



Promoting sustainable security in a complex world: Saferworld submission to HMG *Building Stability Overseas Strategy* (BSOS)

March 2011

Introduction

Saferworld welcomes the development of BSOS along with HMG's ongoing commitment to tackling conflict and insecurity 'at source'. Particularly welcome is the prioritisation of *upstream* conflict prevention.

As we noted in our submission to the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR)¹, whilst 'conflict prevention' may sometimes include short-term responses to crisis it should also be understood as the longer-term process of supporting societal change: helping countries to become more cohesive, resilient and able to manage their internal conflicts without resorting to violence. This is what Saferworld understands by 'upstream' conflict prevention.

This submission was prepared as events across the Middle East and North Africa continued to unfold. Authoritarian states that have done little to meet the needs or expectations of many within their populations are experiencing widespread popular unrest despite having been seen as the 'best bets' for stability by many in the West. Away from the immediate media spotlight, the practices of authoritarian regimes from Ethiopia to Sri Lanka and the chronic insecurity experienced in countries such as DRC and Somalia should give us pause to consider what promoting 'stability' really means if it is to be effective, legitimate and therefore more sustainable.

At the same time, it is now a truism to talk of the 'changing' international order that the UK finds itself operating in. Successfully preventing violent conflict will require even more co-ordination and co-operation with international partners. But, in an increasingly multi-polar world, the actors with potential to influence prospects for peace and security are many and varied.

Against this global context, Saferworld welcomes the opportunity BSOS provides to explore with HMG how the UK can best promote genuinely sustainable peace and security.

This submission is organised into four parts:

1. Saferworld's vision of 'upstream' conflict prevention
2. Working internationally to promote upstream prevention
3. Security and justice programming: a UK comparative advantage
4. Measuring success, learning from failure

¹ Safer world, safer Britain (<http://www.saferworld.org.uk/smartweb/resources/view-resource/466>)

1. Saferworld's vision of 'upstream' conflict prevention

"Recent events in the Middle East have demonstrated why it is critical that the UK increases its focus on helping countries to build open and responsive political systems, tackle the root causes of fragility and empower citizens to hold their governments to account. It is the best investment we can make to avoid violence."

- Andrew Mitchell, Secretary of State, DFID

Violent conflict and insecurity are not 'visitations' upon societies but a product of dynamics that can, with time and effort, be understood and influenced. For instance, 'radicalisation' is a complex phenomenon. Undoubtedly it involves the cynical manipulation of narratives designed to nurture grievance and mobilise people to violence. But it also has roots in people's real experiences of insecurity, social and economic exclusion and political injustice.

'Upstream' conflict prevention is, in part, about developing a thorough understanding of what generates conflict within or between societies and why that conflict turns violent rather than being managed peacefully. Responses need to address both the underlying drivers of conflict and the factors that lead it to become violent.

Preventing violent conflict upstream will not come from policies designed to 'keep the lid on the pressure cooker'. Rather, it is crucial to support countries to develop more responsive and accountable governments along with more inclusive societies – and with a stronger relationship between both state and society.

Understanding the perceptions of those affected by and participating in conflict is vital for developing appropriate responses. Involving affected communities in the design and delivery of those responses is equally important if they are to have the buy-in and ownership needed to be effective.

And successfully addressing the causes and drivers of violent conflict will require a principled and strategic approach to international co-operation across the board. Supporting authoritarian regimes, either overtly or tacitly, is not a sustainable approach if those regimes do not just fail to address grievances amongst their populations but actually help to generate them.

Instead, the key to lasting stability lies in consistently pursuing coherent policies designed to promote 'positive peace' (understood as the absence of overt violence *and* meeting of people's social, economic and political needs).

This presents a strategic imperative for the UK's approach to addressing overseas conflict and fragility. Through its commercial, diplomatic, defence and development engagement, the UK can seek to support democratic principles, good governance, social justice and human rights. The UK should be consistent, principled and strategic in offering real dividends to governments who support these ambitions and withholding them from those who do not. A balance should also be struck between support to build state capacity and support to build the capacity of citizens to hold their governments to account.

Saferworld believes the FCO, MOD and DFID all have central roles in delivering such a vision of upstream conflict prevention. This means finding ways to work effectively in partnership with others in a complex and fast moving international system. And it will mean taking an approach that is not limited by timeframes rooted in target setting or budgetary cycles but in accepting the reality that societal change is a generational endeavour.

