

# **A Survey of Coexistence Sensitivity in International Democratization and Governance Policies**

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## **Part II**

During the last decade, there has been a new and important emphasis on conflict-sensitive approaches to democratization and governance practices around the world. It is increasingly recognized that creating participatory and inclusive political processes is fundamental to the success and sustainability of coexistence work in societies that have endured long-lasting divisions and conflict.

The importance of studying the vital linkages and synergies between development and economic reforms, political transitions, constitutional and parliamentary reforms, war-to-peace transitions, human rights promotion, and land reforms is publicly acknowledged. This increased understanding of the need for a meta-level analysis of conflicted societies has been accompanied by a gradual shift in thinking, and the development of new and innovative approaches in the policy arena. It is now generally recognized that to be most effective, democracy work should not take place isolated from other social change processes. It is notable that more and more institutions and governments are adopting a more comprehensive and integrated approach to the totality of work that is needed to address societal problems.

This report describes some of the policymaking successes, challenges, and lessons learned by major intergovernmental agencies working on issues of democracy in societies where there are substantial needs for coexistence work e.g. work concerned with conflict prevention, management, resolution, and transformation, as well as multicultural and diversity work.

This report has been prepared as part of Coexistence International's (CI)<sup>1</sup> on-going research about coexistence sensitivity in international democratization and governance programs. It seeks to contribute to an increased awareness of how democracy and governance policies address the issue of coexistence.

This report is the second part of a study that was first developed through survey research, which set out to:

- a) Identify the programs around the world that are focusing specifically on democracy work; and
- b) Identifying those programs that had begun to take account of coexistence approaches in their programs. (See *Survey of Coexistence Sensitivity in International Democratization & Governance Policies, Appendix I*)

This second piece of research identifies lessons learned to date by those democracy and governance programs that have adopted a coexistence lens with the expectation of learning about interesting practice models. It should be noted that CI does not endorse any particular

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<sup>1</sup> To read more about CI's work, please visit: <http://www.coexistence.net/>

democracy model. However, this initial research endeavor is devoted to institutional learning within Western-based organizations and does not represent the diversity of democracy and governance policies that might exist across the spectrum of agencies in other parts of the world. The data for this research was gathered by identifying ten agencies that CI perceived to be promoting democracy and governance in their international programs with an awareness of the need to adopt a coexistence lens. These agencies are as follows:

- United Nations Development Program (UNDP) / Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery;
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) / Governance and Public Administration Branch;
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID) / Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation;
- World Bank / Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit;
- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA);
- Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) / Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities;
- Organization of American States (OAS) / Unit for the Promotion of Democracy - Department of Political Affairs;
- United States Institute for Peace (USIP);
- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP); and
- National Endowment for Democracy (NED - World Movement for Democracy).

Individuals in these agencies occupying key policymaking, decision-making, and advisory positions were contacted with a request for an interview discussing the challenges and opportunities faced in developing, mainstreaming, and implementing coexistence-focused policies within their organizations. Six out of the ten agencies expressed an interest in participating in the study and were willing to share their critical insights on how such policies had been developed and implemented within the work of their organizations, as well as the success of such policies. In the end, a total of six policymakers shared with us their observations and opinions on how coexistence work is understood within their agencies, how it is shaped into coherent organizational policy, and how it is mainstreamed into their national and international agendas.

CI recognizes the limited scope of this initial policy review, but believes that it gives valuable insight into what is currently happening in democracy and governance organizations whose work is informed by conflict sensitivity. CI hopes that the preliminary findings detailed in this report and in the previous survey research will serve as a critical starting point for what CI sees as a multi-year policy research endeavor. It is hoped that this study, and successive research garnered through further conversations and conferences that CI plans to convene, will contribute to a publication on observations on the state of coexistence policy within the governance and democracy field, which is planned for release in 2007.

## Research Methods

CI contacted agencies based on evidence of their policy and practices being informed by conflict- and coexistence-sensitivity. The interviewees were selected because of their extensive policymaking experience, expertise in both conflict resolution and democratization work, and the key roles they hold in their institutions. All those who were interviewed are also steady champions of ensuring conflict sensitivity within their agencies. This factor should be taken into account when reading the research, since in many instances respondents acknowledged that their convictions and professional opinions were not universally shared across their respective agencies. As one of the respondents proclaimed, “We are the converted or the “choir” and already on the bandwagon with this important paradigm shift.”

In all, six people were interviewed. The interviews took place over the phone, and lasted approximately 30-40 minutes. All interviews were conducted between April and June 2006. Several key questions were posed to check on definitions and terminology used, to confirm the level of sensitivity to coexistence issues, to assess the level of mainstreaming, to learn about tipping points for ensuring conflict awareness, and to inquire about where and how policymakers learn about good practices and good policies. It should also be noted that the six agencies represented in the study (World Bank, Organization of American States, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, United Nations Development Program and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs) are intergovernmental agencies that represent member states and multiple constituencies. Four organizations that were contacted for interviews declined participation.<sup>2</sup> CI hopes to foster additional opportunities for involving these and other relevant agencies in upcoming discussions.

The interviews took place in April and May of 2006, and readers therefore will need to take into account the evolving development of policies and programs that could have taken place since this information was compiled.

The following is a list of research questions posed during the interviews:

1. How is **coexistence** understood in your organization and more specifically, in your unit/department?
2. How and why is **sensitivity to coexistence and conflict transformation issues** relevant to your democracy and governance programming? Specifically, how does adopting this ‘lens’ impact the overall results of your democracy and governance programs?
3. How do you ensure that coexistence policies are consistent with the **overall policy direction** of your agency/unit?
4. What was the **catalyst** for coexistence sensitivity in your policy work? Was it championed by someone in particular, passed down as a directive from the top, or did it evolve through an organizational re-structuring/re-alignment of strategies, etc?

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<sup>2</sup> United States Agency for International Development, United States Institute of Peace, the Carnegie Endowment and World Movement for Democracy at the National Endowment for Democracy.

5. In your view, what are the **challenges and pressures** that accompany the process of developing, mainstreaming and implementing coexistence-aware policies in the democracy and governance field?
6. What do you see as **opportunities and enabling factors**, within your own organization and beyond, for increasing awareness of coexistence issues when addressing complex societal reforms (rule of law system, electoral systems, legislature, public sector reform, minority rights laws, etc.)?
7. Could you highlight some of the **lessons learned** about effective policies and their impact on increasing coexistence through democracy and governance programs?

## Research Highlights

The relatively small sample of agencies that were interviewed had both similarities and variations in their conflict-sensitive policymaking. Several related themes and factors emerged in each interview:

- One of the most consistent themes among the policymakers at these agencies was their unequivocal commitment to participatory and inclusive approaches in policy development, coupled with an emphasis on capacity building. This was evidenced by:
  1. the choice of strategies promoting this work through participatory processes on country levels;
  2. insistence on inclusive political and civic dialogue that informs policy development; and
  3. programming that is flexible and receptive to the needs of a broad number of stakeholders at the country levels.

