

Reflections on Development Co-operation and Violent Conflict



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Published by Sida 2003

The Department for Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organisations and
Humanitarian Assistance

Print: Elanders Novum AB, 2003

Art.no.: SIDA2516en

ISBN 91-586-8626-6

Foreword

This discussion paper, which has been written by Björn Holmberg, Inger Buxton and Olle Kvist¹ reflects upon recent developments in Sida's thinking and activities in the field of conflict management in terms of policy approach, methodological development and the types of activities that Sida supports. The paper should not, however, be seen as a replacement for Sida's strategy on conflict management and peace building from 1999, but merely – as the title suggests – as reflections on recent developments in this field.

The paper is part of the follow-up to and implementation of the Swedish government's publications on conflict prevention from 1999 and 2000, and the work that has been carried out within the OECD/DAC resulting in the DAC Guidelines: *Helping Prevent Violent Conflict* in 2001. The paper also presents some of the statistics that have been systematically gathered over the past few years, in order to get a clearer picture of what type of conflict management activities that Sida supports, and where and when.



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Introduction

In the publications *Preventing Violent Conflict – A Swedish Action Plan*² and *Preventing Violent Conflict – Swedish Policy for the 21st Century*³, the Swedish government has set the guidelines for Swedish policy on conflict prevention. Within the wider framework of European co-operation, the European Union endorsed an *EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts* under the Swedish Presidency in 2001.

This political development shows that, alongside other policy areas, development co-operation has an important role to play in conflict management on the basis of today's broader security concept. Preventing and resolving violent conflict is very often central to reducing poverty and working toward long-term sustainable development. OECD/DAC has in recent years developed a common policy framework that outlines the relationship between development co-operation and conflict management.

Development co-operation actors have increasingly come to understand that they must work *in* and *on* conflicts and that they cannot work *around* them. At the same time, they have come to realise that they have a great potential for contributing to peaceful change and preventing violent conflict by applying a multidimensional approach, working through the whole span of areas and sectors at their disposal. Conflicts can be dealt with most effectively by integrating a number of activities. It is also essential to work closely with partners in developing countries. Only those affected by conflict can own the processes of peaceful change. The role of external actors is to support such processes. Development agencies also need to work in close

² Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 1999

³ Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2000

co-operation with other authorities and branches of their own government, as well as with other international actors, in order to be able to try to influence violent conflicts in a positive direction.

The Swedish Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) adopted its first strategy on conflict management and peace building in 1999. In 2001, 7 (32%) of Sida's 22 most important partner countries were experiencing ongoing armed conflict through internal turmoil or involvement in warfare in or with a neighbouring country. In addition to these, 10 out of the 22 (45%) were in a post-conflict situation⁴.

Given that the overall goal of Swedish development co-operation is to reduce poverty, Sida, as well as other development co-operation agencies, has looked into the relationship between poverty and violent conflict in order to investigate how an integrated approach to conflict management can become part of a poverty reduction strategy. Furthermore, there is a need for clear guidelines on conflict management where poverty eradication is an issue.

There follows a brief introduction to how Sida sees the relationship between poverty and violent conflict, the approach to be taken when working on conflict management, as well as an overview of what Sida has done in this area over the last few years.

⁴ The calculations are based on the database of armed conflicts collected by the Department for Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University and the statistics presented by Sida in its Yearly Report for 2001. Post-conflict situations are calculated on the basis of open armed conflicts that ended after the Cold War (1989 and onwards).

Poverty – Cause or Effect?

The first question to ask is whether poverty causes violent conflict or not? Previously there has been general agreement that poverty causes violent conflict and vice versa. However, in recent years, researchers have questioned this assumption and have come to differentiate between direct and root causes. Poverty is in itself neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for violent conflict. We have observed violent conflicts in wealthy countries like Spain and the United Kingdom, while countries such as Burkina Faso and Honduras live in relative peace even though they suffer from absolute poverty. The answer to the riddle lies in the combination of a number of factors. Under certain conditions, poverty, in combination with other causes such as human rights abuses, weak state structures, exploitation of ethnic differences, transition from democracy to authoritarian rule, et cetera, gives rise to grievances and a feeling of relative deprivation. This, or other sets of factors, could generate the conditions for violent conflict.

