

The European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) is the platform of European NGOs, networks of NGOs and think tanks active in the field of peacebuilding, who share an interest in promoting sustainable peacebuilding policies among decision-makers in the European Union (EU). EPLO aims to influence the EU so it promotes and implements measures that lead to sustainable peace between states and within states and peoples, and that transform and resolve conflicts non-violently.

EPLO wants the EU to recognise the crucial connection between peacebuilding, the eradication of poverty, and sustainable development world wide and the crucial role Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have to play in sustainable EU efforts for peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and crisis management.

EPLO appreciates the initiative of DG Development to organise a meeting with Member States (MS) and CSOs on the foreseen Communication on Mainstreaming in Development Cooperation held on 26 June, as well as the opportunity given to submit written contributions on this very important issue.

The aim of this paper is to explain why conflict prevention¹ should be included into the list of cross-cutting themes to be mainstreamed in development cooperation. The paper is divided into two sections: the first analyses the reasons why conflict prevention is “entitled” to be a cross-cutting theme; the second looks at how conflict prevention could be mainstreamed in development cooperation by applying conflict sensitivity principles into existing and new policies and mechanisms/tools.

1. WHY CONFLICT PREVENTION SHOULD BE A CROSS-CUTTING THEME

In the *European Consensus on Development*, conflict prevention is not listed as a cross-cutting theme. For this reason, conflict prevention is not usually considered among the themes to be mainstreamed into development cooperation. This is evident also in the “Issues Paper”² preparing the foreseen Commission Communication on Mainstreaming in development cooperation.

EPLO believes conflict prevention should be included as a cross-cutting theme in development policies for the following reasons:

¹ Throughout this paper, the concept “conflict prevention” is used. By this concept we rather mean “the prevention of *violent* conflict” and peacebuilding efforts with the aim to establish sustainable peace and the prevention of a renewal of the conflict cycle. Indeed, conflict prevention or peacebuilding can be understood as a long-term process involving a variety of activities. This approach seeks to ‘encourage the development of the structural conditions, attitudes and modes of political behaviour that may permit peaceful, stable and ultimately prosperous social and economic development. Peacebuilding activities are designed to contribute to ending or avoiding armed conflict, and may be carried out during armed conflict, in its wake, or as an attempt to prevent an anticipated armed conflict from starting’ see EPLO, “Five Years after Göteborg: the EU and its Conflict Prevention Potential” , Conflict Prevention Partnership Report, September 2006, p.16 available at <http://www.eplo.org/documents/eplo5yearafterweb.pdf>

² “*The Integration of cross-cutting issues in EU development programmes and in external relations: an Issues Paper*”. This document drafted by the Commission was distributed at CSOs in preparation to the consultation meeting with EU Member States and CSOs on the issue of Mainstreaming held on 26 June.

➤ There is concrete evidence that development is not “conflict neutral,” i.e. development and conflict *do* affect each other. This interaction clearly shows the need to include conflict prevention in the list of cross-cutting themes. Development cooperation will become more effective in achieving poverty reduction if conflict prevention is mainstreamed.

➤ The link between security (and conflict prevention) and development has been acknowledged by the European Commission and the Council, and several documents declare that conflict prevention should be mainstreamed. These political commitments have yet to be fully translated into practice. Considering conflict prevention as a cross-cutting theme is a significant step in the right direction of translating these commitments into practice. In fact, the designation as a cross-cutting theme implies *inter alia* specific allocation of human and financial resources to achieve this.

➤ Conflict prevention has many of the general characteristics shared by cross-cutting themes listed in section 3 of the Commission “Issues Paper” and does not differ in any significant respect to these. Conflict prevention has not been mainstreamed despite all the political commitments that the EC as well as the EU have endorsed with respect to the security and development nexus. Thus, what is missing is the *political decision* to include the prevention of violent conflict into the list of the cross-cutting themes.

1.1 Conflict prevention as a cross-cutting theme: the interaction between conflict and development in practice

In 2007, Saferworld, Oxfam and IANSA published a report which showed that since 1990, armed conflict has cost Africa almost \$300 billion - about the same amount as it received in aid during the same period. The report also demonstrated that armed conflict shrinks an African nation’s economy by 15 percent.³

The lack of a peaceful and secure environment can make development programmes very difficult to implement and widespread violence often reverses hard-won progress. Violent conflicts damage societies by eroding their political institutions - particularly with respect to their ability to provide basic social services - destroying vital infrastructure, discouraging investments, disrupting social networks, as well as the destruction or depletion of natural resources. Violent conflicts lead to poverty, particularly in cases of protracted conflict and when associated with the collapse of state institutions. Clearly, if development actors want to be successful in achieving their objectives, particularly the eradication of poverty, they must also address the issue of violent conflict.

