperation

Since the mid-1990s a number of bi- and multilateral donors (Germany, Norway, the World Bank among others) and the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) have carried out country and project studies to determine what influence development cooperation has on conflict situations. Past experience can be summarized as follows:

Relative influence of development cooperation: Expectations of what development cooperation can achieve should not be pitched too high (the same being true, of course, of other areas of development cooperation). The responsibility for preventing or ending conflicts rests mainly with the parties concerned. In most cases development cooperation will be unable to prevent or end violent conflicts on its own. It may, on the other hand, tip the balance between civil and violent forms of conflict. A German aid and development programme, for example, proved to be an important step in bringing peace to the Tuareg conflict in northern Mali in the 1990s, since it helped to eliminate the causes of the conflict and to overcome its consequences.

Development cooperation is not neutral in conflicts: Development cooperation has an intended and unintended influence on conflict in partner countries. These effects are identifiable both at the level of individual measures or project regions (micro level) and at the level of a country's overall policy (macro level). At micro level the question in many partner countries is whether and, if so, how account has been taken of the ethnic affiliation of the target groups. There is considerable evidence to show that even "purely technical" measures

Development cooperation and the fight against terrorism

It is not yet possible to say what effect the terrorist attacks will have on German and international development cooperation. Some of the possible implications for development cooperation were, however, already being discussed immediately after 11 September 2001. The discussion shows that development cooperation as a whole may become more important as a result of the new challenges.

The following factors may be of relevance to the current debate:

- Development cooperation cannot look back on specific experience of development policy approaches to combating terrorism. There are, however, numerous links to the debate on crisis prevention and conflict management.

- Development cooperation can do hardly anything about terrorist groups and activities as such, but it can do something about the environment. It can help to deprive terrorist groups of their breeding ground by removing structural causes of conflict.

- Of primary importance are approaches that seek to increase the legitimacy of government structures and their ability to function. This helps to ensure that conflicts within states are resolved peacefully and that the state has a monopoly on the use of force, which counters the spread of violence and the existence of terrorist structures. Of relevance in this context is the problem of failing states.

- In its general form development cooperation promotes international dialogue and can be put to greater use for forms of inter- and intra-cultural dialogue.

- In view of the 11 September attacks a question that has to be discussed is which countries are to be assisted more and which less. This question is complex because of discernible conflicts of objectives. On the one hand, more and more development policy standards to be observed by partner governments and their policies have been introduced (concerning, for example, democratic legitimacy and corruption). At the same time, German development cooperation has begun to focus on fewer countries. On the other hand, the goal of combating terrorism will result in development cooperation taking account, or taking greater account, of important cooperation partners where this task is concerned and in less emphasis being placed on other principles of development policy (as in Pakistan's case). In the long term, however, the standards of development policy should continue to be decisive.

have a positive or negative impact on social tensions and conflict situations. In Sri Lanka, for example, various donors assisted measures forming part of the Mahaweli project that indirectly supported the ethnically oriented settlement policy to the disadvantage of the Tamils and so helped to worsen the conflict. Equally, development cooperation may defuse or exacerbate conflicts at macro level. The allocation of development assistance, for example, is often accompanied by a political signal to the partner country. In Kenya's case donors have occasionally been successful in exerting pressure to make the country more democratic. In some instances a relevant question is whether development cooperation directly or indirectly helps to finance a conflict (through the misuse of funds, for example).

Early warning/conflict recognition: Development cooperation actors can be useful for conflict recognition because they have good external structures in partner countries. If any preventive action at all is to be taken, an adequate knowledge of the potential for conflict and violence is needed. Early recognition of conflicts is necessary especially where development cooperation intends to help prevent crises (*early warning*). Development cooperation paid scant attention to conflict recognition until the second half of the 1990s. There are also shortcomings in the reporting and flow of information within the development cooperation system and between development cooperation and foreign policy actors. In some cases, project staff take no interest in local conflicts in their reporting because it is unclear, for example, what the consequences might be. The selective perception of information may result in incorrect or distorted interpretations of conflict situations, an example being the incorrect perceptions in the context of the genocide in Rwanda. However, it should be emphasized that, even where there is a functioning early warning system and adequate conflict recognition, it is by no means certain that early political action will automatically follow.

Policy coordination/coherence: The interplay of different policies is of the utmost importance for crisis prevention and conflict management. Development cooperation cannot and will not replace other political actors. It is dependent on close cooperation with other policies and between bi- and multilateral donors if it is to be effective. This is true, for example, of arms exports. There is a particular need for joint country strategies (in which, say, foreign and development policy activities are interlinked to de-escalate conflicts) and for political initiatives (as in the control of small arms). This entails far closer coordination with diplomatic and, where appropriate, security policy activities and with other policies (trade, finance, agriculture and environment) than in the past.

Importance of private actors: Crisis prevention and conflict management are relevant not only to government bodies but also to private actors. Groups in civil society originating from conflict areas are of prime importance because they are very familiar with regional conditions, they are often well accepted and they are able to ensure long-term involvement. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating at international level are also important actors. The German political foundations, for example, are often active in key areas of society that are of considerable interest in the context of conflicts (promotion of political "think tanks", dialogue fora for the parties to conflicts, etc.). Growing attention is being paid to the importance of local and international private enterprises for conflict situations. An occasional problem is that armed groups finance themselves by cooperating with enterprises in the mining of such easily transported raw materials as diamonds and gold in conflict regions, which creates material incentives to perpetuate conflicts.