One might ask whether violent conflicts cause poverty. This has proved to be the case according to various studies. The 1997 Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflicts found, among other things, that the Lebanese GDP was 50% lower in 1990 than in 1974 before the war and that 80% of the agricultural land in Angola was abandoned during the civil war⁵. In February 2000, it was estimated that, because of violent conflicts, food crises affected nearly 15 million people⁶.

⁵ The Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1997

⁶ Åkerlund, 2001

Another study in 2001 by an Oxford team of researchers concludes, after examining several cases of civil war, that *economic growth* is almost always negatively affected and the *agricultural* sector is particularly badly hit by a violent conflict. In addition to battle-related deaths, there are *heavy human* costs due to higher infant mortality and deteriorating health, nutrition and educational standards. For example, it is estimated that 7.1% of the Afghan population died from the direct and indirect consequences of the war between 1978–1995⁷. In all cases there were *heavy developmental* costs because of the erosion or destruction of every type of capital, such as physical plant, infrastructure, land, human resources and organisational and social capital, as well as a decrease in new investments in these areas⁸.

To summarise, fighting poverty can be important in removing one root cause of violent conflict. However, if the purpose is to prevent conflict, it is far from sufficient and other measures must be taken to deal with the situation using a multidimensional approach. The severe effect of armed violence makes it devastatingly clear that prevention of violent conflict is also prevention of poverty.

⁷ Sivard, 1996; World Bank, 1997

⁸ Fitzgerald & Stewart et al, 2001

Development co-operation and conflict management

Development co-operation affects and is affected by violent conflicts. This is why it is important to recognise that one cannot work around conflicts but must work in and on them. Violent conflicts affect the room development co-operation has for manoeuvre. At the same time, development co-operation activities can have an impact on the dynamics of the conflict themselves. Thus, development co-operation that is carried out in a conflict situation and whose approach does not have a conscious conflict perspective can, in a worst-case scenario, do more harm than good. Therefore, it is important that Sida, as well as other development co-operation actors, take a conflict sensitive approach.

Three basic approaches on how to relate development co-operation to situations of potential or ongoing violent conflict can be identified:

When working **in** a conflict the approaches that need to be taken are:

- to try to understand and foresee the effects that violent conflict can have on development co-operation activities in the conflict region, and
- to try to ensure that development co-operation does no harm and does not result in an escalation of tensions between the fighting parties by having a negative impact on the situation.

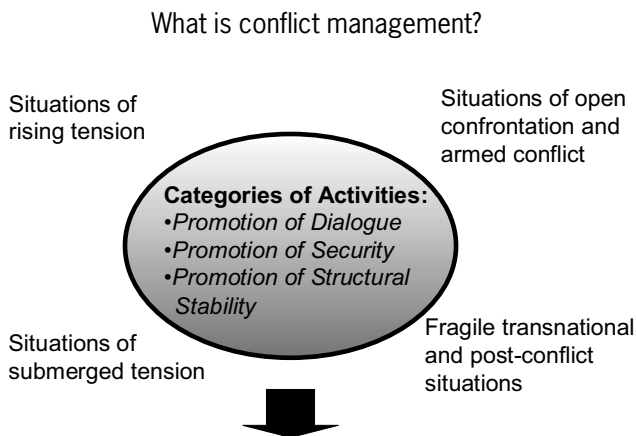
Development co-operation can also try to work **on** the conflict, consciously trying to influence the situation in a positive direction:

- by seeking and exploring opportunities for conflict

management through the hidden potential of regular development co-operation and specific conflict management projects. This means finding options and strategies that can promote peace. Examples of these might be designing projects and programmes so as to strengthen the positive elements that connect people on opposite sides or to reduce the effect of factors that divide them.

