



A big step forward – a long path ahead Saferworld response to the World Development Report 2011 May 2011

Introduction

Saferworld strongly welcomes the first World Development Report to focus on issues of conflict and security. The Report sends a powerful message that the World Bank recognises that violent conflict underpins many of the challenges facing development, and that action to prevent it must inform strategies for economic development and pursuing the MDGs.

There are many positives to take from the World Development Report. Most importantly, the Report presents compelling evidence and arguments for focusing on security and justice as prerequisites for development, as well as ends in themselves. The Report also usefully distinguishes between the security of individuals or citizens, and state security. Of particular value is the Report's striking demonstration of the clear links between authoritarianism, political terror and the incidence of conflict. Thus the World Bank has endorsed those who have long argued that there can be no equitable development without a sustained end to violent conflict and insecurity.

The Report is notable too for its pragmatic approach. It stresses the need for best-fit solutions that take context as the starting point. It acknowledges that, in order to succeed over the long-term, there should be no crude dichotomy of top-down versus bottom-up approaches. And it is persuasive in explaining the importance of coherence, coordination and consistency in multi-sector approaches.

However, there are a number of areas in which Saferworld feels that the arguments set out in the WDR need to be elaborated with care, and pursued with caution and vigilance. The structure of the briefing is organised to respond to these:

- Section 1 stresses the importance of response strategies being context-specific and thus addressing the underlying causes of conflict.
- Section 2 expands on this point by highlighting the importance of addressing political drivers of violent conflict as a precursor to effective transformation of security, justice and economic institutions.
- Section 3 examines the extent to which the World Development Report advocates for individuals and their communities to be active agents in shaping the solutions for peace. This section suggests that the emphasis on 'institutional transformation' can be understood in at least two ways – as an agenda for transforming state-society relations, or as a prescription for technocratic support to reinforce the state.
- Section 4 explores options for funding transitions and cautions against indiscriminate support for budget support and policy alignment in contexts of fragility and conflict;
- Section 5 sets out the priorities for a new peacebuilding agenda that balances investments inside and outside of the state and examines who the most appropriate actors for delivering that agenda are;
- Section 6 concludes with an affirmation of the Report's recommendation for better results indicators that reflect the priorities and challenges of conflict-affected and fragile contexts.

Throughout each of these sections, it is also worth noting that the term ‘citizen’, used by the World Development Report to focus on the concerns and priorities of local people and communities, can be exclusionary. It raises the question of how security will be improved for those deemed as ‘non-citizens’ – who are often the most vulnerable people in conflict-affected societies.

Whilst raising these concerns, this briefing proposes ways of building upon the positive elements of the WDR, examines the implications for aid policies and institutions, and outlines a new agenda that combines community empowerment with greater security and justice.

1. Context-specific response strategies: Factors for addressing the causes of conflict

The World Development Report rightly stresses the importance of adapting response strategies to countries’ local contexts. Saferworld is, however, concerned that the Report’s prioritisation of ‘security, justice and jobs’ may preclude more comprehensive assessments that consider also the impact of other environmental, cultural and political conflict drivers.

The World Development Report affirms the fact that ‘each country’s political context differs, and there are no one-size-fits-all solutions’. It further emphasises the need to:

- ‘Identify priorities from a citizen and stakeholder perspective’,
- ‘Consider explicitly the history of past efforts’
- ‘Identify the specific characteristics of transition opportunities’
- ‘Adapt assessments regularly and frequently’ and maintain concomitant flexibility in response strategies.

Assessments of international initiatives to prevent conflict have shown the difficulty of moving from conflict analysis to preventative strategy. Even where the factors that cause conflict are apparent, the international response has often been to apply ‘band-aid’ solutions to prevent further violence rather than supporting efforts to address more fundamental and politically sensitive causes of conflict. **It is important that response strategies acknowledge and seek to address the underlying drivers of conflict and not merely on their symptoms – notably violence.**

The Report presents a typology of ‘major factors in the academic literature on the causes and correlates of conflict’. This typology highlights many of the key issues that must be addressed in order to bring about a sustainable end to violent conflict. Stresses that can lead to conflict are organised under the categories of ‘security’, ‘justice’ and ‘economic’. Depending on how these categories are defined, the organisation of stresses in this way risks downgrading the importance of other important environmental, cultural and political factors. **Given the tendency of international actors to focus on more technical aspects of development, an under-emphasis of the political drivers risks entrenching conflict and replicating previous shortcomings of peacebuilding efforts.**

The World Development Report does stress the importance of international community ‘acting regionally and globally to reduce external stresses on fragile states’. Saferworld agrees on the importance of international efforts to prevent conflict. This includes cross-border and international cooperation to address what the Report refers to as ‘illicit stress factors’ such as illegal trafficking and financial flows. Saferworld would highlight the need to address the devastating impact of legal but irresponsible arms transfers to contexts where they fuel conflict, as evidenced currently by the case of Libya.

