

Executive Summary

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

This study on UNDP support to conflict-affected countries was conducted by UNDP's Evaluation Office in response to a request from UNDP's Executive Board. In a decision taken in 2000, the Board decided that crisis prevention and recovery should become a core practice area for UNDP. By 2005, activities in conflict-affected countries constituted nearly 40 percent of UNDP's global expenditure.

SCOPE AND APPROACH

This evaluation was designed to assess the extent to which UNDP has helped address the structural conditions conducive to conflict so that a recurrence of armed conflict could be prevented. Towards this end, it looked at the changing character of conflicts around the world and the international response to growing human security concerns. UNDP's policies and operations in conflict-affected countries were examined in the context of UN reform, especially integrated UN peace-keeping and peace-building missions.

Research and analysis covered the period 2000-2005 and involved in-depth case studies in six countries—Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, Haiti, Sierra Leone and Tajikistan—all of which were, or still are, under Security Council mandate. The case studies were supplemented by a tailored, results-oriented survey of 24 countries or areas that are recipients of assistance from UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR), along with stakeholder interviews, desk research and data collection.

The evaluation relied upon both primary and secondary source data, including past thematic and programme outcome evaluations. In order to gain an independent perspective, national consultants were

recruited in each of the case-study countries. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with UNDP staff along with government officials, civil society members, parliamentarians, international observers, UN mission and agency personnel, bilateral and other multilateral agency staff, national and international academics, members of the military and the police, private businesspeople, journalists and other media representatives.

The evaluation was undertaken by a core team of three senior international consultants, supported by national consultants in each country visited.

KEY FINDINGS

In the six case-study countries, overt conflict continues only in Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, in all cases, there are low levels of human security, measured in terms of population displacement, human rights violations, high crime rates, violence and discrimination against women, economic insecurity (especially joblessness), and vulnerability to natural and man-made disasters. In all six case studies, it is possible to identify common structural conditions that make conflict more likely to be violent. These include weak state institutions, low participation in decision-making, weak civil society institutions, inadequate institutions to ensure the rule of law, erosion of the monopoly of legitimate violence (that is, the emergence of private armed groups), an undiversified economy dependent on primary products and external markets, the availability of small arms, large numbers of unemployed young men, unequal gender relations, a decline in human development, and the spread of an illegal/illegitimate economy. These conditions are aggravated by the experience of conflict or by conflict in neighbouring states.

The role of the international community

The international community has contributed to a decline in the overall number of conflicts by helping to sustain peace agreements, often through the United Nations. It has stabilized conflicts mainly through a substantial international presence. But it has not adequately addressed the structural conditions conducive to conflict. Human security, therefore, remains precarious and there is a risk of recurrence of armed conflicts if the international presence is reduced or withdrawn. Weaknesses of the international role include: failure to provide sufficient protection to civilians; failure to establish legitimate political authority; insufficient engagement with civil society; failure to prioritize development from the outset; failure to mainstream gender; insufficient attention to regional dimensions of conflict; the undermining of national structures through the creation of parallel structures that leave a heavy 'footprint'; and an excessive preoccupation with security.

The role of UNDP

UNDP is an essential component of the international effort and is uniquely positioned within the United Nations to address the structural conditions conducive to conflict.

As a resident agency, UNDP undertakes a wide range of activities in conflict-affected countries that are specific to each situation. Broadly speaking, these include activities aimed at recovery and reintegration of war-affected populations, restoration of state authority and governance capacity-building, justice and security sector reform, poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods, support for civil society, and regional cooperation. Much more effort is expended on the first three goals than on the last three, however, reflecting the fact that UNDP is developing a niche expertise in these areas. UNDP has played a pioneering role in developing new strategic responses to conflict and has introduced

many innovative projects, especially community-based ones.