What is conflict management?

It is essential to recognise that conflicts are not linear in their development. Some never escalate into armed violence while others do so repeatedly, going from a post-conflict situation back to open violent confrontation, which results in increased poverty. As a way of thinking, it may be fruitful to view conflict as a circle made up of different situations that can recur in the dynamics of conflict. These include submerged tension, rising tension, open armed conflict and post-conflict. However, it should be noted that the dividing lines between these are not clear-cut.



In all *situations*, from submerged tension to post-conflict (see figure above), Sida has identified three basic categories of conflict management activity. Activities can be combined and applied in more than one situation of a conflict, and thus contribute to an integrated approach to conflict

management. Conflict management then becomes a tool that can facilitate escape from a vicious circle of violent conflict. The different categories of activity are explained in more detail below.

Promotion of dialogue: Special attention should be given to efforts that promote or create conditions for dialogue, negotiation and de-escalation between both primary and secondary parties to conflicts. For example, activities dealing with the culture of violence, education, seminars, reconciliation, mediation at local level and other activities aimed at forming opinion and increasing awareness.

Promotion of security: This includes interventions that can give individuals and groups affected by violent conflicts a greater degree of protection. These are implemented, for example, through civil peace monitoring, observer functions, monitoring and documentation with the aim of stabilising a conflict situation, disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration (DD&R) of ex-combatants into civil society and measures to decrease the excessive and destabilising accumulation of small arms and light weapons. Activities also include humanitarian assistance to protect the lives and livelihoods of those affected, especially non-combatants and in particular women and children.

Interventions with the aim of promoting security can be called for wherever there is an identified need, i.e. not only when there is an apparent risk of open armed conflict but also when there is a high degree of insecurity – e.g. the dangerous accumulation of small arms and the occurrence of small arms related violence.

Promotion of structural stability – Interventions that, as their *primary* or *secondary* goal, *consciously* target root causes of violent conflict and human insecurity. In order to do this, a real or potential situation of violent conflict must have been identified. In a given context it is also necessary to have

identified which factors constitute its root causes. This definition is needed to avoid *all* types of development co-operation efforts being seen to contribute to conflict prevention and conflict management, which is not the case.

Examples of root causes are political and socio-economic inequalities, weak state structures, abuses of human rights, ethnic discrimination and scarcity of shared resources. Interventions are best carried out using a multidimensional approach. Areas of importance might include the eradication of poverty that creates grievances, the sustainable use of natural resources to prevent resource based conflict, good governance, the rule of law, respect for human rights, representative political institutions capable of managing change and resolving disputes, the development of a vibrant and democratic civil society, gender equality and efficient security sectors under democratic control.

Sida's support for conflict management

Sida recently conducted a study of the conflict management activities supported during 2000 and 2001⁹, which showed that the number of projects in the period had increased by about 60 per cent compared to the previous two years, i.e. 1998 and 1999¹⁰.

During 2000 and 2001, 218 conflict management projects and programmes were supported. Assistance amounted to around 640,000,000 SEK (~70,000,000 US\$), which accounted for approximately 2 per cent of Sida's total budget¹¹.

If one looks at the regional distribution of support for conflict management activities, both in terms of financial support as well as the number of projects, Africa was the region receiving the largest share during these years. Overall, the number of projects by region correlates broadly with the financial assistance given to each region¹².

If one divides the different projects into the three basic categories of conflict management activity (promotion of dialogue, security and structural stability), as shown in Table 1 below, one finds that promotion of dialogue was the

⁹ Kartläggning och analys av insatser relaterade till konflikthantering; Sida 2000–2001, Sida/IPM, 2002.