2. Politics at the centre of response strategies

The World Development Report argues that ‘focusing on citizen security, justice, and jobs means that most other reforms will need to be sequenced and paced over time, including political reform’. Following this advice is problematic: in our experience, any reform of security and justice is an immensely political endeavour. If political reform is postponed while security and justice sector capacities are strengthened, existing deficiencies within these systems, many of which reflect political dynamics and broader governance issues, will likely become

further entrenched. When this happens, options for substantive reform of security and justice systems are reduced, and the scope for improving citizen security is limited. The drawbacks in certain contexts of helping national governments to 'concentrate their efforts' before seriously questioning the political direction those efforts are taking (in terms of responsive and accountable governance) must not be overlooked.

Whether within or beyond the security and justice sectors, the Report should advocate a much clearer focus on efforts to build the capacity and political space for people to demand better of the state. Within many conflict-affected and fragile states, where the institutions within and outside the state are unable or unwilling to manage conflicts through non-violent means, broad-based political debate is often regarded as destabilising. Within these contexts, significant political reform is too often treated as a secondary output of institutional reform, rather than the essential quality that gives those institutions and organisations their legitimacy. Delivering early results may succeed in curbing the expectations of frustrated populations in the short-term. However, without the more fundamental signal of political reform, deeper institutional transformation and confidence building toward peace is unlikely to occur.

3. A recipe for empowerment - or more state control?

The ambivalence of focusing on 'institutions'

The World Development Report emphasises the importance of transforming institutions and asserts that: 'Both state and non-state institutions are important. Institutions include social norms and behaviours [...] as well as rules, laws and organisations'.

Saferworld applauds the Report's recognition that legitimate institutions that govern societies' behaviour are located not only within the formal confines of the state, but also in the variety of cultural, religious and governance structures that exist outside. These institutions have the potential to contribute both positively and negatively to peacebuilding efforts.

Saferworld is concerned, however, that the Report does not sufficiently elaborate the kinds of institutions that exist outside of the state and how international organisations need to be reformed in order to better understand and interact with them. Without this consideration, phrases such as 'institution-building, in support of national efforts' lend themselves to an alternative reading endorsing indiscriminate support for the formal institutions of the state. Thus, on the one hand, the Report appears to advocate a new agenda to transform the way societies engage with and shape the organisations that govern and provide services to them; while on the other it promotes a more conventional agenda of support to and through state institutions.

Further to the Report's discussion of institutional transformation, it rightly highlights the common error of 'focusing on the "form rather than function" of change (with an emphasis on elections, model procurement laws, and anti-corruption and human rights commissions)'. Soon after, however, the Report advocates 'faster, smarter, longer-term engagement through national and regional institutions'. This latter statement appears to be at odds with the former and risks advocating for fairly indiscriminate support for the form of the state, without sufficient consideration for its ability or willingness to function appropriately. In some contexts, this may amount to the reinforcement of predatory security and justice systems. This would be an error that neither people living in conflict-affected countries nor the aid community can afford.

Domestic and international organisations working to prevent violent conflict must invest more in understanding and engaging with the variety of legitimate institutions that exist outside of the state, which have the power to contribute both positively and negatively to peacebuilding efforts.

Individual and community empowerment in the World Development Report

The World Development Report usefully distinguishes between citizens' and state security, and highlights the importance of building citizens' confidence in institutions. It is, however, ambivalent on the more fundamental question of how and whether people should be enabled to actively influence the shape and speed of institutional transformation.

Improving security for individuals and communities requires that institutions and organisations become more accountable, as well as more effective. In many conflict affected and fragile states, however, this is not often in the interests of governments and elites. It is important, therefore, that international actors consider:

- How donors and other international actors can persuade elites to act when it is clearly not in their economic, political and sometimes security interests to do so?
- How the concept of 'local ownership', which in recent years has been taken to mean ownership by a government, can be strengthened to mean ownership by individuals and communities at risk of violence and insecurity? This is particularly important in situations where the individuals and organisations within the government are complicit actors in the conflict and implicated in the breakdown of security and justice in communities.