Development is not only affected by conflict; it often has an effect on conflict, too. In fact, development programmes, even well-intentioned, can inadvertently fuel conflict (by fostering corruption, increasing competition for scarce resources and distorting traditional economic system). Programmes that do not pay sufficient attention to conflict dynamics can have limited outcomes or even be counterproductive.

³ Saferworld, Oxfam, IANSA “ *Africa’s Missing Billions*” , October 2007 available at http://www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php/282/africas_missing_billions

Conversely, development policies and programmes which take conflict dynamics into consideration can have positive impacts on conflict and contribute to sustainable peace.

EPLO believes that the interdependence of development and conflict clearly shows the need to designate conflict prevention as a cross-cutting theme. It needs to be mainstreamed for development cooperation to be effective and reach its objective of poverty eradication.

1.2 Conflict prevention as a cross-cutting theme: from the theory to the practice of the development and security nexus

Political commitments with respect to the link between security and development have been endorsed by the Commission and the Council in several documents starting from article 11 of the Cotonou Agreement to the most recent documents adopted, particularly the Council Conclusions on Security and Development.

Moreover, both the 2003 European Security Strategy and the 2005 European Consensus on Development acknowledge that there can not be sustainable development without peace and security, and that without development and poverty eradication there will not be sustainable peace.

Specific reference to conflict prevention and its link to development cooperation is contained in particular in the Commission Communication on Conflict Prevention, April 2001; in the EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts, adopted at the European Council in Göteborg, June 2001; and in the Council Conclusions on Security and Development, November 2007.

The EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts, clearly lists development as one of the EU long-term instruments for conflict prevention and states that the EU “must use [development] in a more targeted and effective manner in order to address root-causes of conflict (...)” (p.3). The Programme stresses that in order “to strengthen EU instruments for long and short term prevention *all relevant institutions of the Union will mainstream conflict prevention within their areas of competence*, taking into account the recommendations made in the Commission Communication on conflict prevention (...)” (p. 3, emphasis added).

In its Communication on Conflict Prevention, the Commission affirms “Development policy (...) provide[s] without doubt, the most powerful instruments at the Community’s disposal for treating the root causes of conflict” and “Sustainable economic development, democracy, and respect for human rights, viable political structures and healthy environmental and social conditions, with the capacity to manage change without resort to conflict [are] elements [which] need to be addressed in an integrated way” (p. 9-10).

The Council in its Conclusions on Security and Development, November 2007, “underline[s] that conflict prevention should be pursued as a priority goal in particular by fostering and strengthening development cooperation (...)” (para 5).

Last but not least, the recent Judgment by the Court of Justice of the European Communities annulling the decision of the Council supporting the moratorium on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) should be mentioned here. The Court, in its

judgment, recognizes the link between security and development, and, more importantly, *the fact that peacebuilding is an important objective of the development policy of the European Union.*⁴ More importantly, the Commission itself claimed before the Court that the fight against the proliferation of SALW has become an integral part of its development cooperation policy, thereby holding the view that peacebuilding measures do fall into development cooperation.⁵

EPLO believes that to translate the above-quoted EU commitments with respect to the link between security and development into practice, conflict prevention should be considered as a cross-cutting theme in development cooperation.

Labelling a theme as “cross-cutting” has important practical implications; cross-cutting issues have a “special status” that entails mainstreaming into development cooperation and thus, specific allocations of human and financial resources. Omitting conflict prevention from the list of cross-cutting themes merely limits the resources available for turning policy into practice.

1.3 Conflict prevention as a cross-cutting theme: the prevention of violent conflict shares many common features with other cross-cutting themes

In article 101, the Consensus describes the cross-cutting issues as “require[ing] more than just specific measures and policies; they also require a mainstreaming approach because they touch on general principles applicable to all initiatives and demand a multi-sectoral response.” Furthermore, “these cross-cutting issues are at once objectives in themselves and vital factors in strengthening the impact and sustainability of cooperation.”

In the “Issues Paper,” the Commission affirms that while the cross-cutting themes are considered to be qualitatively different from other issues which can be targeted through specific programmes, the Consensus does not elaborate a precise definition.⁶ The Commission concludes, “In essence, (...) the decision to include the four selected themes in the Consensus must be regarded as being *a political decision*” (section 3, emphasis added). Furthermore, in the same section of the paper, the document lists some of the general characteristics of cross-cutting themes.⁷

⁴ Commission v. Council, Judgement of the European Court of Justice in case C-91/05, (20 May 2008) See para 92-93 of the Judgment

⁵ See para 36-37,40

⁶ The rest of the text of the Issues Paper is: Not only are the ‘general principles’ in the first part of this definition unspecified. But also attempting to analyse something that is at one and the same time ‘an objective in itself’ and a ‘vital factor in strengthening impact’ leads to very unclear conclusions.