Areas of action: attempts to achieve more conflict-sensitive development cooperation

There are various ways of making development cooperation more sensitive to conflicts:

Development of strategies: Crisis prevention and conflict management must be reflected in the development of strategies (country, sectoral and similar strategies). In the context of country strategies this means considering the following questions: Is there potential for violence in the partner country? How does the country programme and the policy dialogue take this potential into account? How keenly is the

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Efforts in German development cooperation to increase conflict awareness

Various efforts to focus on the subject have been made in German development cooperation since the mid-1990s, the most important being the following:

- The Federal government has established an overall concept entitled "Crisis Prevention and Conflict Settlement" (2000), in which the importance of development policy is explicitly emphasized.

- To identify the tendency for crises to occur in partner countries, an indicator model has been developed and has been in use since 1999. With the aid of various thematic areas (disparities in a society, existing capacity for peaceful conflict management, concepts of the enemy, etc.) the extent to which there is potential for crisis and violence and thus a need for preventive action is determined.

- The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has obtained a general insight into the effects of German development cooperation in conflict situations by conducting a series evaluation of six countries. Pilot studies on the subject have also been undertaken by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the German Bank for Reconstruction and Development (KfW).

- Since 1998 the BMZ has had a seat on the Federal Security Council, where it argues in particular for a restrictive German arms export policy.

- "Development of peace and crisis prevention" is one of currently ten focal areas of bilateral German development cooperation.

- The BMZ has commissioned the GTZ to undertake a consultancy project having as its objective "the further development of crisis prevention and conflict management concepts and instruments and their exemplary use in key countries". A handbook on conflict analysis for project planning and management and another on the observation of the impact of development cooperation projects on conflicts are currently being put to the test.

- A further consultancy project is devoted to the subject of "small arms control".

- In 1999 the BMZ created the Civil Peace Service, which undertakes development and peace work aimed at promoting the non-violent handling of conflicts.

- A fund for peace institutions and initiatives has been established to promote the practical application of theoretical approaches.

- In the BMZ a new Department for Foreign and Security Policy, the Development of Peace and Crisis Prevention has been formed (its remit also includes human rights and research).

- Network structures have been created by the BMZ's Working Party on Crisis Prevention and Conflict Management through Development Policy (since 2000) and the Peace Development Group (FriEnt) (since August 2001).

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partner government trying to settle the conflict peacefully? Does development cooperation offer incentives to de-escalate the violence? Will the misuse of development cooperation possibly increase the capacity for the use of violence? Does

the regional concentration of development cooperation in the partner country have implications for existing conflicts?

Approaches adopted by the German Foreign Office

Like the BMZ, the German Foreign Office has added to its crisis prevention and conflict management measures, placing the emphasis on (i) civil personnel and physical support for UN missions, (ii) courses to prepare civil peace personnel for international missions (e.g. activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), (iii) promotion of international peace processes and conflict management instruments (e.g. for the International Panel to Investigate the Genocide in Rwanda) and (iv) support for individual conflict management, crisis prevention and peace consolidation projects undertaken by German and international NGOs.

Coherence: During the development of strategies it should also become clear at what stages other policies may actively contribute to crisis prevention and conflict management or whether development cooperation may support other actors' initiatives. Efforts should therefore be geared to strategies jointly implemented with foreign policy and any other relevant policies.

Establishment as a cross-section subject: In many countries where there is a potential for conflict it will not be possible or appropriate to establish crisis prevention and conflict management as a focal area of development cooperation. Nonetheless, even in such cases the subject should be taken into account as a cross-section dimension in procedures, sectoral strategies, individual measures, etc. Thus a question that should always be asked in the case of any measure assisted in such countries as Rwanda, Sri Lanka and Guatemala is whether the various groups perceive it as favouring or discriminating against them.

Conflict impact assessment: A conflict impact assessment enables development cooperation to recognize and adjust effects of its own conduct that are relevant to conflicts. A conflict impact assessment of this kind should not be confined to the level of individual measures, although it is often an important starting point. It should also include the basic development cooperation policy towards the partner country concerned (e.g. policy dialogue) and the development cooperation portfolio.

Increasing staff awareness: One of the most important opportunities for making development cooperation more conflict-sensitive is provided by the initial and advanced training of domestic, foreign and counterpart staff. Germany and other donors now have a number of major training programmes devoted to the subject.

Operational measures: At the level of individual projects and programmes existing and new, conflict-specific measures can be considered. The existing options include measures to promote democracy, measures in support of good governance (rule of law, etc.), measures that encourage regional cooperation and measures to reconstruct in-

frastructure destroyed in war. Some of the new specific measures are:

- support for security sector reforms (democratic control of the military, demobilization and reintegration of combatants, etc.),
- containment and control of small arms,
- trauma and reconciliation work (for child soldiers among others),
- promotion of local groups that contribute to peaceful conflict management (resolving local land use conflicts, providing legal advice, etc.),
- peace-promoting measures in the education and media sectors.

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Further reading:

Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation: http://www.berghof-center.org/ handbook/cf.htm

Klingebiel, S. (1999): Impact of Development Cooperation in Conflict Situations. Cross-section Report on Evaluations of German Development Cooperation in Six Countries, GDI, Berlin

Mehler, A. / C. Ribaux (2000): Crisis Prevention and Conflict Management in Technical Cooperation. An Overview of the National and International Debate, GTZ, Wiesbaden

OECD/DAC (2001): Helping Prevent Violent Conflict, Orientations for External Partners, Paris

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