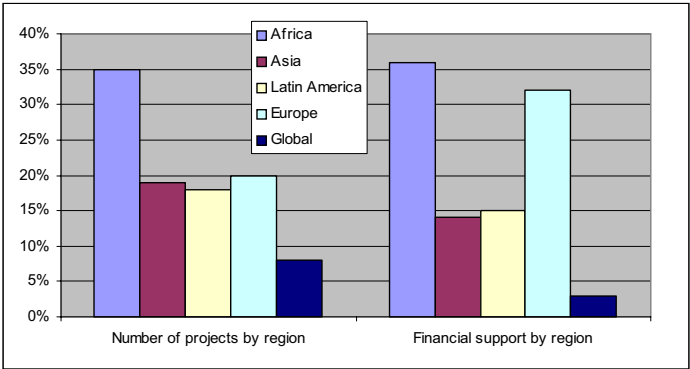
¹⁰ It should be noted that projects related to promotion of structural stability, which accounted for around 15 per cent of all projects during 2000 and 2001, were not included in the earlier study. The same goes for projects dealing with the destruction and clearance of mines, which in the more recent study were included as promotion of security. Even if these are excluded for 2000 and 2001, there is an increase in the number of projects and the financial support for conflict management.

¹¹ Note that the financial figures are estimations. For example, projects that only have conflict management as one component of a larger programme are included with the whole sum, since it can be very difficult to separate the amount of assistance that specifically deals with conflict management.

¹² The greatest exception is Europe, where support has been directed to larger programmes.

predominant form of conflict management. This form of conflict management includes between 43 to 56 percent of the total number of projects within the various regions.

Figure 1; Overview of conflict management projects supported by Sida



In most regions, the number of projects dealing with promotion of security is around 10 per cent, with the exception of Africa where as much as 22 per cent can be defined as falling within this category. This high proportion is explained by the support that Sida gave to a number of DD&R projects (Disarmament, Demobilisation & Reintegration) in that region.

Promotion of structural stability has quite a high percentage of the projects in Latin America, largely due to Sida's support to Guatemala, where the focus has been on tying projects for structural change to the peace agreement. The column for Combined in the table below represents projects including at least two of the categories of activity identified above, and the column for Studies represents research projects in the conflict management field.

Table 1; Activities in different regions. The table shows the percentage of projects supported within each region for each category of activity. The two "total" columns show the percentage of projects within each category and region respectively.

	Structural					
	Dialogue	Security	stability	Combined	Studies	Total
Africa	33 (43%)	17 (22%)	12 (15%)	10 (13%)	5 (7%)	77 (35%)
Asia	23 (56%)	4 (10%)	3 (7%)	6 (15%)	5 (12%)	41 (19%)
Europe	21 (55%)	4 (10%)	3 (8%)	8 (22%)	2 (5%)	38 (18%)
Latin						
America	19 (43%)	6 (14%)	13 (30%)	2 (4%)	4 (9%)	44 (20%)
Global	1 (6%)	2 (11%)	2 (11%)	3 (17%)	10 (55%)	18 (8%)
Total	97 (44%)	33 (15%)	33 (15%)	29 (14%)	26 (12%)	218 (100%)

The study shows that during 2000 and 2001 around 80 per cent of all conflict management projects supported, were carried out during situations of open violent conflict or post-conflict, as shown in figure 2 and table 2. The number of conflict management projects in situations of submerged or rising tension is comparatively low, accounting for only 2 and 4 per cent respectively¹³ of the total. The category "several" includes activities that span at least two of the four situations mentioned in the conflict circle.

The figure and table below show the need for Sida to concentrate increasingly on support for more conflict prevention measures.

¹³ Note the possibility of measurement errors since there are no clear dividing lines between these phases. The figures are more of an indication of Sida's involvement in these situations.