⁷ The Issues Paper says: A number of points, however, can be made about the general characteristics of cross-cutting themes:

1. Cross-cutting themes frequently involve questions of attitude, values, culture or belief that may inhibit development;
2. Cross-cutting themes are not normally selected as focal sectors by beneficiary governments. Certain themes, for example ‘environment’, may be treated both as a focal sector within the NIP and as a cross-cutting theme;
3. Cross-cutting themes are associated with incentives within the social order which encourage or promote certain kinds of behaviour;
4. Where the structure of incentives promotes behaviour which is unfavourable to poverty reduction, equitable development or sustainable growth, actions designed to stimulate development in a positive sense, not only cannot succeed but are likely to result in unintended negative consequences: (examples of corruption, les obligations familial etc.)

EPLO believes that conflict prevention matches most of these characteristics and does not differ in any significant respect to the recognized cross-cutting themes.

In fact:

- As illustrated in section 1.1 of this paper, violent conflicts lead to poverty, particularly where protracted and associated with the collapse of state institutions. Violent conflict damages societies by eroding their political institutions, destroying vital infrastructure and discouraging investments thus inhibiting development. On the contrary, politically informed poverty reduction and conflict prevention policies can effectively reinforce each other.
- Regarding attitudes, values and beliefs: Violent conflict may arise because of the lack of appropriate and effective structures as well as mechanisms within society that enable the constructive and peaceful management of differences in attitudes, values, culture and beliefs existing within the society.
- Regarding behaviours unfavourable to poverty reduction: Conflict prevention in societies depends on the creation of a conflict-resilient society, which, in turn, can be promoted by the state through integrating these principles into their development policy and indeed in all policies, and creating incentives for non-violence. This requires political will by national governments.
- Regarding selection of theme as focal sector: Conflict prevention is not usually selected by beneficiary governments as focal sector.

Thus, what is missing is the *political decision* to include conflict prevention into the list of the cross-cutting themes, to match all the political commitments that the EC as well as the EU have endorsed with respect to the security and development nexus, illustrated in section 1.2 of this paper.

2. MAINSTREAMING CONFLICT PREVENTION THROUGH CONFLICT SENSITIVITY

Mainstreaming conflict prevention into development programmes means applying principles of *conflict sensitivity*. Conflict sensitivity implies understanding the context in which the project will be implemented, the interaction between the intervention and the context, and more importantly, the use of this understanding to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive ones. The central component of conflict sensitive practice is *conflict analysis* as it provides the foundation to inform conflict sensitive programming, in particular in terms of understanding the interaction between the intervention and the context. A conflict sensitive approach to development work at all stages of programming, implementation and evaluation can contribute not only to decreasing levels of violent conflict or the potential for violent conflict, but also to increasing the effectiveness of development cooperation.

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5. For cross-cutting themes to be successfully mainstreamed there must be genuine political will on the part of the national administration;
 6. The scope for successful mainstreaming, therefore, depends on the development agenda of the national administration and the degree of political will that a particular theme can generate.

Conflict is a dynamic process. It is always context-specific and, as with the causes of conflict, conflict prevention is multi-dimensional and changes over time. Conflict includes the interaction of social, cultural, political, security, economical, geographical and ideological factors: all these elements are thus relevant to conflict sensitivity. It is therefore important to conduct regular conflict analysis throughout a project cycle, and be prepared to change the practice according to the changing situation.

The EC Check List of Root Causes of Conflict is a useful tool for conflict analysis that the EU has already at its disposal. Conflict analysis based on the EC check list should be undertaken regularly in order to review progresses at tackling the drivers of fragility and conflict. In this respect, the IQSG Programming Fiche on conflict prevention also intends to provide guidance to measure performances and impacts of development programs.

Conflict analysis should be aimed at addressing and reflecting people's needs and concerns. Therefore, it should be carried out in a participatory and inclusive manner. Indeed, consulting local CSOs helps enhancing understandings of drivers of conflict as well as improving local ownership and sustainability of these strategies. "Northern" NGOs can act as go-betweens, providing guidance and expertise as well as facilitating dialogue and collaboration among the different relevant actors.