All of the agencies stressed the link between the inclusivity of the policy development *process* and the increased level of receptiveness to the policies' substance or *content*;

- Another important recurring theme is that all of the relatively successful strategies described by the respondents also endured challenges stemming from questions of credibility and acceptance, sustainability of new approaches, lack of political will, and lack of necessary funding;
- Terminology used to describe the conflict- and coexistence-aware approaches varies widely from agency to agency. Terms such as *conflict prevention*, *conflict sensitivity*, *conflict management*, *peacebuilding*, *social inclusion*, *social cohesion*, *social integration*, *reconciliation*, *ethnic harmony*, *participatory processes*, *equity work*, and *diversity work* were recorded as key descriptors of programmatic strategies and foci. The term *coexistence* is not explicitly used by any of these agencies, but is widely understood as related to social inclusion/integration and diversity-focused strategies, and as a result is seen by many as analogous to the terminology used within these organizations; and<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Coexistence International uses the following definition: Coexistence means that there are peaceful and positive relationships between groups that are different from one another. Coexistence is strong when different ethnic, racial, religious, and social groups feel safe, equal, at home, and respected in the communities and countries where they reside.

- All of the respondents regard awareness of and sensitivity to coexistence and conflict issues as integral to the efficacy and sustainability of political, economic, and social development efforts.
- There is a great diversity of conceptual frameworks on democracy and governance put forward by these agencies. Some agencies that have historically focused on development, such as World Bank and UNDP, integrated a focus on good governance into their development frameworks a decade ago. Others, such as IDEA and OAS, are primarily working on democracy promotion, electoral assistance, and strengthening democratic institutions and processes. Yet others, such as OSCE's Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities and UNDESA, are primarily concerned with social integration processes, civil service and public administration realms, and inclusive political dialogue on national levels that ensures peace, security, and stability within and outside state borders.
- In the opinion of all of the agencies questioned, successful mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity is recognized as an important success factor for the democracy and/or governance programming.
- Integrating conflict-sensitive approaches into already established or emergent programmatic areas requires a range of strategies at the headquarters level as well as the country level. The way policies are implemented in the field greatly depends on the availability of financial and human resources, as well as the commitment of field staff and national governments to transforming policy recommendations into effective practices.
- The need for and the benefits of comparative learning between agencies was stressed.

## **Overall Summary of Lessons Learned**

While each agency has followed its distinct path to developing a conflict-sensitive lens in its democracy and governance programming, there are a number of comparable lessons learned that have accumulated in each institution over the years. Many of these have to do with establishing and facilitating favorable institutional environments that allow for conflict sensitivity to take root and be institutionalized in the most valuable way. Other lessons have to do with cultivating partnerships between the headquarters, country level offices, and national stakeholders. Yet others are concerned with specific analytical tools and their successful application. Some of these are summarized below and are addressed again elsewhere in the text. At the time of the interviews, several of the participating agencies were awaiting publication of research on lessons learned within their organizational units and will share these reports with CI.

### Summary of Lessons Learned:

- Capacity-building for agency staff, as well as national stakeholders, reinforces the likelihood that conflict prevention and conflict sensitivity are genuinely integrated into all relevant institutions, programs, and strategies;

- For coexistence issues to be placed on national agendas, it is critical for country level staff and the headquarters staff of intergovernmental agencies to seek out and cultivate partnerships with champions of conflict sensitivity within their agencies and within national governments;
- Conflict analysis and conflict assessment are fundamental starting points for understanding the sources of conflict and informing policy solutions in countries emerging from inter-group conflict and political turmoil;
- Democratic governance promoted with a conflict-sensitive lens relies on participatory and inclusive processes that foster broad participation of multiple stakeholders in conflict analysis, policy, and strategy development;
- The participatory approach is also key to a policy development process that engages agency staff at the headquarters and country level. There was agreement on the importance of developing and implementing strategies responsive to the needs of the constituent populations.
- There was some evidence that adopting a conflict and coexistence lens resulted in positive outcomes related to increased stability and more inclusive processes. Some of the agencies, including the World Bank, UNDP, and UNDESA are in the process of compiling lessons learned and are awaiting the publication of these internally commissioned reports in order to fully gauge the impact of conflict sensitivity on their overall organizational and departmental outcomes.
- There is a need for adequate resources to be made available for agencies to develop conflict-sensitive approaches as part of their work, and for donors to be partners in such development.
- Documenting practices and findings is key to promoting wider institutional learning, fostering receptiveness of conflict sensitivity and establishing credibility vis-à-vis partners and local stakeholders. Publication and dissemination of lessons learned and comparative studies help build awareness on the part of the national stakeholders about the way that adopting a conflict-sensitive lens could help them manage the democratization and governance processes more efficiently.

## **Summary of Interviews**

The following summaries describe each agency's policy approaches, challenges, and successes. They are only a glimpse into the current landscape of democracy and governance policymaking that is informed by sensitivity to conflict and coexistence issues; but such glimpses are valuable in assessing the extent and level to which these issues are being acknowledged and shifted from the marginal quarters of the policy realm into actual programmatic focus.

### **WORLD BANK**

#### **Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit<sup>4</sup>**

Established in 1944 and headquartered in Washington, DC, the World Bank is one of the world's largest funders of development activities, with membership extended to developing and developed countries.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/>

## Programs

*Conflict sensitivity* is the guiding term used to describe conflict de-escalation work and define strategy at the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit (CPR) of the World Bank. The CPR understands conflict in much wider terms than just armed conflict, and its conflict analysis framework takes into account all relationships between societal groups. Key work of both the CPR and the Social Development Department (of which CPR is a part) focuses on *inclusion* and *social cohesion* strategies. Learning from global lessons, CPR's staff realizes the acute need for a comprehensive approach to political and economic development processes that take into account diversity issues and minority rights. While the term coexistence makes sense on an intuitive level, it is not used at the Bank.

The conflict sensitivity and governance foci at the World Bank are relatively recent phenomena. Historically, the World Bank focused strictly on economic development, later incorporating social development perspectives and strategies on governance. The conflict agenda was introduced in 1997 in response to the changing reality of post-Cold War conflicts, and a Post-Conflict Unit was set up (later renamed the CPR Unit). In 2000, the CPR unit developed World Bank Operational Policy on Development Cooperation and Conflict, which mandated the integration of conflict sensitivity into the Bank's development assistance through conflict analysis.<sup>5</sup> This new policy development provided the basis for design of the Conflict Analysis Framework (CAF) by the CPR unit. CAF focuses on six areas: 1) social and ethnic relations, 2) governance and political institutions, 3) human rights and security, 4) economic structure and performance, 5) environment and natural resources, and 6) external factors. The CAF is intended to support World Bank country teams in developing country assistance strategies and inform program development in the context of conflict and post-conflict settings. However, CAF is not a mandatory process and the research and analysis expenses are paid for from the country program's budget. To date, fourteen countries have been subject to conflict analysis in exercises conducted in collaboration between the CPR unit and World Bank country teams. The analyses have varied both in design (adaptation of CAF and other tools) and in scope. Cost is one of several factors limiting the application of CAFs by the country offices.

To complement CAF, the World Bank's Social Development Department has developed "Country Social Analysis" or CSAs, which provide a conceptual framework for indicating warning signs for social conflict and assessing strategies for inclusion, empowerment, and security at all societal levels. The scope of social analysis consists of assessing: social diversity and gender; institutions, rules, and behaviors; stakeholders; participation; and social risks. While CSAs would normally be applied in countries not engaged in conflict and the CAF in openly conflict-affected countries, teams would be using elements of both approaches in several countries (e.g. countries which are in transition or at risk).