The Report rightly advocates for 'programs that support bottom-up state-society relations in insecure areas'. The language used in the Report, however, tends to characterise citizens as passive recipients of efforts by states, donors and aid agencies. Thus the Report recommends:

- Efforts to 'restore confidence' and 'trust' by elites, rather than a more substantive role for local people in bringing about change from below;
- 'Citizen polling data' and 'perception surveys', rather than community-driven planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- 'Providing a sustained level of citizen security, justice and jobs', rather than ensuring communities have the capacity and democratic space to ensure their priorities in these and other areas are achieved.

While the Report does partially recognise the value of bottom-up alongside top-down approaches, on balance there is too much focus on the state's role in providing for and convincing essentially passive communities to be more contented.

'A new way of doing business' in fragile contexts, where nationally-led positive transitions are not underway would involve doing much more to protect and empower civilian populations to articulate their needs for security, justice and to develop solutions for the challenges they face. To operationalise the agenda for peace through institutional transformation, those with relevant capacities need to help make citizens more active agents of change.

4. Financing transitions – from an economic to a political approach

The World Bank's Report develops a sophisticated economic analysis to attack the 'high volatility in assistance' to fragile states. When aid orphans get left behind by aid allocations that overly focus on Western strategic interests, when aid flows fluctuate according to the whims of donors rather than with the needs and opportunities in the local context, this indeed fails poor people and the governments of affected countries.

It should be recognised, however, that some aid volatility is due to changes in the context over which donors are not in control. Before recommending that donors commit to deliver more aid at predictable levels through country systems in fragile states, it is therefore important to recall the political and ethical dilemmas donors face in setting appropriate levels of support to fast-changing contexts.

Delivering consistent budget support to fragile states, regardless of their behaviour, may actively discourage positive transitions from occurring or actively exacerbate those conflicts. In the on-going tragedy of the Somali conflict, international backing for a government with low levels of legitimacy has fuelled violent rejection both of the imposed state and its international

backers.

The risks of providing more support to authoritarianism are acknowledged in the opening sections of the Report:

High levels of political terror in past periods increase the chances of current conflict.[...] [S]ignificant reductions in the number of political prisoners and extrajudicial killings make the renewal of civil war between two and three times less likely than in countries with higher levels of human rights abuses.

This recognition of the risks associated with support to authoritarian regimes does not appear to permeate the Report. It is surprising that the Report glosses over the risk of strengthening the hand of the kinds of government whose policies lead directly to violence, insecurity and conflict even when it later recommends that donors 'embrace faster engagement through national institutions'.

These concerns come into clearest focus when the Report argues for more 'On budget support and technical assistance for citizen security and justice' and 'state-community, state-NGO, state-private sector programs for service delivery and multi-sectoral violence prevention'. A state-centric approach *can* have strong benefits in those contexts where governments are leading positive transformations, for instance in Timor Leste or Liberia. Such approaches could, however, be disastrous if applied to contexts in which the state is predatory towards its citizens or otherwise complicit in human rights abuses.

Case study: Nepal

'In Nepal, many have viewed questions of public security from a state-building or foreign policy perspective. In the past, some donors provided technical support to the security forces, including arms and equipment, despite persistent human rights violations by the security forces. Post-conflict, those working from a state-building perspective have prioritised reintroducing the Nepal Police into former conflict areas to restore public order, and negotiating the integration of former Maoist fighters into a reformed Nepal Army. Peacebuilders have not been wholly unsupportive to these efforts, but have also drawn attention to the need to think through the manner in which all this is done, calling for better public consultation and gestures of reconciliation around the reintroduction of the police and looking for issues of both impunity and inclusion to be dealt with in relation to SSR.[...]

Babaud S, Giarmata V, Parker R, Rynn S, 'Responding to people's security needs: Improving the impact of EU programming', April 2009, p.13

The doctrine under which donors are being urged to simply accept high risks for high returns and provide dependable on-budget support to fragile states needs to be advocated with much greater caution in light of this concern. Donors do need to speed up and become more flexible. Long-term commitment to alignment and use of country systems in fragile states is, however, not necessarily a mantra for good donor practice. As the appropriateness of supporting a foreign government changes according to its behaviour towards its people and its neighbours, some degree of volatility will surely be unavoidable. Increased public financial management and oversight mechanisms are not by themselves sufficient to justify continuing on-budget support, as the Report sometimes seems to suggest. The government's political behaviour must also be considered.

