

Linking Peacebuilding and Development

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Introduction

The EU (European Commission plus Member States) provides almost 60% of global official development assistance (ODA). EPLO believes that the EU can significantly increase the peacebuilding potential of its development assistance programmes. The purpose of this short paper is to highlight some of the means by which EU ODA can become a more effective instrument for building peace and preventing violent conflict.

The paper is divided into three sections: an explanation of the links between development and peacebuilding, an assessment of some of the practical implications of strengthening those links, and some specific recommendations towards the EU institutions.

The links between peacebuilding and development

Development and peacebuilding are intrinsically linked. Development can be defined in many ways but refers broadly to social, economic and political processes which unlock expanded human capabilities and reduce vulnerability in society. Peacebuilding refers to policies, strategies and actions which aim to build the capacity within society to resolve and manage conflicts non-violently. At the heart of both development and peacebuilding processes is the need to strengthen resilience and the capacity within society to manage change and resolve differences.

Development is a process of societal change and is, therefore, potentially conflictual. In situations of fragility in which there is a limited capacity for managing change and resolving differences peacefully, development is a particularly challenging process which can actually contribute to violent conflict. For this and other reasons, development processes are frequently interrupted and set back by violence and unresolved conflicts.

Meanwhile, much of what is traditionally seen as “development” work (e.g. improvements in social and economic well-being) is also needed in peacebuilding. The best practice in both fields is to work at multiple levels, using participatory, consultative methods to link grassroots with higher level perspectives. Fairness and inclusion are critical to both development and peacebuilding processes and outcomes.

The widely-held view that conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities should not be financed from development assistance budgets is no longer valid. According to the statistical reporting directives which were adopted by the members of the Organisation for Economic Development’s Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) in 2007, ‘certain conflict, peacebuilding and security expenditures meet the development criteria of ODA.’¹ In this way, the OECD-DAC has given explicit recognition that activities such as security sector reform, civilian peacebuilding, post-conflict peacebuilding, the reintegration of former combatants, and the control of small arms and light weapons etc., contribute to development objectives.

¹ DAC Statistical Reporting Directives (2007)

The need for conflict sensitivity

“Conflict-sensitive” development policies, strategies and practices take account of the abovementioned links. They are based on a thorough understanding of both the context and how the development changes proposed will interact with other prevailing dynamics, particularly with existing and potential conflicts. If designed and implemented with this in mind, development interventions can go beyond simply respecting the basic principle of ‘Do no harm’ and make a positive contribution to sustainable peace.

Despite the apparently evident conceptual and practical linkages between them, development and peacebuilding are still largely seen and implemented as separate endeavours. The arguments which are set out in this paper have been made repeatedly for more than a decade both within the EU institutions and externally by NGOs and other actors, and the linkages between peacebuilding and development have been recognised in numerous EU policies and commitments.² However, it is clear that many of those policies and commitments have not yet been fully implemented.

In February 2005, the European Commission (EC) brought the so-called “ECOWAS Case” before the European Court of Justice (ECJ).³ This legal challenge was significant because it served to prolong and reinforce the separation between development and security, and contributed to reluctance on behalf of the EU institutions to finance peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities. During the three years which elapsed before the ECJ made its ruling on the ECOWAS Case, the legality of using EC development assistance to finance work on small arms and light weapons (SALW) remained in doubt. The fact that the case was still ongoing at the time of the revision of the EU’s external financing instruments (2004-2006) resulted in the omission of references to these and other peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities in the new instruments and, as a consequence, a narrowing in the scope of EU development assistance. The Instrument for Stability (IfS) was established partly to compensate for the omission of support for peacebuilding and conflict prevention in other external financing instruments (e.g. the Development Cooperation Instrument, the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance, etc.). Nevertheless, there is a major imbalance between the funding which is available via the geographical instruments and the IfS.⁴

Ultimately, the problem is that the EU institutions have not realigned their policies and systems in such a way as to enable the integration of peacebuilding and development in practice. This is also true of a number of other European development actors, including some NGOs.

² See: EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflict (2001), European Consensus on Development (2005), Council conclusions on security and development (2007), Council conclusions on an EU response to situations of fragility (2007)

³ The case related to the issue of EU support to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for combating the accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons (SALW). It rested on the European Commission’s (EC) claim that a Council decision to support ECOWAS on SALW in the framework of the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was illegal on the grounds that it infringed on the EC’s competency regarding EU development policy.