Departmental contributions to upstream conflict prevention

Whilst context should always dictate approach, and it is not suggested that HMG adopt a 'template' for addressing conflict, it may be helpful to differentiate upstream conflict prevention from more reactive approaches by giving some indicative areas where different departments could play a role. The following is a far from an exhaustive description.

MOD

The UK provides training for the armed forces of other countries and should ensure that it uses these to embed respect for such issues as human rights, democratic oversight, gender equality and the accountability of security forces. These trainings could also be used to identify champions for change and develop an ongoing relationship with these individuals.

The UK's defence community also has a key role, amongst other departments, in Security Sector Reform; Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration; and Defence Transformation programmes – *but not only as part of post-conflict stabilisation operations*. Long-term programmes to promote the democratic reform of security forces are an important tool for upstream conflict prevention. Not only does the defence community have expertise to add to these efforts but, in many contexts, HMG defence officials may enjoy greater traction in working to support reforms than their civilian counterparts.

FCO

The responses needed to address the underlying causes of conflict and fragility are often likely to be politically sensitive. By working to a shared strategy, and placing conflict prevention objectives firmly on the list of diplomats' priorities, HMG could ensure that its diplomatic service is both incentivised and empowered to provide high-level political support to conflict prevention efforts in-country, regionally and internationally.

The FCO leads the UK's engagement with many of the international processes underway to address drivers of violent conflict (see, for instance, next section). By recognising the importance of these initiatives to upstream conflict prevention within BSOS, additional political impetus can be given to the UK's efforts to secure successful outcomes from them.

DFID

DFID has a significant role to play through the way that its programmes in 'conflict-affected and fragile' countries address underlying causes of conflict and fragility. Saferworld believes that DFID's 'Peacebuilding and Statebuilding' approach provides a credible model for the role of poverty-focused international development in helping to build stability overseas.

Internationally, DFID can also use the reputation that it has built itself as a credible and 'pro-poor' actor with particular expertise in developing innovative ways of meeting the needs of conflict-affected populations to work with other donors and international institutions to advocate for the development and uptake of more appropriate ways to 'do development' in countries affected by conflict and insecurity.

BIS

The UK is an important trading nation and Saferworld believes the UK's trading positions with other countries provide the possibility of a strong material incentive for promoting the uptake of democratic principles, human rights and social justice and so should be seen as a key component in upstream conflict prevention efforts: as should the full and proper implementation of controls on the UK's defence and security exports.

Stabilisation Unit

'Stabilisation' efforts should be seen as one step in a longer process and attention given to how they can best lay the ground for, and hand over to, longer-term work. As such, although the Stabilisation Unit may specialise in immediate or 'hot' stabilisation, it will be important to ensure this kind of work is integrated into HMG's broader strategic approach to any given country.

2. Working internationally to promote upstream prevention

The UK cannot often 'go it alone' and supporting societies to manage their conflicts without violence will, of course, require working in a co-ordinated and coherent way with international partners. However, identifying who our primary international partners should be – and how we can best work with them – is far from simple.

It is well-recognised that the nature of the international community is changing and with it the opportunities and challenges for collective action to promote peace and stability. In particular, we are moving to an increasingly multi-polar world order with the continued rise of 'new' actors such as the so-called 'BRICS' and other emerging regional powers.

Largely by virtue of their rapid economic growth, many of these countries now play a far more significant role on the global stage than at any time in the previous century. Their injection of resources into developing countries gives them considerable political leverage and this has altered the context for international efforts to build peace and stability. More and more, these actors are likely to be in a position where they can reinforce or undermine the UK's own conflict prevention efforts.

If BSOS is to provide an effective strategy for the UK's efforts to prevent conflict, it will have to have to be based on a thorough analysis of how this changing world order is shaping prospects for peace and security. It will also need to examine the UK's strengths and weaknesses within this global context and 'with who, about what and how' the UK can best use its influence to promote peace. BSOS needs to be an advocacy and partnership strategy as much as a guide to programming.

This will require analysis of the impact of major international actors' aid, commercial, military and diplomatic engagements in conflict-affected and fragile states. This would help HMG understand the opportunities and limitations of its own efforts to promote peace and stability. Such analysis could also provide a platform for stronger partnerships with a range of international actors, perhaps serving as a basis for dialogue between the UK and other states to help define and develop ways of working towards shared peace and security objectives.