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<sup>5</sup> According to a CPR dissemination note "the need for conflict analysis is based on the recognition that the probability of success of development assistance is improved by a complementary analytical framework that identifies sources of violent conflicts and opportunities for their outbreak and escalation."  
[http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/sdvext.nsf/67ByDocName/TheConflictAnalysisFrameworkCAFIdentifyingConflict-relatedObstaclestoDevelopment/\\$FILE/CPR+5+final+legal.pdf](http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ESSD/sdvext.nsf/67ByDocName/TheConflictAnalysisFrameworkCAFIdentifyingConflict-relatedObstaclestoDevelopment/$FILE/CPR+5+final+legal.pdf) (Accessed on June 14, 2006).

The 2000 Operational Policy drew increased attention to the sources and causes of conflict, but it did not devise pathways for Bank engagement in peace and peacebuilding. However, in 2002, the World Bank formed a task force to determine programmatic priorities in Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS). The LICUS initiative addresses the distinct challenges faced by fragile and failing states, many of which are emerging from decades of violence and instability. As a result, there is a stronger attentiveness to such non-conventional areas for the World Bank as “peacebuilding,” “state-building,” and democratic processes. State functionality remains at the core of the Bank’s country-level work in these newly articulated areas. World Bank’s increased recognition of linkages between poverty reduction and peace and security issues is the driving factor behind the focus on an integrated approach to peace-building and development assistance in these fragile states. Ultimately, however, the Bank does not advocate for a particular model of government.

Over the past three years, the CPR unit has led a program partially funded by DFID (UK) and carried out in cooperation with several entities within and outside the World Bank to ensure effective poverty reduction strategies (PRS) in conflict-affected countries. The program started with a retrospective study in nine countries of the extent to which the PRSs had taken conflict drivers into account in process and content. The program is now providing direct support of poverty reduction strategies in six countries. Among the products of the program will be conflict-sensitive tools and measures, as well as guidance to staff, partners and client countries.

Despite this steady evolution of organizational priorities informed by conflict sensitivity, the World Bank still retains a mandate that is largely focused on economic and social issues and much less on exclusive political processes. The Bank does not validate any particular democracy model but operates with an understanding and recognition of symbiosis between economic development and good governance. There are on-going discussions across multiple units of this large organization about just how important conflict sensitivity is to creating policies that impact structures for good governance..

### **Institutional Factors**

The catalyst for conflict sensitivity at the World Bank was a convergence of several factors. First was the recognition at the end of the 1990s that the Bank needed to adapt its traditional development and poverty reduction programs in areas that were also experiencing major conflict (e.g. Bosnia-Herzegovina, West Bank and Gaza). The subsequent organizational response with the establishment of the CPR unit prompted the appointment of people from the outside with direct conflict experience.

However, the launch of a new conflict sensitivity agenda at the World Bank at the end of 1990s did not transform the institution overnight. Financial challenges created obstacles for the evolution of conflict sensitivity throughout the organization. Each World Bank country team must prioritize its financial resources and social development and conflict work do not carry as much primacy as do “core” disciplines, i.e. economic development, public sector management, infrastructure, etc. When funding is limited, the appointment of technical staff absolutely necessary for key country projects takes precedence.

Another critical challenge is the fact that the CPR Unit, which serves as the Bank headquarters' "anchor" for conflict sensitivity and focuses on policy, analytical work and operational support, is still relatively new. It is considered to have an interesting but not absolutely essential agenda and therefore has quite limited resources. Its organizational location is also not where most decisions of key importance for the Bank take place. The unit supports the work of World Bank operational units (country and program teams) upon demand. Ultimately, CPR occupies a marginal corner within the overall frame of the organization. The participants we spoke to believe that if CPR were placed closer to key decision-makers and allocated additional funding, it would have considerably more impact on pushing for conflict sensitivity across the board. Conversely, the World Bank's environmental and social "safeguard policies" on protection of natural habitat, cultural property, and indigenous rights, among others, have been profoundly institutionalized. Despite the 2000 operational policy reinforcing conflict sensitivity, it has not been made mandatory or articulated into a "safeguard policy". While the interviewee believed that making conflict sensitivity a "safeguard policy" would have a tremendous short-term impact, there is uncertainty on whether this would be more effective in the long run since obligatory measures are often bureaucratic, unpopular among staff and could backfire.

Another challenging factor of conflict sensitive programming has to do with ownership and decision-making authority. World Bank programs are "executed" by national governments, and financed and supported technically by the Bank. Many national governments have a tendency to de-emphasize controversial issues such as conflict in their approach to economic and political development. The challenge that remains is operationalizing these goals on the country level where time, budgetary constraints and political obstacles persist.

For an institution as large as the World Bank it is difficult to adequately assess an organizational "shift in thinking" and to list all possible enabling factors for conflict-sensitive work. The establishment of the CPR unit and its persistent focus on conflict-sensitive approaches has brought about changes in the organization. Furthermore, the LICUS initiative and the recent paper *Fragile States – Good Practice in Country Assistance Strategies*<sup>6</sup> present a significantly new area of focus that links peace-building and state-building and calls for in-depth analysis of the political economy factor in conflict societies. It is believed that this will enable further development of conflict sensitivity in support of work in fragile states.

### **Lessons Learned:**

In 2006, the World Bank commissioned two separate and comprehensive reports on the cumulative lessons learned from the use of Conflict Analysis Framework (CAF) and Country Social Analysis (CSA). The report on effective conflict analysis exercises, which focused on process factors of CAF, outlined specific recommendations for overcoming organizational challenges. Echoing the aforementioned assessment shared by our interviewee, this new report identified the typical organizational and implementation challenges to be "time and funding constraints, limited capacity, unstable and volatile security climate, and tackling of political

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<sup>6</sup> [www-wds.worldbank.org/.../IW3P/IB/2005/12/22/000090341\\_20051222094709/Rendered/PDF/34790.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/.../IW3P/IB/2005/12/22/000090341_20051222094709/Rendered/PDF/34790.pdf)

sensitivities in preparing the analysis.”<sup>7</sup> Key findings and recommendations from this report are partially noted here:<sup>8</sup>

- Limited conflict analysis exercises that involve desk studies can provide a sufficient and meaningful picture of chief conflict factors in a cheaper and timelier manner. More comprehensive exercises are useful in those cases where an ongoing security situation has not permitted an examination of the conflict.
- Multi-agency collaborations have proven to be more effective and should be encouraged as they result in shared analysis, alignment of strategies, building of partnerships, and joint dialogue.

The report on Country Social Analysis (CSA) addressed the capacity of the donor community to use macro-level social analysis to inform policy dialogue and reform, as well as to contribute to the coordination of approaches across agencies. The scope of this study stretched far beyond conflict-related issues, but the subsequent policy recommendations list a number of constructive pointers for effective practice that could be useful in understanding the policy-level learning at the World Bank. Some of these pointers of effective practice include:

- Linking the analysis with clear policy recommendations indicating not just what needs to be done but how it can be implemented;
- Narrowing down the sectors on which to focus the policy recommendations and ensuring that they are clearly defined in actionable steps;
- Involving relevant government and relevant in-country stakeholders in the definition of the focus of the analysis and expected policy recommendations.<sup>9</sup>

## **INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE (IDEA)**

### **Democracy Building and Conflict Management Program<sup>10</sup>**

Created in 1995, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with member states from all continents, which has a mandate to support sustainable democracy worldwide. IDEA operates at the intersection between those who analyze and monitor trends in democracy and those who engage directly in political reform, or act in support of democracy at home and abroad. IDEA works with both new and long-established democracies, helping to develop and strengthen the institutions and culture of democracy. It operates at international, regional, and national levels, working in partnership with a range of institutions.

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<sup>7</sup> “Effective Conflict Analysis Exercises: Overcoming Organizational Challenges.” June 21, 2006. Published by the World Bank.