However, UNDP's effectiveness is constrained by the architecture of international agencies. The international response continues to be structured around a phased approach to conflict despite the integration of development agencies in the UN's post-conflict response. UNDP is also constrained by the lack of guaranteed core funding for development. Sixty-seven percent of UNDP's global expenditures in the 24 conflict-affected countries or areas included in the survey are non-core; in the case-study countries, the proportion of non-core to core was far higher. Partially as a result, in the immediate post-conflict period UNDP has tended to undertake gap-filling and administrative functions in order to be of maximum relevance and utility to the international community. In these new types of conflicts, there are often urgent needs that do not fit the mandates of specialized agencies. UNDP has clearly built a reputation for managing direct budgetary support in an efficient and accountable manner in the immediate post-conflict period and for meeting needs that might otherwise be left unfilled. Its ability to strengthen relevant institutions beyond this, however, depends to a large extent on the interest of donors and the availability of third-party funding.

Other weaknesses of UNDP include: lack of systematic analyses of conflict or best practices in conflict areas; insufficient attention to civil society and gender; lack of expertise on the part of staff sent on missions to conflict-affected countries and training for such staff; bureaucracy and delays; difficulty in obtaining information about what UNDP does and the procedures through which it operates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Formulate a strategic vision.** In order to strengthen its intellectual leadership, UNDP, in conjunction with other UN bodies, especially the Department of

Political Affairs (DPA), needs to elaborate a strategic vision based on the concept of human security. The concept of human security provides an umbrella under which the structural conditions leading to conflict can be addressed. This strategic vision should highlight the importance of:

- *Human rights (both political and civil and economic and social rights).* The physical and material security of individuals is the primary goal of any post-conflict intervention. This should receive priority over top-down political concerns. In some places, the view prevails that political stability—meaning deals with former warlords or commanders—takes precedence over political and civil rights, and economic stability—balanced budgets and low inflation—takes precedence over economic and social rights. In contemporary conflicts, this is misguided since stability, in the long run, depends on respect for human rights. The rule of law, political participation, and the livelihoods of individuals are critical to conflict prevention and recovery.
- *Legitimate political authority.* In order to create an environment in which human rights are respected, the establishment of legitimate political authority is necessary. The emphasis on legitimacy implies that this is not just a matter of establishing state institutions; it also requires the building of trust and respect for institutions. The engagement of civil society is just as important as the construction of formal institutions. And non-formal institutions such as families, companies or educational facilities also need to be sustained throughout conflicts.
- *Coherence.* Poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods must be key components of the overall vision

and need to be integrated into strategic planning at all stages of a conflict. Debate and discussion with all partners—including other agencies, government and civil society—on how to achieve a coherent approach are critical.

- *A bottom-up approach.* The people who have lived through conflict are usually the best guides to the specific mix of policy responses that are required. At all stages of peace-building, it is important to listen to and involve a range of groups in civil society, including women and grass-roots organizations as well as politicians and former warlords/commanders.
- *Regional focus.* Conflicts tend to spread over borders. Yet programmes are country-based. Much more attention needs to be paid to regional frameworks.

2. Integrate development concerns within United Nations strategies for security.

Development is still seen as an add-on to conflict recovery programmes. Nevertheless, development is critical to addressing the structural conditions conducive to conflict. UNDP needs to take a bolder position in impressing upon the Security Council and other political bodies the paramount importance of development concerns. In order to improve the integration of development concerns in conflict situations:

- The Administrator of UNDP should brief the Security Council, as do the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the High Commissioner for Refugees.
- Development assistance should be included in funds earmarked for missions with a Security Council mandate.
- UNDP should be involved in the negotiation of peace agreements and should press for the involvement of civil society and women's groups.

- Development concerns should have a stronger voice in integrated offices.
- Development should be considered one of the priorities in the new Peace-building Commission.