Building coalitions to promote effective multilateral institutions

Multilateral institutions have the potential to provide increased legitimacy, co-ordination and political consensus to conflict prevention efforts but there is work to be done before some are able to fulfil this potential. Arguably, some existing commitments within which multilaterals operate (for instance, those relating to aid alignment and local ownership in the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action) may unintentionally exacerbate conflict or undermine efforts to promote peace and security if applied without sufficient care.

Saferworld therefore welcomes DFID's recent multilateral aid review (and particularly its conclusion that many multilateral organisations need to improve their performance in fragile states). However, we believe HMG can further build on this review in two ways:

- evaluating the impact multilateral institutions have – consciously or not – on prospects for promoting peace and sustainable security
- expanding the scope of the UK's analysis of multilateral institutions beyond those with which the UK has an aid relationship. It will also be important to understand the role of a wider set of institutions such as, inter alia, the UN Security Council, African Union, and OSCE.

Where such assessments find failings in key multilateral organisations, however, Saferworld firmly believes the answer is not a retreat to unilateralism but to use this analysis to help build a coalition that can push for needed reforms.

China

China is already and increasingly a stakeholder in international peace and security, particularly in Asia and, to a growing degree, in Africa².

Saferworld's experience suggests that a co-operative and practically-focused approach to engaging with Chinese policymakers, and those that influence them, can yield concrete results. China is still exploring its new role on the world stage, forming policy and building norms about the way it approaches overseas conflict. As it does so, it is important that the UK includes China in its attempts to stimulate greater international action on upstream conflict prevention.

Although China has traditionally favoured bilateral support to countries in which it has a strategic interest (for instance, through its arms exports), Saferworld believes there is a growing perception in China of the legitimacy of international organisations, especially the UN.

Saferworld therefore recommends that the BSOS encourages these trends towards multilateral, co-operative approaches to peace and security.

The UK should investigate further areas where the UK and China can undertake joint co-operative action. Initially these should be practical, small-scale 'on the ground' projects that can be used as entry points to broader, strategic co-operation and norm-building in the longer-term. For instance, DFID already supports joint peacekeeping training and BSOS could outline further co-operative possibilities (perhaps, support to management of small arms stockpiles in conflict-affected countries, for instance).

And this kind of focused, practical work could be usefully complemented by supporting a 'track two' engagement with Chinese policymakers and experts. For instance, last year Saferworld convened a group of around 50 Chinese, African and international conflict and security experts in Beijing to discuss how China could better contribute to supporting peace in Africa.

European Union

"The events in Tunisia and Egypt remind all of us that stability can lead to immobility. Betting on stability alone therefore can not be the ultimate answer. There is a difference between stability and sustainability. The latter has its foundations in economic results and social justice, in freedom and democracy. A political system which does not allow for peaceful change will remain weak at heart. I think this realisation deserves more attention in our foreign policies, in our expectations, and not only in the Middle East."

- Herman Van Rompuy, President, European Council

The development of the European External Action Service (EEAS) provides an opportunity for the UK to push for more effective EU approaches to conflict prevention. The UK's welcome support to the ongoing Gothenberg Review should certainly be captured within the commitments BSOS makes around promoting successful international partnerships.

This should include building a coalition of EU members that can encourage the EU to take a more systematic analysis of conflict dynamics within EU planning processes and address these through its Country Strategy Papers whilst using its political, trade and security policies to leverage the promotion of human rights and good governance³.

Similarly, BSOS should commit the UK to focusing resources into influencing the development of the EEAS's approach to conflict prevention. Although Saferworld recognises the risk of

² See, for instance, *China's growing role in African peace and security*, Saferworld, 2011 (<http://www.saferworld.org.uk/smartweb/resources/view-resource/500>)

³ See also *What hope for development without peace? Saferworld submission to EU green paper on budget support*, Saferworld, 2011 (<http://www.saferworld.org.uk/smartweb/resources/view-resource/504>); and *No peace, no security, no justice – no long-term impact: Saferworld submission to EU green paper on development impact*, Saferworld, 2011 (<http://www.saferworld.org.uk/smartweb/resources/view-resource/503>)

focusing on technocratic institutional developments in Brussels rather than on the countries experiencing conflict and fragility themselves, the institutional make up of the EEAS will be an important factor in determining how effectively the EU is able to deliver successful upstream conflict prevention and so, at least in the short- to medium-term, certainly warrants significant attention⁴.