Figure 2; Situations when conflict management activities are carried out

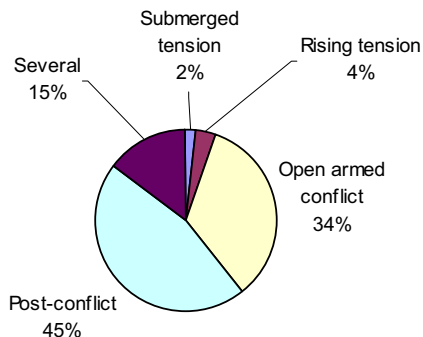


Table 2; The situations in which the different categories of activities are used. The table shows the number and percentage of projects respectively by activity and phase.

	Submerged tension	Rising tension	Open armed conflict	Post-conflict	Several	Total
Dialogue	0 (0%)	6 (6%)	47 (49%)	38 (39%)	6 (6%)	97 (100%)
Security	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	5 (15%)	22 (67%)	5 (15%)	33 (100%)
Structural stability	2 (6%)	1 (3%)	3 (9%)	25 (76%)	2 (6%)	33 (100%)
Combined	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	10 (33%)	8 (30%)	10 (33%)	29 (100%)
Studies	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	9 (35%)	7 (27%)	9 (35%)	26 (100%)
Total	4 (2%)	8 (4%)	74 (34%)	100 (46%)	32 (14%)	218 (100%)

The way ahead

Since around 80 per cent of the conflict management activities that Sida supports involve projects and programmes in situations of open armed conflict or post-conflict, it is clear that Sida needs to focus more on activities in situations of submerged and rising tension. Not only can activities in these situations help prevent poverty and human suffering, but also there are many more options for action available during these situations, in comparison with open armed conflict or post-conflict phases.

Sida has an important role to play in implementing one of the cornerstones of Swedish foreign policy, which is to try to act early to prevent the outbreak and recurrence of violent conflict. This requires close co-ordination with other Swedish authorities and organisations, but especially working together with other actors in the field in situations of violent conflict through multi-stakeholder co-operation. The aim is to work with actors at all levels of society, e.g. local NGOs and authorities, national governments, regional and international organisations as well as the business community, in order to assure sustainability and common ownership of projects that promote peace.

In relation to situations of violent conflict, Sida's approach must be to look at poverty through a conflict prevention lens and to acknowledge that conflict prevention and poverty reduction are mutually reinforcing activities. To do this, an integrated perspective is required. In order to deal with conflict and its root causes effectively, it is important not only to work at different levels but also to incorporate a conflict perspective into all Sida's activities relating to that particular conflict situation. Just as there is seldom a single cause of a conflict, there is no single measure that can sufficiently address the problems and promote peace.

In order to achieve these aims, it is important to first carry out a careful analysis of the conflict and then to assess the impact that development co-operation efforts might have on it, so that Sida supported activities do not have a negative impact but promote peace, security and sustainable development. Sida is now in the process of shaping its own *Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment* (PCIA) methodology.

Two models for PCIA, based on the needs identified for Sida, are currently being developed, one for strategic and one for project level. These are referred to as a *Strategic Conflict Analysis* and a *Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment for Project Level*.

The Strategic Conflict Analysis will help in writing country and regional strategies, which are important instruments for Sida's work. This model will include tools for analysing the conflict and possible future scenarios as well as tools for developing strategies and options useful at the operational level.

The model for PCIA at project level will be designed to help desk officers assess the impact of projects and sector programmes in countries and regions that are in one of the situations of violent conflict identified in the conflict circle above. This project level analysis and assessment can help avoid any negative impact of development co-operation activities, as well as in developing options that can promote peace.

To help identify countries at risk of violent conflict, Sida is also looking into different systems for early warning. These could potentially be helpful in exploring opportunities for early action on those conflicts where Sida is well placed to make preventive efforts in co-operation with other actors.

The revision of Sida's overall strategy on conflict management will start in 2003. It will be based on a series of thematic studies including ones on democracy and violent conflict, poverty and violent conflict and the prevention of recruitment of child soldiers. The new strategy is aimed to be more in line with the guidelines from the Swedish government, as well as those decided upon within the OECD/DAC, and will be finalised in 2004.

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