⁴ The budgets allocated to the geographical instruments for the period 2007(8)-2013 are as follows: European Development Fund: € 22.7 billion; Development Cooperation Instrument: € 16.9 billion (€10.1 in the geographical envelope); Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance: € 11.5 billion; and European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument: € 11.2 billion. This compares to just € 2.1 billion for the IfS.

Practical implications

Efforts to strengthen the links between peacebuilding and development, and the adoption of conflict-sensitive approaches to development have important implications for the design and implementation of development assistance policies and programmes. As a consequence, European development actors, including the EU institutions, EU Member States and NGOs, will have to adapt accordingly:

- All development interventions which are undertaken in situations of fragility must as a *bare minimum* be conflict sensitive in order to avoid doing harm and to maximise the chances of promoting peaceful development.
- European development actors should consider going further than this, and adopt peacebuilding as a core part of their mission and activities. This implies clearly articulating goals and strategies in terms of their contribution to peace, and broadening the traditional development agenda to take account of issues such as inclusion, security, justice and governance.
- Development actors need to reorganise themselves in line with peacebuilding objectives. This means that, rather than asking “how can we incorporate peacebuilding alongside our existing development work?”, they should ask “how should we be organised to build peace?”
- Development actors should see their role as political and societal, rather than purely technical.
- EU institutions and EU Member State agencies should review their institutional structure and incentives, to enable, support and reward conflict analysis, flexible programming, and an emphasis on making a contribution to peace rather than on funds expended and projects implemented according to plan.
- They should provide training to their staff and partners in peacebuilding analysis and conflict-sensitive development.
- Staff, contractors and partners should be selected for their abilities to understand and engage within the local political context
- The planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes need to be based on a thorough analysis of power, the economy, justice, security and well-being, and the interactions between them, and the formal and informal capacities of societies to manage and resolve conflicts without violence.
- Programmes need to be planned and implemented with flexibility built in, so that adjustments can be made to the approach if necessary, based on conflict-sensitive monitoring.
- Programmes need to support those activities which are not covered by traditional development funding, including those actions which address the attitudes and behaviour of people involved in armed conflicts and which promote the “culture of peace” and contribute to trust-building and reconciliation between opposing groups.
- There is a need for regular dialogue between peacebuilding and development actors to exchange best practices, and discuss the challenges and opportunities related to linking

peacebuilding and development. In this context, EPLO is committed to continuing to engage with CONCORD.⁵

Specific recommendations

1. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy and the EU Commissioner for Development should make it clear to their respective services that the ruling in the ECOWAS Case⁶ removed an obstacle to the integration of peacebuilding and development, by establishing that activities in support of conflict prevention were a Community competence and could, therefore, be undertaken as part of the EC's development assistance programmes.
2. The EU institutions and EU Member States should ensure that peacebuilding and conflict prevention issues are fully integrated in the European Consensus on Development, which is due to be revised in the coming months.
3. The EU institutions and EU Member States should consider how to include peacebuilding and conflict prevention throughout the set of external financing instruments which will be established under the next EU financial perspective; and ensure that a significant share of external financing is allocated in support of peacebuilding and conflict prevention.
4. The Conflict Prevention and Security Policy Directorate within the European External Action Service (EEAS) should provide leadership to ensure that conflict prevention and peacebuilding are integrated across the work of the EEAS and other EU institutions, including the EC's Directorate General EuropeAid Development and Cooperation.
5. One of the roles of the EEAS should be to bring relevant decision-makers together to agree common, coherent objectives for country and regional strategies, including departments within the EEAS and services outside the EEAS.
6. The EU should publish the proposed *EU Action Plan for Situations of Fragility and Conflict* which calls for a "whole-of-EU approach", including peacebuilding and conflict prevention, to the EU's co-operation with fragile, conflict-affected countries and regions
7. The EU should adopt the strategic objective of using its potential leverage within the UN system to promote the integration of conflict sensitivity and a proactive approach to peacebuilding by UN organs and agencies.

⁵ CONCORD is the European NGO confederation for relief and development

⁶ Case C-91/05. In its ruling in May 2008, the ECJ upheld the EC's complaint, thereby removing the legal argument for not including activities in support of peacebuilding and conflict prevention in the EC's development assistance programmes.