3. Build substantive capacity in core areas of peace-building. Recent conflicts, including those studied for this report, have exposed the need for certain types of activities that deal with the conditions that lead to conflict and that are not addressed by other agencies. Rather than carrying out these activities in an ad hoc fashion, UNDP needs to develop a substantive capacity in core areas that builds on the innovation and the best practices of existing UNDP programmes and that can be replicated in different situations.

UNDP's mandate in these areas places it, potentially, at the very centre of a concerted peace-building programme. More specifically, within the framework of a strategic vision, UNDP needs to address the following:

- *Recovery and reintegration of war-affected populations*, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and mine action; long-term political reconciliation that extends the political agreements reached at the centre to local levels, including the equivalent of truth commissions and/or war crimes tribunals.
- *Governance and capacity-building*, including strengthening parliamentary institutions to broaden participation and inclusion in decision-making; decentralization, with a view to empowering local communities; strengthening the role of key civil society institutions—not just in the delivery of services, but also as sources of knowledge, as watchdogs and as independent advocacy groups; public sector

reform; accountability and anti-corruption programmes.

- *Justice and security sector reform*, including independence of the judiciary; access to justice; key institutions for guaranteeing human rights; and the restructuring of the civilian police and the military.
- *Poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods*, especially community-based development that emphasizes local empowerment and the creation of employment and sustainable livelihoods through people-centred, area-based programmes and small-scale credit schemes; and the development of policies that foster the growth of small enterprises and sustainable livelihoods.

4. Improve the effectiveness of implementation. One of UNDP's perceived strengths is that some of its procedures are currently more flexible than those of other actors in the UN system. As a result, it is often better able to innovate in response to crises. This edge should be maintained. But to further increase operational flexibility, intellectual responsiveness and speed of delivery, UNDP should:

- *Develop analytical capacity to understand specific conflicts and monitor human security.* UNDP needs to build capacity among think tanks and academic institutions in conflict-affected countries so as to have a long-term analysis of the conflict situation and relevant data on human security.
- *Enhance human resources in conflict-affected countries.* This should include the development of a clear and effective set of incentives to attract experienced staff to serve in conflict-affected countries; training programmes in all facets of human security designed to facilitate adaptation to new activities for

national and international staff in countries affected by conflict or in fragile states; workshops, seminars and other forms of debate about human security policies and specific contexts, both in New York and in-country.

- *Strengthen internal UNDP decision-making mechanisms.* Conflict situations tend to require intensive oversight and management. Such support could be provided through the re-establishment of the committee for the management of UNDP operations in all conflict-affected countries. This committee, which could be chaired by the UNDP Administrator, Associate Administrator or Director for the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, would be responsible for reviewing policies and approaches, capacity requirements, the allocation of resources, partnerships and political relations, resource mobilization and the effectiveness of programmes.
- *Undertake a systematic review of its financial and administrative procedures.*
- *Emphasize full transparency,* particularly by ensuring the regular updating of its national websites and by posting more systematically user-friendly information on projects, budgets, procurement and recruitment.
- *Improve its outreach beyond capitals,* including through the establishment

of field offices with the necessary delegation of authority.

5. **Enhance coordination and partnerships.**

Coordination mechanisms should be streamlined and reduced in overall number. Moreover, they should provide substantive, clear-cut, general strategic frameworks for addressing the structural causes of conflict rather than the management of funds. Subsidiary teams could be established in order to address contributing themes, such as macroeconomic policy and revenue and budget management, the rule of law and access to justice, public administration and civil service reform, gender and the role of women, and the construction of essential infrastructure, among others.

UNDP also needs to further develop certain key strategic partnerships. It has already begun to develop its partnership with DPA and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, as witnessed in the establishment of the Executive Committee on Peace and Security and the integrated offices. UNDP also needs to strengthen its partnership with the World Bank with a view to mobilizing resources to generate jobs and sustainable livelihoods, as well as the revenue base of national institutions. It needs to help build government capacity while ensuring that external assistance reaches beneficiaries. And it needs to engage with civil society so as to help shape legitimate institutions.