The application of conflict sensitivity principles should *not be limited to situations of fragility*.⁸ Conflict is a natural phenomenon that is typically indicative of change within a society. Conflict risks becoming *violent*, however, when there is a lack of appropriate and effective structures and mechanisms within a society that enable the constructive and peaceful management of differences.

Some Members States already have a policy of conflict sensitising in their development programmes, an example is the United Kingdom. In its document "Preventing Violent Conflict," the UK Department for International Development (DFID) dedicates a specific section on "Making all our development work conflict-sensitive."⁹ The document clearly states that "evidence shows that this [conflict-sensitive] approach reduces the potential harm of development assistance and makes the most of potential benefits." Moreover, DFID affirms that it applies conflict sensitivity also in its work in countries which are not currently affected by violent conflict (paragraph 41-42). It thereby recognizes the importance and the value of conflict sensitivity as a preventive measure of violent conflict, also in "non-fragile" societies.

EPLO believes that to concretely mainstream conflict prevention into development cooperation, conflict sensitivity principles and conflict analysis should be integrated and institutionalised into existing and new policies and existing and new mechanisms/tools such as Country and Regional Strategy Papers and the different financial instruments. Furthermore the use of tools for conflict prevention such as the IQSG Programming Fiche on Conflict Prevention and the EC check list of root causes of conflict should be enhanced at the programming, implementation and evaluation phases.

⁸ As the Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire examples have shown.

⁹ DFID, "Preventing Violent Conflict", March 2007," section 3, pp. 28-32 available at <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/preventing-conflict.pdf>

2.1 Country and Regional Strategy Papers

The Council Conclusions on Security and Development clearly include in their list of pragmatic actions that the EU commits to: “systematically carrying out security/conflict sensitive assessment and conflict analysis, where appropriate , in the preparation of country and regional strategies and programmes” as well as “taking into account the development dimension in the preparation of CFSP/ESDP activities, and taking into account security aspects, including the CFSP/ESDP dimension, in preparation of development activities” (p 2).

The 2007 OECD DAC peer review on European Community’s Development Cooperation Policy states that the EU should make “more systematic use of conflict analysis as part of country-level programmes and projects” to “improve their impact and ensure they “do no harm.”

In this respect, EPLO would like to make the some key recommendations¹⁰:

At the drafting stage

- The EU should evaluate the impact of past CSPs on conflict dynamics and use lessons learned from this evaluation to inform future strategies.
- The EU should use conflict analysis as a central tool in the drafting and revision of CSPs. Furthermore, conflict analysis should be given an equal priority to other forms of assessment.
- Conflict assessment should be as comprehensive and inclusive as possible ensuring the involvement of all actors in the process and consideration of broader conflict issues.

At the implementation stage

- The EU should provide support to build recipient governments’ capacity for conflict-sensitive planning and programming.
- The EU should build the capacity of its staff to implement conflict sensitive programming through specialised guidance: i.e. develop a short and tailored user’s guide on conflict sensitivity for relevant EU staff. (The Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment Systems (PCIAS) and the Resource Pack on Conflict Sensitivity provide general guidance and might be a starting point to make a common tool to work more efficiently towards conflict sensitive development¹¹); provide regular specialised training and tools on conflict-sensitive approaches and assessments to its staff in delegations, Brussels headquarters and Member State embassies and capitals.

The evaluation stage

- The evaluation of CSPs is a critical component of ensuring conflict sensitivity in EC programming. Mid-term evaluations, using country-specific indicators

¹⁰ See EPLO Policy Paper, The EU as a conflict-sensitive international player: key actions to make the difference in 2007-2013, January 2007 available at

<http://www.eplo.org/documents/Con%20sens%20in%20progmg%20CSPs%20FINAL%202007-03-15.pdf>

¹¹ <http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/>

can reveal the successes or failures of individual projects in mitigating existing conflict or preventing its emergence, and enable adjustments to be made to improve the efficacy of programming. Building conflict sensitivity into every stage of the cycle of evaluation, assessment, and implementation, will ensure that all Commission programming has a positive impact on the stability and development of partner countries.

2.2 Financial Instruments

Among the main new external cooperation instruments for the period 2007-2013, there are both geographic instruments (which include thematic programmes) and horizontal instruments. In terms of conflict prevention activities, the most significant are the Instrument for Stability, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and the thematic programmes on Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development (NSA-LA) and Investing in People. Following the court case on SALW¹², any reference to conflict prevention was deleted from the long term instruments and is now only mentioned in the short term Instrument for Stability, which EPLO finds regrettable. As explained before, the recent Judgement of the Court confirmed the Commission's competence to undertake conflict prevention activities under its development cooperation programmes and confirmed the strong link existing between conflict prevention and development. This judgement was published too late to avoid the deletion of conflict prevention in development cooperation instruments but arrives on time for the mid term review of these instruments.