<sup>8</sup> Full list of recommendations can be found in the World Bank report entitled “Effective Conflict Analysis Exercises: Overcoming Organizational Challenges.” June 21, 2006. Published by the World Bank.

<sup>9</sup> The full list of policy recommendations can be found in the recent World Bank report entitled “Understanding Socio-economic and Political Factors to Impact Policy Change.” June 15, 2006. Published by the World Bank.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.idea.int/>

## **Programs**

IDEA sees coexistence as relevant to its mission and priorities. *Conflict management* is the commonly used term that describes IDEA's approach in this area. The logical premise is that it is not feasible to build democratic institutions without first laying the groundwork for coexistence. IDEA's democracy-building work takes into account the fact that democratic processes are conditioned by systems of relations in a society. The process of building democracy can by itself be conflict-inducing by producing unexpected changes and uncertainty.

IDEA believes that democracy is not what you find when you lift a totalitarian regime. It is something that has to be built in the most inclusive and comprehensive manner involving all relevant stakeholders. IDEA promotes dialogue, conducts the necessary research and develops appropriate tools for making democratic transitions less conflict-prone and more sustainable. Besides multiple tools relating to electoral processes, IDEA works with many governments, international organizations, and donors on other themes such as constitution-building and the organization and functioning of political parties. It supports transitions to democracy within the borders of its member states and other countries. IDEA's approach to democracy-building is distinctly non-prescriptive. IDEA does not promote "ready-made recipes" for democracy and does not advocate for specific models, but instead focuses on advocating for good and fair processes. For example, in its constitution building work, IDEA advises governments on how to ensure that the process is open, inclusive, and participatory. IDEA's work is rooted in the conviction that when you involve all stakeholders (minority groups, etc), it is more likely that the constitution and newly formed state institutions will reflect the values of inclusion and will uphold democratic principles.

IDEA's work on democracy-building and conflict management is crosscutting. It integrates analysis, dialogue and specific support activities in a holistic manner: a strong emphasis is placed on consensus-building and promoting reconciliation and inclusive democracy. Thus, work on constitution-building, electoral processes, and political parties is being developed in an increasingly integrated fashion.

## **Institutional Factors**

IDEA strives to bridge the gap between research and policy practice and to be useful to policy professionals, international agencies, its own member states and their political actors. IDEA aims to produce tools that are easily accessible, functional, and sensitive to specific regional needs.

The challenges that IDEA has encountered in its democracy-building and conflict-management work are characteristic of the current polarized discourse on democracy. One of the key general challenges in the field of democracy-building is related to the skepticism with which international democracy assistance is sometimes met and the concern over possible hidden agendas. IDEA believes that it has a comparative advantage over some other state agencies that provide international democracy assistance because it does not have super-powers among its members and because it includes members from all continents. Another challenge is the danger of uniformity and perception of democracy as a Western product imposed on the rest of the world. Deeply aware of this challenge, IDEA places a strong emphasis on South-South

cooperation. Indeed, there are countries in the global south that have a lot to share in terms of lessons learnt and best practices in the field of building effective democracies.

Finally, there are challenges with the very concept of coexistence and its application. Obviously, one could not advocate coexistence while maintaining blatantly undemocratic and abusive practices. The challenge is how to find the right balance in democratic systems that are built on a scaffold of cultural, historical, and linguistic backgrounds.

At the same time, IDEA also recognizes the widening of opportunities for coexistence and conflict management approaches as evidenced by an increase in requests for assistance. There are a number of countries currently dealing with societal conflicts arising from transitional processes and IDEA's conflict management and democracy-building tools provide both an analytical and functional approach to resolving these impasses.

## **ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS)<sup>11</sup>**

### **Department for the Promotion of Democracy and (Former) Special Program for The Promotion Of Dialogue And Conflict Resolution**

Founded in 1948, the Organization of American States (OAS) is a regional intergovernmental organization composed of 34 member states in the Western Hemisphere. Its purpose is to strengthen cooperation and advance its members' common interests.

#### **Programs**

The primary mission of the OAS is to promote peace and democratic development within states and between states. However, it was not until the member states began confronting a series of socio-political challenges, which adversely affected democratic systems across the region, that the OAS made a decision to expand and more explicitly define its role and contribution to helping member states respond to these complex challenges. The OAS's mission to maintain peace and harmony between states in the Americas and within the borders of these states coincides directly to the values of coexistence. The OAS utilizes different terminology to describe the type of work it does and the types of processes it promotes and supports on the ground in Latin America and the Caribbean. Specifically, OAS official documents and policies refer to *participatory democracy*, *democratic governance*, *inclusiveness*, *consensus building*, *tolerance*, *dialogue*, and *conflict prevention and resolution*. This multiplicity of terms presents a challenge to the OAS's democracy and conflict work. A term such as coexistence is seen as potentially useful in encompassing the various aspects of the OAS's work on national and regional levels in the Western Hemisphere. For example, one of the objectives of the OAS's former Special Program for the Promotion of Dialogue and Conflict Resolution<sup>12</sup> was to develop a conflict-sensitive assessment that OAS member states could use in order to gauge their readiness to prevent social and political conflicts, as well as to mitigate existing ones.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.oas.org/main>

<sup>12</sup> Since the time of writing of this report, the Special Program for the Promotion of Dialogue and Conflict Resolution has been integrated into the recently created Crisis Prevention Department under the Secretariat for Political Affairs.

Coexistence-related issues such as indigenous rights and social inclusion would be central to these assessment instruments.

The OAS defines democratic governance as a social construct created and supported by the practices and interaction of state and civil society institutions in pursuit of their collective, sectorial, and particular interests. Democratic governance is characterized by its ability to peacefully manage economic, social, cultural, and political differences through both formal and informal mechanisms. OAS acknowledges the need for progression from a rudimentary conflict resolution focus to comprehensively addressing the relationship between conflict and governance/democracy building. This understanding is derived from direct experience in Latin America and the Caribbean, where long-standing socio-political tensions have been exacerbated by a breakdown of governance structures. The OAS recognizes the links between the sources of conflict, conflict dynamics, and dysfunctional governance structures. OAS's efforts include advising governments on the formation of human rights commissions and introducing constitutional amendments safeguarding minority and indigenous rights. One of the lessons learned from OAS experiences in post-conflict peacebuilding is the importance of mainstreaming conflict resolution and coexistence principles into governance work as a way of inviting governments to examine questions of social cohesion, coexistence, and functionality of institutions from a conflict lens. While some governments are willing to adopt this lens, few have the political will or capacity to begin utilizing it or implementing the necessary policies.<sup>13</sup>

The process of fostering sensitivity and recognition of interdependence between coexistence, democracy, and governance is accompanied by a number of challenges. There is resistance to mainstreaming these perspectives within intergovernmental organizations, in which member states often prioritize economic issues over social integration and the promotion of inclusive political dialogue. The OAS interviewee, however, was open to the idea that a coexistence lens should be institutionalized within intergovernmental and multilateral organizations, and that mainstreaming social cohesion and coexistence approaches into governance policies would contribute positively to the sustainability of democracy in the long run. This strong conviction about the value of coexistence mainstreaming is based on the hypothesis that ignoring underlying social tensions is detrimental to the long-term success of any governance and democracy-building process. As a result, there has been a gradual shift towards incorporating conflict resolution concepts and tools, such as inclusive political dialogue, participatory public policy making and multi-sectoral consensus-building into the OAS's political and democracy-building toolbox. The failure of the region's democratically-elected governments to deliver tangible improvements in the quality of life for their majorities is leading to a loss in the appeal of democracy among broad sectors of their populations. The persistence of unresolved problems and the emergence of new challenges underscore the need to develop new paradigms to deepen the quality of democracy. The process currently looks like "two steps forward, one step back."