Donors should, therefore, be more consistent in overall levels of support to fragile contexts, but more flexible in changing levels of on- and off-budget support, in order to:

- **Incentivise and support political will to lead positive transitions whenever they are viable;**
- **Ensure community relief and service provision continue through aid agencies when the state is unable or unwilling to lead positive transitions itself – provided these agencies aim to make links between communities and state structures where these are possible;**

- **In all conflict-affected contexts, support a broad range of societal actors, particularly those outside the state, who are capable of contributing to the establishment of better governed societies.**

For the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), who are heavily biased towards working with and through recipient governments, this may mean at times doing less of what they do best – reducing support to and through the state and large multilateral funding mechanisms – rather than seeking to address volatility of aid flows to fragile contexts.

Beyond ensuring more thoughtful and cautious support for conflict-affected states, Saferworld wholeheartedly agrees with the Report that the extension of nationally and regionally owned initiatives to praise and reinforce good governance offer a promising way to influence leaders and officials to practice more transparent, responsive and accountable governance. The Lomé Declaration and Ibrahim Prize for African leadership indeed represent important progress.

As the Report rightly notes, ‘lack of concerted support for the norms of responsible leadership is a concern’. One of the hardest remaining questions after reading the World Development Report is how international actors can persuade elites to lead positive transitions when this may diminish their power and/or resources. As well as, at times, being more ready to challenge predatory governments, international efforts should investigate and utilise other avenues for positively incentivising power holders to pursue more progressive ways of doing business.

As the international community wakes up to the hunger for change across North Africa and the Middle East, it would indeed be timely for the aid community to increase its support for practical initiatives encouraging better governance and leadership: this is critically important to overcoming cycles of violence and underdevelopment.

The idea of supporting regional mechanisms to develop pooled capacities and strengthen regional reinforcement of good governance is likewise positive. But at the same time, additional aid is not likely to be able to manufacture the political will to make regional institutions legitimate and fit-for-purpose. It can surely only be helpful in fertilizing what is developing organically. Regional institutions can be effective or ineffective, engaged or remote, willing to uphold human rights or blind towards their violation – thus they must not be assumed to offer a panacea.

Regional initiatives should be supported by donors when and if their analysis shows that there is regional political will for more effective collective action to ensure human security and development.

5. Delivering the new peacebuilding agenda

The World Development Report eloquently articulates the need to move away from hopeful, but ineffective ways of doing business and towards approaches that really work. These approaches do not necessarily require more money, but do require a dual shift in emphasis:

- Increasing efforts to engage a broad range of societal actors in actively shaping the form and function of a more peaceful, responsive and accountable state in conflict affected contexts;
- Less routinised funding and reinforcement of state institutions when governments have not made tangible commitments to reform.

Engaging individuals and communities in shaping a more peaceful future

In order to undertake sustainable and legitimate changes to institutions, individuals and communities affected by violent conflict and insecurity should be engaged as active agents, and not just passive recipients. They should play active roles in shaping both the form and the functions of institutions such that they are reflect and respond to their concerns and priorities.

Saferworld has worked 'on the ground' in a number of countries over recent years to support efforts to improve security and justice as part of transitions from fragility and conflict to peace. We have piloted community security initiatives in over ten countries across Europe, Africa and Asia. Our experience suggests that the elements of successful security and justice activities involve individuals and communities and include:

- **Excellent understanding of the context** Priorities vary widely from context to context. Actors' agendas and relationships need to be particularly well understood. There is a strong probability of generic interventions doing more harm than good.
- **Independence when needed from existing power structures** The participation of national and local governments in security and justice building activities in conflict-affected contexts is often detrimental to meeting the needs of individuals and communities.
- **Funding should be appropriate** Financial resources can distort fragile power relations and encourage corrupt practices.
- **Community development expertise** A background in work with security and justice institutions is less important than knowledge of how to engage with and sustainably empower communities to resolve their problems.
- **Flexibility to provide multi-sectoral responses** Individuals and communities tend to conflate hard security and justice needs with broader human security concerns (e.g. public health, economic, physical, energy and food security) with which they tend to be strongly linked. Resolution of their problems requires action at different levels and across different sectors.
- **Capacity to deliver security and justice programmes on a larger scale** Even when the state is unable, or partially/fully unwilling to play a constructive role, community security can be dramatically improved in specifically targeted locations. Yet, without integrating these efforts across national and subnational security and justice governance efforts, successes are very difficult to replicate on a wide scale.
- **Significant periods of time** Building the required levels of trust and allowing for change to take root takes time and cannot be rushed.