UN

The UN is uniquely placed to act as a repository of international legitimacy and Saferworld welcomed the SDSR's recognition of the UN's 'primary responsibility for international peace and security'. However, the UN suffers a number of well known challenges to its efficacy in this area and so we also support the SDSR's commitments to:

- push for an effective Security Council that is more representative of the world as it is now
- ensure conflict prevention plays a central role in UN efforts to foster global peace and security, alongside more effective peacekeeping and peacebuilding
- promote reforms to ensure a UN which better integrates political, security, development, humanitarian and human rights efforts
- promote better coordination with NATO and the EU

We also welcome the commitment in DFID's Multilateral Aid Review to supporting improvements in UNDP's work in conflict-affected countries, and the recognition of the work of the Peacebuilding Fund.

BSOS should recognise the important contribution the UN can make in conflict-affected and fragile states and detail HMG's plans for promoting the best use of UN capacity and resources in upstream conflict prevention.

US

Whilst we now live in a 'multi-polar world', the influence of the US both on the policies and practices adopted by the international community and directly in conflict-affected and fragile contexts is clear. The conclusion of the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) at the end of 2010 – with its call for increased focus on conflict prevention and the use of 'civilian power' – makes it even more important to engage with the US on approaches to building stability in the coming period.

The prioritisation within the QDDR to 'Preventing and responding to... conflict' in itself is a strong indication of the importance of this agenda within broader foreign and development policy within the US at the moment. Beyond that, there are a number of encouraging indications of how the US sees these issues: not least the references within the QDDR to "focus[ing] on a country's underlying grievances and seek[ing] to address the root causes of conflict" and the strong focus on Security Sector Assistance which recognises the importance of "linking S&J initiatives to governance and development approaches" and "emphasising civilian policing".

Clearly there are a number of obstacles that may hamper the implementation of the commitments within the QDDR, not least of which being the changing political environment in Washington and inter-departmental tensions. However within the context of the specific SDSR commitment to working with the US to develop more effective methods of conflict prevention, referencing in the BSOS the need to encourage US counterparts supportive of an *upstream* conflict prevention approach would have clear benefits.

⁴ For more information, see *Conflict prevention and peacebuilding inside the EEAS*, EPLO, 2011 (www.eplo.org/assets/files/2.%20Activities/Working%20Groups/EEAS/EPLO_Statement_EEAS_Feb2011.pdf)

International processes

Successful upstream conflict prevention will require not only looking at how to address the underlying causes of conflicts within countries but also to identify and address some of the long-term structural drivers of conflict and insecurity at a global level.

Many of these drivers are either a product of the actions of multiple diverse actors (for instance, the impact of extractive industries in fragile countries) or issues of such scale that no one single government could hope to address them unilaterally (the peace and security impacts of climate change, perhaps). As such, multilateral efforts will be required.

There are already international processes looking to address many of these drivers and BSOS should make reference to these and set out how and why the UK is looking to support them as part of its approach to upstream conflict prevention. This would help provide a more complete picture of the UK's vision for addressing overseas conflict and provide valuable political impetus for engaging in these processes.

However, much like multilateral engagement overall, HMG must be clear on the reasons for engaging in these processes and the tangible impact they will have on dynamics underlying conflict and insecurity. Process must not become substitute for impact.

And if BSOS is to represent a truly co-ordinated approach, it should not confine itself to those processes that look at 'conflict issues' directly, but also those that may play an important but indirect role in the prospects for building sustainable peace. For instance, the conflict sensitivity of climate change adaptation funds, regulation of extractive industries and international measures to curb corruption and limit capital flight will all be important.

Drawing on Saferworld's own areas of expertise, however, we offer the following thoughts on some of the issues and processes that BSOS should include, amongst others.

Conventional arms

The under-regulated international transfer of conventional weapons has long been recognised as a key element contributing to overseas conflict and insecurity, along with the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW) within countries.

In 2012, the UN will negotiate an international Arms Trade Treaty to regulate international transfers of conventional arms. BSOS should set out the UK's strategy for ensuring a robust and effective treaty is negotiated. BSOS should also outline the UK's commitment to continuing to support the development, implementation and uptake of the treaty once negotiated.