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<sup>13</sup> For example, in Guatemala the post-civil war peace process framework called for mixed commissions to be formed. It immediately became evident that there were no mixed multi-sectoral "spaces" for collaboration that have ever existed in the past, and therefore no experience or expertise in this type of collaborative work on the national or civil society levels. The framework was admirable on paper because it stretched beyond just being a peace agreement, yet none of the government, public or civil society actors had any expertise in such dialogue processes.

In many cases, there is a verbal commitment to building coexistence and social cohesion, but the observable actions are different.

### **Institutional Factors**

The initial catalyst for conflict and coexistence sensitivity in the OAS came by way of advocacy on the part of individual champions within the organization who believed in the importance of mainstreaming conflict sensitivity and delineating a role for the organization. The changes, however, were incremental, and the articulation of why a conflict lens is important is still evolving. The institutional changes were also informed by the gradual accumulation of lessons learned about the role of dialogue and consensus building in political impasses – lessons which came directly from the countries where the OAS was involved in advisory, technical assistance, and other capacities. Learning from its own experience and seeing the importance of this work was highly influential in the initial decision to articulate the relationship between conflict, peace-building work, and democracy and governance. Another catalyst was the availability of funding for applying the research and training in the field. The OAS would not have had the financial capacity to fund this work without the financial assistance from the Nordic states (Sweden, Norway, and Denmark), who became the main funders for the conflict resolution, dialogue and peacebuilding programs at the OAS. The leadership factor, such as when the Secretary General publicly acknowledged the importance of addressing conflict issues in a comprehensive approach within a governance-context, was yet another important step to institutionalizing this approach at the OAS.

In 2001, the OAS General Secretariat approved a new area entitled the “Special Program for the Promotion of Dialogue and Conflict Resolution.” The Special Program was conceived in order to strengthen and consolidate democratic institutions and practices by developing institutional mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict and by enhancing citizen participation in decision-making through dialogue. The area developed projects and activities designed to foster the attitudes, values, skills, and behaviors necessary to engender inclusiveness, tolerance, and collaboration across public and private sectors. The expansion and institutionalization of this specialized program was based on the significant experiences gained over more than a decade in peace-building, post-conflict reconstruction, reconciliation, and democracy building throughout the Americas.

Along with opportunities for change and the catalysts described above, came challenges that had the potential to undermine the efficacy of conflict sensitivity at the OAS. First of all, prior to setting up the Special Program on Conflict Resolution there was no clear political mandate for the OAS to work in areas of conflict and peace. Most of the conflict-related work (peace and conflict assessments and dialogue work) was approached from a low-profile, technical assistance and training level; in other words “through the back door” until the conflict-sensitive approach was institutionalized.<sup>14</sup> A second challenge is linked to the internal organizational dynamics at the OAS. The OAS has historically been an institution at the service and request of member

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<sup>14</sup> OAS’s involvement in Haiti in 1999 was a clear example of a limited mandate: OAS tried to build capacity for conflict resolution and mainstream it through the components of the state apparatus such as police and judicial agency but was unable to compel the recently formed Haitian government to place these needs high on the agenda. As a result they never became priorities and OAS had no institutional mechanism to provide incentives for the Haitian government to introduce these.

states. The political challenges included strong reservations on the part of the member states about using the word “conflict” to describe the social upheaval or political impasses within their borders. Many member states express concerns about other member states getting involved in their internal affairs under the umbrella of the OAS conflict prevention work.

Initially, the OAS did not have a clear policy on what kind of role it could play in conflict situations. New normative language, policies, and goals were introduced concerning conflict, security, and peacebuilding, but some member states took a long time to accept these new developments. This long evolution of conflict sensitivity within the OAS was accompanied by the critical process of establishing credibility both within its organizational core and with its numerous member states. Consequently, the OAS had to prove its expertise in conflict prevention and resolution work, which it had accumulated over the years but which was rarely documented and systematized. The available lessons learned from several Latin American and Caribbean countries served as the basis for condensing the OAS’s experience and sharing it across the hemisphere.

Since the spring of 2006, the OAS General Secretariat has undergone a substantial restructuring of its democracy and political affairs department. The OAS’s newly created Secretariat for Political Affairs is comprised of the Department for the Promotion of Democracy, Department for the Promotion of Governance, and Department of Crisis Prevention and Special Missions. The Special Program for the Promotion of Dialogue and Conflict Resolution was used as a springboard and foundation for the creation of the Department of Crisis Prevention, with the latter one absorbing the Special Program’s portfolio of projects and activities. The OAS has demonstrated the political will to make conflict resolution an organizational priority, where peace-building and conflict related programming has evolved from a specialized unit within a larger section to being integrated into a fully-fledged department. Moreover, it was placed on the larger organizational agenda and policy table, rather than kept at a project level.

The recently established Department of Crisis Prevention and Special Missions serves as the focal point and the principal advisory unit to support the Secretary General of the OAS in his continuous efforts to address political issues, developments, challenges and crisis that occur (or may occur) in the hemisphere. It provides advisory and technical services to Special Missions established by the OAS Permanent Council and/or the General Secretariat in the event of a potential or ongoing political crisis or in response to member states’ requests. Furthermore, it spearheads the Secretariat’s follow-up to the development of democracy in the hemisphere, according to the provisions set forth in the Inter-American Democratic Charter. It coordinates the development of an early warning system and the execution of the Fund for Peace as instruments to support crisis prevention efforts in the hemisphere. The Department liaises, coordinates, and collaborates with other units of the General Secretariat on these issues, as it deems appropriate.<sup>15</sup>

Currently, the political leadership of the OAS, and in particular the office of the Assistant Secretary General, has pointed out the importance of linking conflict prevention to development and security arenas. The current socio-political landscape in the Americas is characterized by steady decline in violent conflict, with the exclusion of Colombia. Conversely, internal tensions in socio-economic and political arenas in several countries in the hemisphere call for

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<sup>15</sup> Excerpt provided by the OAS from the most recent documents delineating recent organizational restructuring.

comprehensive and lasting transformations in national and local structures and institutions. The OAS would be the ideal forum for promoting conflict-sensitive democratic processes and good governance, given its expertise and the availability of organizational resources to contribute to this task. Due to the OAS's diligent awareness-raising work and close consultations with its member states, there is increased understanding on the importance of involving civil society in governance processes, including within the judiciary, military and security sector as well as through political party work. This awareness does allow for further developing and mainstreaming conflict sensitivity into democratic policies and structures. However, there are still a number of national governments that are not well informed about OAS's conflict prevention and resolution work. A strong analytical department dedicated to documenting and publishing on democracy and conflict research would increase awareness among the member states about what the OAS can do in this area and what it has already done. The key is that a conflict-sensitive lens has not been in existence for long enough, thus making it harder to assess and measure consistent impact. Therefore, much of the advisory work at the OAS is based on a plausible hypothesis and theories, but not enough hard evidence from the ground for it to be deemed successful.