In addition to these instruments financed under the Community budget, the European Commission has also managed the European Development Fund; the current financial period covers 2008-2013.

Given that the aim of this paper is to stress the need to include conflict prevention as a cross-cutting theme and its mainstreaming in development cooperation, and given all these financial instruments for external cooperation are counted as official development cooperation spending, all long term instruments should be conflict sensitive and allow for funding of specific conflict prevention activities.

The fact that long term instruments do not cover conflict prevention ignores a number of important premises:

- The external cooperation instruments, by their very nature, are implemented in the poorest countries, where violent conflict is prevalent, and may be implemented in middle-income countries also at risk from violent conflict;
- Peacebuilding measures can only be conducted in the long-term and form an integral part of good development practice;
- Any and all activities implemented under the external cooperation instruments must be accompanied by conflict impact analyses;

Given that the DCI, the EIDHR, the ENPI, the IPA, the NSA-LA as well as the EDF are aimed at development, and that development and conflict are interrelated, EPLO

¹² Commission v. Council, Judgement of the European Court of Justice in case C-91/05, (20 May 2008)

believes that these instruments should include conflict prevention within their scope and objectives. In this respect, the mid term review of financial instruments in 2009/2010 offers a good opportunity for that, taking one relatively easy step toward mainstreaming conflict prevention.

Therefore, EPLO suggests all external cooperation instruments include in their strategy a specific article ensuring they are conflict sensitive. The paragraph 21 of the EIDHR Strategy Paper for 2007-2010 can serve as a basis for other instruments. This paragraph states that "The response strategy seeks to be "conflict sensitive" within the meaning of Article 2(1)(a) vii) of Regulation (EC) No 1889/2006, helping to tackle "root causes", (...) Where necessary, the response strategy is interfaced with crisis response interventions envisaged under the new Instrument for Stability".

In the same vein, the first paragraph of the first article of the Cotonou agreement states its objective 'to promote and expedite the economic, cultural and social development of the ACP States, with a view to contributing to peace and security and to promoting a stable and democratic political environment.' This provides the legal basis for the EDF and there are no reasons why conflict prevention should not be mainstreamed in development cooperation covered by the instrument.

In addition to ensuring all instruments are conflict sensitive, each instrument should allow for specific funding of conflict prevention activities. The mid term revision of the financial instruments should therefore ensure conflict prevention is mentioned as an objective in each external cooperation instrument.

EPLO believes that prevention of violent conflict should be designated as a cross-cutting theme and as such, it should be mainstreamed in development cooperation.

As this paper has illustrated, development and conflict are interdependent, and they do affect each other. Furthermore, conflict prevention does not differ in any significant respect the recognised cross-cutting themes. Conflict prevention must be mainstreamed for development cooperation to be effective and reach its objective of poverty eradication.

Omitting conflict prevention from the list of cross-cutting themes means that all EU commitments to conflict prevention as an instrument for development and *vice versa* will remain unfulfilled.

To concretely mainstream conflict prevention in development cooperation, conflict sensitivity principles and conflict analysis should be institutionalised into new and existing policies and mechanisms such as Country and Regional Strategy Papers and the different financial instruments. Finally, the use of existing tools for conflict prevention such as the EC List of root causes of conflict and the IQSG Programming Fiche on Conflict Prevention should be enhanced.

EPLO MEMBERS

Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management
Civil Society Conflict Prevention Network—KATU
Crisis Management Initiative—CMI
European Network for Civil Peace Services—EN.CPS
European Centre for Conflict Prevention—ECCP
ESSEC Iréné
Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior—FRIDE
German Platform for Peaceful Conflict Management
International Alert
International Center for Transitional Justice—ICTJ
International Crisis Group
International Security Information Service - ISIS Europe
Interpeace
Kvinna till Kvinna
Life and Peace Institute
Nansen Dialogue Network
Nonviolent Peaceforce
Partners for Democratic Change International—PDCI
Pax Christi International
Quaker Council for European Affairs—QCEA
Saferworld
Search for Common Ground
Swisspeace
Toledo International Centre for Peace—CITpax
World Vision



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EPLO advances the interests of its members through common policy positions and consequently advocating for those common positions. EPLO disseminates information and promotes understanding of EU policies of concern to its Members. The Office builds also solidarity and cooperation amongst its members and with other relevant NGO networks. Finally, EPLO raises awareness about the contribution the EU should make to peacebuilding and the need to hold the EU accountable to its own political commitments of helping secure peace within and outside its borders.

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