EU Members States are legally bound by a 'Common Position' which sets rules to govern the export of military and security technology and equipment. These rules require member states to refuse transfers where there is a clear risk that equipment might be used for internal repression or aggravate existing tensions. Yet, the recent case of Libya highlights serious flaws in how EU members put these rules into practice. BSOS should commit the UK to pushing its European partners to take these commitments seriously, and to basing this push on the example of improvements in its own practice.

The UN Programme of Action on SALW (PoA)⁵ sets out measures states should take to address problems arising from SALW proliferation and misuse including provisions relating to technical and financial support. However, states have primarily taken a technocratic approach to PoA compliance, focusing on the *process* of SALW control (for example, stockpile management, weapons collection and destruction) and neglecting to measure the *impact* these processes have on the humanitarian consequences of SALW proliferation and misuse. BSOS should

⁵ 'UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects'

commit the UK to measuring and communicating the *impact* of PoA implementation and refocusing PoA discussions increasingly towards assessing and improving impact.

International aid architecture

International aid, properly conceived and delivered, has enormous potential to address the underlying causes of conflict and fragility. However, the current international aid architecture is not set up to deliver on this potential. Instead, a system that is excessively focused on support for the state risks entrenching the power imbalances and dynamics of exclusion which generate conflict. An uncritical push for alignment in conflict-affected and fragile contexts misses opportunities to use aid as an incentive for policies and practices that would advance a peacebuilding agenda. As ever larger funds are established and disbursed for the purpose of supporting climate change adaptation, such resources may deepen these trends and steps should be taken to ensure that adaptation funds are conflict-sensitive.

The UK has been co-chairing the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, a grouping of governments from a range of 'fragile' states and donors that will feed into the fourth High Level Forum for Aid Effectiveness in South Korea at the end of 2011. BSOS should not only reference the UK's support for the Dili Dialogue but also its analysis of how the broader international aid effectiveness agenda impacts on conflict and fragility, and how it will push for discussions to look at the way aid can support peace and lasting stability in conflict-affected and fragile states.

Similarly, the 2015 deadline for setting out a framework to succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is fast approaching and international discussion has already begun on what could potentially replace them. As one of the world's leaders in development policy in situations of conflict and fragility, the UK should use BSOS to both advocate for enhanced approaches to development and conflict from other donors, but also to ensure the template for development from 2015 acknowledges the importance of progress on governance, rights fulfilment, security, justice and political empowerment. These are the issues that underlie poverty in the majority of the world's poorest countries, yet the current model for 'effective' aid risks actually *undermining* progress on these areas.

Promoting inclusion in mediation and security decision-making

It has long been recognised that 'exclusion' can play a key role in generating conflict – for instance, political settlements that leave out certain actors, or the inequitable delivery of basic services between social groups. So it is important that BSOS recognises 'inclusion' as a key principle in the UK's approach to promoting peace and security. In this context it is welcome that BSOS is likely to make reference to the UK's National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325.

Women and girls are not only more often the victims of violence but, despite being roughly half the world's population, are also frequently excluded from decision-making and policy-development on peace and security.

In Nepal, for example, around a third of the Maoist Army combatants awaiting rehabilitation or integration packages as part of the country's 2005 peace agreement are women. An assessment of the differing needs of male and female combatants conducted by Saferworld in 2010 found a range of specific challenges to the rehabilitation / integration process facing female combatants that were overlooked by previous, non-gendered, assessments. Identifying and addressing these issues is therefore not only a step in promoting women's welfare but also a component in building sustainable peace in Nepal.

The UK's support to UNSCR 1325 (and related resolutions) and the development of its own cross-Whitehall National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325 are welcome. However, proper implementation, monitoring and evaluation will be key to ensuring the success of the UK's NAP and so should be explicitly referenced within BSOS.

And, as 'inclusion' is a key aspect of sustainable security policy, BSOS should frame the UK's support for UNSCR 1325 within reference to its broader efforts to support the representation and participation of excluded populations more broadly.

3. Security and justice programming: a UK comparative advantage

As noted, Saferworld believes that meeting the UK's conflict prevention ambitions will require a serious investment in multilateralism. However, it will also be necessary to identify where the UK has comparative advantages that best add value to international efforts. Saferworld believes there may be several of these areas (including the UK's leadership around international development policy, the quality of its diplomatic networks, and reputation of its armed forces) but restrict our analysis here to the UK's security and justice programming.