The OAS could be a key organization for promoting coexistence-focused policies because of its multilateral status and direct and constant access to policymakers in national governments across Latin America and the Caribbean. There is also a great deal of room for growth and the need to build the organizational capacity of the OAS to assist its member states in this process. Recently, during an OAS Permanent Council meeting, member states discussed the lack of internal mechanisms for effective dialogue and facilitation prompted by a dispute between Uruguay and Argentina. Disputes between member states often become highly polarized and the OAS Secretary General has publicly stated that the OAS needs to strengthen its institutional capacity to help its members states overcome impasses such as this and work on building coexistence within their borders.

### **Lessons Learned:**

The bulk of the lessons accumulated at OAS over the years have come from its direct, on-the-ground experience across the Americas. Some additional and very important learning came from OAS's joint work with other multilateral agencies implementing large-scale countrywide programs in Latin America and the Caribbean.

- The OAS has built strong relationships and credibility with national stakeholders by having its specialized field staff, program coordinators and advisors spend extensive periods of time in the field in consultation with local staff, national government representatives, and civil society;
- OAS insists on a participatory approach to managing programs in the field where policies are ultimately developed at the headquarters, but are thoroughly informed by input gathered from field staff and needs articulated by national stakeholders;<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> This approach became a point of contention with USAID, a major partner for many OAS programs, which insists that policies be locally formulated. OAS remains adamant about its policymaking approach and continues to advocate for a complementary approach in which both the headquarters and the field offices participate in developing policies.

- The Organization's actions are based on consensus as a result of a direct request or invitation by the member state;
- Capacity-building as a component of a broader strategic approach to peacebuilding and conflict management;
- Programs are sensitive toward the importance of local ownership through joint design and implementation of programs; and
- Effective exit strategy designed early in the process.

**ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)  
Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM)**

OSCE is the world's largest regional intergovernmental security organization with 55 member states. Headquartered in Vienna, it maintains field operations in South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. Its field missions work with local governmental and civil society institutions to facilitate political processes, offer forums for political negotiations, prevent and settle conflicts, and promote civil society and rule of law. OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights based in Warsaw, Poland, works throughout the OSCE area on election observation, democratic development, human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination, and rule of law. The Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, established in 1992 and located in the Hague, identifies and seeks early resolution of ethnic tensions that might endanger peace, stability or friendly relations between OSCE participating states.

**Programs**

OSCE's conflict prevention work contributes to building peaceful coexistence on the national level. Specifically, the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) concerns itself with relations between minorities and majorities in its member states. A key strategy utilized at OSCE is social integration with respect for diversity. Respect for diversity means awareness and sensitivity to language diversity and minority rights through access to education for minorities in their mother tongue and access to training and education in the state language. Respect for diversity has implications on multiple levels: legislative, symbolic, and practical implementation. OSCE views sensitivity to diversity issues when formulating social integration policies as a key factor contributing to sustainable conflict prevention.

In its social integration policies, HCNM advocates for mixed multi-lingual education as opposed to segregated schools, and for the content of educational materials to be inclusive and respectful of diversity. The main goal of social integration policies is conflict prevention through access, respect, and rights. HCNM believes that conflict prevention alone is not sufficient for nurturing sustainable social cohesion. In order to build a cohesive society, there is a need to build something collectively shared or common. Therefore, HCNM strongly promotes participation in local governance, access to national governments, and access to the state language for all minorities.

HCNM does not see conflict prevention as a lens but as one of its main goals. The real outcome of its integrated conflict prevention work expressed in social integration and diversity policies is

sustainable democracy and governance. Recognition of plural identities and diversity is the central focus of its programs, and while democratic coexistence is not explicitly declared as a goal, it is ultimately seen as an unmistakable outcome of its programs. As a result, within the organizational family of OSCE, there are some overlapping areas where HCNM and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) collaborate. For example, when ODIHR provides electoral assistance, HCNM plays an important role by advocating for a platform and access for minority perspectives. However, each unit carries its own “territorial” peculiarities. The HCNM is sometimes criticized for being security driven when putting too much emphasis on conflict prevention. Conversely, ODIHR is on occasions criticized for its strong emphasis on human rights and justice. This dichotomy is rather artificial because both units are also seen as integral to the larger goals of OSCE: security, cooperation, and promotion of democracy and human rights.

### **Institutional Factors**

The upsurge of nationalism and the collapse of longstanding relations between national minorities and majorities in many parts of Europe indicated a need to address these challenges in a comprehensive manner. The creation of the Office of the High Commissioner for National Minorities in 1992 was a clear catalyst for conflict sensitivity at OSCE. It is important to note that through its mandate for conflict prevention, HCNM advocates for peace and security and respect for human rights, including minority rights. When national minorities are mistreated by a state, HCNM pays special attention to this out of both normative and security considerations. However, HCNM is not a “minorities ombudsman,” as some mistakenly perceive the role of this office to be. Since its creation, the work and achievements of the HCNM have been hailed as one of the success stories at OSCE. The unit is relatively independent from the central office and is an “under-advertised”<sup>17</sup> institution that has gained much recognition, trust, and credibility through its effectiveness in working with multiple national governments on sensitive issues of social integration.

One of the general methodological challenges at OSCE is to maintain flexibility when involving multiple national stakeholders in developing policies that respond to local needs. On an implementation level, there are issues that arise in relation to perceptions by many national governments that minorities are a potential threat to territorial integrity and national security. As a result, there is a considerable resistance and lack of political will to recognize minority rights. Policy-making challenges include resistance to the idea of devolution and power-sharing on the part of many national governments. Another important challenge is the weakness of available compliance and enforcement mechanisms that ensure the implementation of minority-sensitive policies. HCNM recommendations are non-binding, but other enforcement mechanisms do exist through the membership benefits in OSCE and, in some cases, in the European Union.

HCNM’s quiet diplomacy and steady promotion of inclusive processes has made some headway in persuading national governments to start perceiving national minorities as viable partners in the process of democracy building. In this delicate work, HCNM takes a politically sensitive approach and does not pressure governments to adopt any particular model of a socially cohesive society. There is on-going self-reflection at the OSCE about the organization’s impact on

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<sup>17</sup> The High Commissioners have traditionally practiced quiet diplomacy.

societies where it operates. Thus far, the most important findings come directly from on-the-ground experiences in countries where OSCE works. Some of these include:

- The importance of developing and implementing timely approaches.
- The centrality of inclusion in all processes that HCNM advocates for: public debate, open and inclusive process for formulating legislation and shaping constitution with participation from national minorities.
- A lesson with important ramifications for maintaining HCNM's credibility is the need to consult as many stakeholders as possible in the process of developing policy recommendations. Besides government officials and decision-makers who are most directly involved in shaping laws and policies, HCNM advisors talk to NGOs and local community representatives in each country for which it develops policy recommendations.

## **UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS (UNDESA) - GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION BRANCH**

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat links policy and practice in the economic, social, and environmental spheres. The Department works in three main interlinked areas: analysis of economic, social, and environmental data and information, on which member states draw to review common problems and to take stock of policy options; facilitation of negotiations between member states in many intergovernmental bodies on joint courses of action to address ongoing or emerging global challenges; and advice to governments on the ways of translating policy frameworks developed in United Nations conferences and summits into programs at the country level and, through technical assistance, building national capacities.<sup>18</sup>

### **Programs**

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA or DESA) utilizes the term *social cohesion* to describe the coexistence-related work it does in the field. In normative documents produced at the headquarters, DESA uses the term *social integration*. This term is rather problematic because it has easily been mistaken with *homogenization*.<sup>19</sup> So far, however, there has not been a move to adopt new terminology, although the concept of coexistence is increasingly understood as embracing a wide range of approaches on which DESA focuses.