These ingredients seem strongly at odds with the current direction-of-travel in aid policy – 'doing more with less', increasing the financial scale of programmes, focussing on deliverables, short term impacts and results. This apparently significant difference in approaches must be squared to meet both the needs of communities and those of donor organisations.

The role of different actors in supporting security and justice

The Report correctly notes that 'IFIs are not equipped to lead specialized international support' to security, justice and jobs at the scale that is required. This begs the question: 'How can the "implementation gap" be filled?' Without considerable capacity to deliver the politically complex support required to enable change, even the best laid plans will fail. However, if a genuinely 'new way of doing business' is envisaged, it may be unwise to argue solely that, 'a clear lead within the UN system would help this effort'.

In a context of robust debate surrounding the risks of securitising aid, many established development and humanitarian agencies have not yet engaged with the importance of security and justice as enablers of development and benefits in their own right. In many contexts, however, these organisations, more than others, have the experience and ability to manage the large scale, complex and politically contentious programmes that are required to help translate the World Development Report findings into action.

The Report is articulate in explaining the dilemmas surrounding the implementation gap. The Report rightly bemoans the short duration of projects in fragile contexts, where meaningful change takes time.

‘Aid is fragmented into small projects, making it difficult for governments to concentrate efforts on a few key results.[...] Aid donors often operate in fragile countries through systems parallel to national institutions—with separate project units for development aid and with humanitarian programs implemented through international NGOs.’

The Report makes the case for higher project budgets, more use of country systems and pooled funding mechanisms in effectively delivering security and justice at scale. In the same breath, it pushes for fewer small projects by NGOs and civil society independent of links with or co-ordination by national government. When considering these arguments, a few key points should be considered:

- The societal actors whose democratic engagement is most needed to take forward a meaningful agenda for ‘institutional transformation’ thrive better on smaller grants that are easier to access. By contrast, in Sudan for example, large pooled funds have tended to be hard for local organisations to access.
- Community empowerment can be taken forward better by agencies that routinely place themselves close to the ground rather than in plush offices in capital cities.
- NGOs, much more often than multilateral agencies, routinely exhibit what the Report describes as ‘existing good practice [...] in combining humanitarian delivery with capacity-building, using local personnel and community structures’.
- Larger multi-mandate NGOs may also have:
 - the flexibility to offer a comprehensive and context-specific approach at both the policy and programming levels to the range of factors that communities identify when asked to specify their security and justice needs; and
 - the operational capacity to scale up the piloting work done by peace-building organisations, which are typically not so large in size, and to advocate at different levels.
- Multilateral agencies tend to be more remote from communities, and less willing to raise sensitive political concerns towards partner governments who are actively exacerbating conflict, than is often admitted – in part because they are bound by the politics of mandates negotiated between governments who are not always fully committed to upholding protection norms.
- When working on sensitive issues that a national government might prefer to ignore (such as a joint initiative to end abuses by security forces and restore confidence among vulnerable conflict-affected peoples) independent projects to bear witness to the human rights situation, and parallel project implementation units that work with but are not fully co-opted by, abusive governments, are essential to prevent sensitive issues being brushed under the carpet.

Taking into account these considerations as a whole, Saferworld’s conclusion is that:

- **The larger non-governmental aid agencies with expertise in community relief, development and empowerment are well-placed to take forward a more bottom-up agenda for community security and justice – if they can be convinced to rise to this challenge.**
- **They and local societal actors need more consistent support to work for change over longer timeframes.**

6. Measuring results

The World Development Report is right to advocate for ‘supplementing the MDGs’ which ‘have drawbacks in their direct relevance to progress in violence prevention and recovery’. This will

be important to measure progress in preventing conflict and insecurity. The Report argues that:

‘Results indicators should be more closely geared to priorities in fragile and violence-affected situations[...] The use of these indicators by international agencies—across the diplomatic, security, and aid divides—would increase the incentives for more integrated responses’

Advocacy for supplements to the MDGs or result indicators that focus on the priorities and challenges of operating in fragile and conflict-affected contexts are timely and important as efforts to renew international commitments to development after 2015 get underway. It is worth noting that valuable lessons can be learnt from ongoing processes examining the conflict-development interface, such as the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding. It is crucial that such processes attract sufficient political backing from developing as well as developed states. Furthermore, it is important that these processes reflect evidence of what works, rather than the vested interests of those developing them.