Promoting security and justice for vulnerable populations to prevent conflict upstream

As well as playing a key role in poverty reduction efforts, the UK's security and justice programming can help to address the insecurity that is often a driver of violent conflict.

Weak, corrupt or repressive security agencies are often unfit or unwilling to respond to people's security needs and security forces that are untrained, ill equipped, mismanaged, or irregularly paid may themselves be a driver of insecurity. For instance, in Zimbabwe, the military and police are viewed as instruments of an oppressive regime, and reform will be an essential step if the government wishes to rebuild its legitimacy.

Experiences of abuse and discrimination at the hands of security services are also recognised as contributory factors to radicalisation. For instance, in Bangladesh, the Islamic-inspired Jama'at ul-Mujahedeen Bangladesh has used widespread frustration over the state's failure to meet public expectations as an effective recruitment tool.

But to successfully address these challenges, security and justice programming must be based on the needs of those people actually affected by insecurity. So conceived, security and justice programmes can help transform problematic agencies into institutions that actively respond to people's security needs and which are central to good governance, help provide much-needed legitimacy to governments in fragile states, and facilitate the development of a social contract between citizens and states around the issue deemed most precious to both parties: their own security and the rule of law.

Although the UK is often viewed as a 'market leader' in security and justice programming, Saferworld believes BSOS provides a valuable opportunity to cement the effectiveness of the UK's efforts through the following six steps.

a. Avoid making assumptions

States' security is inextricably linked to the 'human security' of their citizens and so sustainably addressing the grievances that underlie many conflict dynamics will mean meeting the security needs of people, as well as the state. But it is important that we do not presuppose what makes communities feel unsafe or insecure, or restrict our definition of what constitutes 'promoting security' to a narrow set of interventions. Two examples from Saferworld's own field programmes help illustrate this point.

In the village of Nyong in southern Sudan's Eastern Equatoria state, the community worked with Saferworld to identify the need for better relations between them and the local police as their security need. We then worked with them to establish a regular forum where community members and officials from the police, judiciary and local authority could come together to discuss issues and plan responses (as a result, the police have launched a new emergency number and established regular foot patrols).

By contrast, a slum community we worked with in Dhaka, Bangladesh, identified high levels of child abuse which meant the predominant 'security concern' was parents being unable to leave

their children alone whilst they went to work. We helped bring them together with local businesses, schools, the police and other local officials to develop solutions to this problem. In doing so, not only did family incomes rise but increased levels of trust were built between the community and local state officials: providing basic child care facilities for poor communities may not sound like 'conflict prevention' but responding to the needs of the community provided one small – though important – step towards building a more resilient, peaceful society less prone to violence.

In both these cases, the important lesson is not to presuppose what makes communities feel unsafe or insecure but to work with people to help them identify and define their own needs and develop appropriate solutions. It will be essential for any vision of security-building set out in the BSOS to recognise the importance of working to meet the security needs communities actually have, rather than those we may assume they do.

b. Take a comprehensive view of the security and justice system

It is important that Security System Reform (SSR) is not confused with Defence Transformation. And neither SSR nor Defence Transformation should be seen as the entirety of the UK's approach to supporting security and access to justice, which is a multi-dimensional endeavour requiring different contributions from the MOD, FCO and DFID.

As defined by the OECD, SSR covers the whole security and justice system, including the armed forces and police, justice institutions and intelligence agencies. Crucially, it also involves oversight bodies such as parliamentary committees and independent complaints commissions. Particularly in fragile and conflict-affected states, it must also address powerful 'non-statutory' security forces such as militias and private security companies. It can also encompass informal justice mechanisms such as paralegal committees and 'traditional' mechanisms such as Afghan shuras. In many conflict-affected and fragile contexts those providing *de facto* security and access to justice do so on a non-statutory basis alongside (or in the absence of) state services. The BSOS should be clear about the need to engage with these actors in both immediate and longer-term efforts to reform and develop the security and justice system.

c. Balance 'supply' and 'demand'

BSOS should look not only at supporting the institutions that provide security and justice services (the 'supply' side) but also at how the UK can empower civil society groups and communities to become involved in the oversight and decision-making of how their security and justice services are delivered and hold their governments to account accordingly (the 'demand' side).