The evolution of conflict sensitivity in DESA, UNDP, and throughout the UN structure is ongoing. The adoption of a conflict-sensitive lens has yielded some impact on overall results on the country level, but this impact cannot be seen across the board. There are two frameworks currently available for assessing political and social changes and identifying institutional needs: (1) Common Country Assessment (CCA) which is carried out by the UN offices and (2) the UN

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.un.org/esa/desa/>

<sup>19</sup> There are civil society actors that partners with the UN who disagree with this term and perceive it as partially coercive.

Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) which is a joint assessment carried out by the UN and the national governments. In those few cases where the UN country teams have made the UNDAF process more conflict-sensitive, the assessment process contributed to an important understanding of what could have been improved upon to decrease tensions and conflict.

The challenge is that conflict-sensitive lenses or frameworks are not directives and require a certain level of capacity building for the country staff to be able to integrate them into their routine work. Logistically, this presents a number of challenges connected to availability of funding for training and staff retention. Due to high turnover rate, many trained staff members leave the organization and important skills are lost. One important lesson that DESA has learned in the process of pushing for conflict-sensitive UNDAF is how crucial champions of conflict sensitivity within national governments can be to the success of this on-going advocacy effort. In the past, DESA provided training workshops for government officials on conflict-sensitive development as well as dialogue and mediation skills. DESA team was amazed at how positively the training was received and appraised. Many government officials saw a great deal of value in acquiring these skills, and expressed their expectations of how much more these skills would allow them to achieve.

In order to ensure that conflict sensitivity is consistent with overall policy, DESA insists on introducing the relevant terminology and concepts into important internal documents. DESA's experience demonstrates that if "conflict sensitivity" is incorporated into public administration terminology and capacity building instruments, it is more favorably and readily accepted within the UN headquarters and country offices. It helps when conflict sensitivity and social integration policies are focused toward specific, tangible goals such as merit-based, inclusive and representative civil service and specific strategies for getting there, and affirmative action programs tailored to a particular context. The strategy that was employed by those who championed conflict sensitivity was to present this approach as nothing innovative, but rather as a supplementary angle to an established practice that was already an integral part of ongoing UN work. When articulated in public administration and technical terms, such as specific instructions for what conflict-prone factors one needs to account for when crafting civil service policies, procedures and codes of practice, the receptiveness to the concept increased. Just as computer training is provided to Financial Ministries in order to streamline their financial management procedures, capacity building around conflict-sensitive assessments needs to set specific, technical learning objectives and a focus on skill building.

### **Institutional Factors**

There is a gradual process of de-stigmatizing conflict sensitivity through the nuanced exploration of appropriate language, instead of pressuring people into adopting it and punishing them if they don't. Given the sheer size of the UN, this work needs to take place in multiple departments and levels. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), DESA, and Department of Political Affairs (DPA) were the key entry points for exploring conflict sensitivity and its receptiveness within key policymaking bodies of the UN. As in many other large organizations, internal organizational challenges to this work have to do with impediments to collaboration across the UN departments, addressing turf issues, and conflict work being seen by some as their distinct "domain." Staff at DESA, UNDP and DPA collaborate on a number of joint analytical and

programmatic areas at the headquarter level, as well as in collaboration with their respective field staff.

There is now more interest in conflict-sensitive approaches and greater understanding among key headquarters staff and at some country offices than previously. Two recent meetings inspired fresh thinking about ways to integrate conflict sensitivity into the various UN programs implemented at country levels. Organized jointly by UNDP/BCOR/DPA and DESA in collaboration with the Namibian government, the first one of these gatherings was a workshop titled “National Ownership of Conflict Prevention and Transformation Initiatives: Sharing Experiences from Southern Africa” (July 2005). Participants found the workshop to be very beneficial and saw the in-depth sharing on conflict sensitivity as an important learning step that contributed to changing the discourse around these issues. The lessons learned that were shared at these workshops came from a variety of multilateral and local agencies partnered with UN agencies in conflict-sensitive development work. The second gathering held in Istanbul (March 2006) captured equally important observations and included UN agencies and national partners from several regions around the world. The gathering helped disseminate information on the diversity of how programs manifest themselves and contributed to increasing coherence throughout the UN system.

Some of the findings in the process of DESA’s work on developing conflict-sensitive policies are:

- This approach is not as effective if it comes as a result of external pressure. It must be developed in partnership with internal champions who are already pushing for change from the ground-up within their respective departments, agencies, and governmental units.
- For a conflict-sensitive lens to be adopted and mainstreamed with potential for impact, a critical mass of supporters must exist at all levels: governmental, intergovernmental, and grassroots. One of the main purposes of the UN capacity-building work in this area is to find and build the skills of a constituency who sees the value of this work.
- There is a critical need for awareness-raising and advocacy directed at those who have yet to see the benefit of conflict sensitivity in their work. One lesson that came out from the Namibia and Turkey meetings is the importance of creating a platform for dialogue and bridge-building and continuing to ‘feed’, support and nourish the imagination of political and social scientists in the various sectors of international development assistance work in order to deepen our exploration of the field.

**UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (UNDP)  
BUREAU FOR CRISIS PREVENTION AND RECOVERY**

The Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) is one of nine major bureaus within the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Consistent with UNDP’s mission to promote sustainable human development, the focus is on the development dimensions of crisis situations. UNDP works to prevent the occurrence and recurrence of armed conflicts, reduce the risk of disasters, and promote early recovery after crises have occurred. Through UNDP’s country

offices, BCPR staff support local government in needs assessment, capacity development, coordinated planning, and policy and standard setting.<sup>20</sup>

## **Programs**

The Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) generally uses the terms *conflict prevention* and *peacebuilding* to define its policies and goals. That said, the BCPR does not strictly adhere to any particular terminology and is flexible in finding language and terms that are most relevant to the context of countries in which it works. For example, in Guyana UNDP uses the term social cohesion to describe its work related to building coexistence in this multicultural state. In Fiji, the terms “peace and stability” were found more suitable to engage local stakeholders in a participatory conflict analysis process. Coexistence is understood as a concept and is relevant to much of the work done by BCPR.

The starting point for conflict sensitivity in UNDP’s work is the recognition that development processes by themselves can do harm and induce conflict as they bring forth major changes in socio-economic and political realities and shift the existing status quo. Therefore, UNDP adopted a conflict prevention lens to promote a conflict-sensitive approach in its own development assistance and to foster similar awareness and capacity among national stakeholders in countries where it works. Democratic governance is one of five programmatic areas at UNDP together with the remaining four areas: Poverty Reduction, Crisis Prevention and Recovery, Energy and Environment, and HIV/AIDS.

UNDP’s commitment to mainstreaming a conflict-sensitive approach into development work is based on highly participatory conflict analysis processes conducted with national stakeholders. Conflict analysis is seen as a tool for analyzing structural causes of conflict, assessing conflict-prone factors in a society, defining structural problems, and articulating strategies for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. UNDP provides the crucial space for joint exploration of these issues by the national stakeholders, and for strengthening the capacities of local actors and institutions to identify joint problems and forward looking strategies. In those post-conflict societies where no such space for shared dialogue had previously existed, the joint conflict analysis process becomes an intervention method in itself and serves as a relationship-building tool.

Another component of UNDP’s work in conflict prevention is the collaboration between UNDP and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) on strengthening national capacities for conflict prevention and management by equipping national actors with tools and skills for effective political and civic dialogue, consensus building and collaborative engagement.<sup>21</sup> Where national capacities for conflict prevention do not exist or are weak, UNDP is strongly concerned with being able to support the strengthening of institutions that can mediate dispute and facilitate dialogue processes on the ground that lead to important institutional reforms and enable

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.undp.org/bcpr/>

<sup>21</sup> In Guyana, UNDP has trained the members of the Interethnic Council in mediation skills that would allow this institution to serve as a mediation body for local and national disputes involving various ethnic groups. In Ghana, UNDP has worked with political parties, parliament, and civil service employees to develop “the architecture for peace” that is the cornerstone of local democratic governance

development assistance to achieve long-lasting impact.<sup>22</sup> Often, this is done by piggy-backing on already existing and on-going initiatives and processes that include a democratic governance focus.

### **Institutional Factors**

The catalyst for broadening UNDP's mandate to include crisis prevention and recovery in its development assistance framework was a comprehensive strategic planning process at the end of 1990s. A policy paper on UNDP's conflict prevention work served as a vital catalyst for the establishment of the Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery in 2001. BCPR is located at the headquarters level and supports country offices based on their analytical and programmatic needs.

The challenges for this new "practice area" are multiple. Establishing credibility and demonstrating a track record and expertise in conflict prevention work was one of the initial challenges for UNDP, and for BCPR in particular. In order to overcome the initial challenges, UNDP/BCPR engaged in a concerted effort of sensitization and awareness-raising both across departments at the headquarters and vis-à-vis country offices. This awareness-raising was done with support from field staff that had already been engaged in conflict prevention work, even if it was not designated as such. There was a global UNDP e-discussion on conflict prevention efforts, and numerous training sessions whose objective was both awareness-raising and capacity-building. Country staff saw great value in peer-to-peer and comparative learning, and were more favorable to implementing new approaches when given concrete examples of how it has worked or been adapted by their colleagues elsewhere. There was also a need for an important paradigm shift in relation to necessary prerequisites and qualifications for engaging in conflict prevention work. To this end, UNDP helped to demystify this area of work by advocating for a broad and non-specialized approach to conflict prevention work that can and should be done by a wide range of country office staff.

UNDP has been registering a steady increase of demands for conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding-oriented methodologies from its country offices and national stakeholders. In particular, the notion that prevention needs to be integrated into all post-conflict work is gaining some ground, starting with the integration of conflict analysis into the development of transitional recovery plans through joint post-conflict needs assessment. In its advocacy for participatory and complementary approaches, UNDP recognizes that joint commissions and dialogue work help create the building blocks for sustainable democratic governance and development. There is a widening of the context for this type of work because of the gradual realization that development and governance work can't be done in a separate and compartmentalized manner. What helps solidify this increasing support for complementary approaches is the availability of concrete examples of how people are working on these issues around the world. UNDP can now recommend specific approaches that have been tried. Documentation of the accumulated and current best practices is a major part of UNDP's knowledge management. Successful knowledge management is a strategy for increasing receptiveness of these approaches in the country offices.

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<sup>22</sup> In Mauritania, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were used as entry points to approach coexistence issues in a sensitive manner aligned with local political realities.

Lessons learned at UNDP/BCPR include:

- It is of critical importance to integrate gender and youth dimensions into conflict analysis and conflict prevention strategies.
- There is a vital need to assess impact and to document and disseminate good practices. The focus on documenting practices ties directly into the need to create spaces for UNDP staff and national stakeholders to learn together and to sustain a dialogue on constructing national conflict prevention capacity-building programs appropriate to their own contexts.
- Participatory processes help build ownership of the conflict-sensitive development process and allows for new and innovative approaches to come forward.
- It is important to bring donors to the table and into strategy development conversations as more than funding agencies, but as partners.

## Conclusion

As evidenced by the viewpoints offered by participants in this study, the relationship between democracy and conflict is in itself problematic. When conflict is seen as arising from lack of appropriate and functional institutional mechanisms that mediate competing interests, democratic institutions and governance structures are used to create the enabling and mitigating environment for socio-political tensions to be resolved. Equally, the process of building democracy is marked by a tendency to induce tension and conflict, and has to be deliberated and realized with acute awareness and sensitivity of social and political triggers. Similarly to the way that UNDP views the process of “doing development work” as potentially conflict-inducing if not done in a conflict sensitive way, IDEA sees democracy building work as likely to contribute to heightened tensions if electoral and constitution building processes are not approached from a conflict-sensitive lens. Some of the shared lessons learned at these agencies indicate that electoral and decentralization processes, as well as influx of development aid, could all mask the underlying inequalities and may even heighten them and lead to a more uneven playing field. For example, political party assistance and electoral assistance may play into the hands of the ruling party that already has resources, controls the media and can gerrymander the election to its advantage. Similarly, financial and humanitarian assistance introduced into a community can inadvertently set one group of underprivileged persons against another. Consequently, democracy building and development assistance must be exceedingly conflict-sensitive to anticipate and overcome these adverse impacts.

In comparison to the UNDP and IDEA, the Organization of American States sees its role as promoting democratic governance among its member states, but does so with an emphasis on inclusive political dialogue as an essential conflict resolution tool both within and between its member states. Distinct in its organizational mandate as a funder of development programs, the World Bank has been at the forefront of developing conflict analysis frameworks and is now moving into an area of development assistance that specifically targets state capacity to mitigate internal conflicts. The Officer of the High Commissioner on National Minorities at OSCE is unique within this group in its focus on conflict prevention and national minorities, but its approaches are comparable in their focus on participatory processes in articulating constitutional safeguards and implementing social integration policies with a focus on diversity.

The conflict and coexistence sensitivity to democracy and governance in these six agencies has evolved out of a discerning and timely assessment of the changes in the nature of interstate conflicts around the world, and the link between failure of governance structures, economic instability, and conflict. This conflict sensitivity is expressed in a multiplicity of terms and approaches within each of the units that participated in the study, and in relation to their respective organizational structure and partners at the national levels. The process of developing, articulating, mainstreaming, and institutionalizing conflict sensitivity has been laborious and is not deemed complete by any of these units. It is an evolving process that requires painstaking analysis and advocacy on the part of institutional champions to place it on the organizational agenda, and acquire leadership and political will for anchoring and institutionalizing it. It also requires continuous mainstreaming efforts to link this approach to the vital social change processes that take place on the ground.

The cumulative conclusions learned within these agencies include the need to adopt sensitivity to conflict and coexistence issues, such as political representation and participation in multi-ethnic states, religious and language rights, and other safeguards for national minorities and marginalized groups. Moreover, such core coexistence values as *inclusion* and *participation* have to be embodied in the very process of building democracy and not merely in the content of its normative documents and legislative articles. When it comes to the institutional factors that strengthen conflict- and coexistence-sensitivity, the availability of financial resources is critical for advancing it and institutionalizing it throughout the dispersed units and country offices of international agencies. Conflict-sensitive democracy and governance policymaking has to occupy a central place within the larger organizational structure in order to have a greater and more sustainable impact. The importance of champions, within the international agencies as well as within the national governments, in advocating for this approach can't be over-stressed. Adopting a conflict-sensitive lens is a process that can't be coerced and requires collaboration among multiple departments, programs, and individuals, as well as a strong commitment to capacity-building and recognition of the advantages of adopting this approach.

There has been great learning that has been collectively accumulated in all of these agencies that could benefit from further research, gatherings, and one-on-one conversations. Such opportunities would help to further define the challenges, and to share the success factors that can contribute to the effective and sustainable mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity work into the policies and programs of international development, democratization and governance work.