International support has all too often focused on providing support to state-level security apparatus as a contribution to 'statebuilding'. However, support which focuses on state institutions to the exclusion of civil society risks doing more harm than good when state security mechanisms are perceived by the local population as an aggressor that threatens their livelihoods and wellbeing. Security assistance will not contribute to stability if political commitment to reform is absent and so supporting accountability is at least as important as supporting effectiveness.

And a real commitment to supporting accountability is a long-term investment over a range of sectors and policy areas. To take one example, populations need access to information if they are to hold their governments to account and, if that information is written, to be literate enough to understand it. Hence, the development of a public able to hold their governments to account and play a role in building sustainably peaceful societies relies on a range of related development interventions – all of which are important to *long-term* success in building peaceful, stable societies. In this way, the BSOS should be clear that different elements of the UK's approach to conflict-affected and fragile contexts including more mainstream development efforts such as education, health and public awareness can and should contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding goals.

d. Work at different phases of the conflict cycle

Improving security system governance and promoting people's access to quality security and justice services is a key component of long-term, upstream conflict prevention (consider the role that a lack of equitable security and justice provision played in the grievances underlying Nepal's ten year civil war; or risks playing in any newly independent South Sudan).

As such, if HMG is to deliver on its ambition of tackling conflict and insecurity at source, it is important that it does not approach security and justice support as predominantly an activity for immediate post-conflict stabilisation contexts (although there is, of course, a key role for security and justice interventions in these contexts). Institutionally, this will mean ensuring that HMG has the staff, tools and resources needed to deliver security and justice work at various stages of the conflict cycle and that this programming is included in contexts where immediate crisis is not yet apparent.

e. Bridge the implementation gap

It is essential to get the policy and decision-making architecture in Whitehall right. However, in our experience in numerous fragile and conflict-affected countries, the ability to translate commitments and ambitions into action on the ground is equally important.

Doing so requires capacity, either within HMG or from outside. Without a clear idea of who will put HMG policy into practice, and how, it is difficult to see how even the best strategies can achieve tangible impact.

Saferworld recognises that HMG has faced serious pressure to 'do more with less'. One response to this has been an increase in the outsourcing of HMG programmes, from design through to delivery and evaluation. While such an approach can potentially fill vital capacity gaps and deliver better value for money, it should not be seen as an 'easy option'.

Firstly, it is not immediately clear which combination of external actors (academic, NGO or private sector) – if any – would have the requisite capacity and experience to deliver on the developmental vision of security and justice programming needed to most effectively contribute to upstream conflict prevention.

Meeting this challenge may require HMG to critically assess the capacities and added-values of all the potential partners it has available to it and, potentially, to invest in and encourage the development of certain capacities within those partners where there is a clear gap.

And on the ground, finding the right partners may still require an investment from HMG in staff that know the context well and have the experience and authority to take political decisions and manage programmes flexibly.

Secondly, the management and co-ordination of security-related programmes is inherently difficult, even when all functions are kept in-house. When many activities are outsourced, often to more than one actor, this adds an extra layer of complexity for donors who bear ultimate responsibility for the programme. Negotiating the politically sensitive areas of policy and practice these programmes touch upon – as well as ensuring that they are integrated with wider national conflict prevention and poverty reduction strategies – will need sustained and proactive management.

Strategies shared across HMG will help in setting an appropriate framework for the design of outsourced programme objectives, but regular oversight as part of wider and regular monitoring of evolving conflict dynamics and the impact of programming on them will still be necessary.

f. Be in it for the long haul

It takes a long time to help build the capacity of both state institutions and the civil society that holds them to account. Neither can HMG rush the development of the trust and legitimacy needed to make security and justice programming effective. Similarly, the longer the UK is engaged in a context, the greater the depth of its intelligence and insight will be.

HMG's security and justice programmes need to be planned, implemented, evaluated and funded according to these realities. Achieving real change will take many years and cannot be done through a 'patchwork' of largely unconnected short-term projects.

4. Measuring success, learning from failure

The M&E / results framework BSOS uses should place priority on assessing the long-term impact of action taken to prevent conflict upstream.

But we need to ensure that the way we measure prevention is realistic and avoid falling between the twin traps of the unattributable (HMG's 2007 conflict PSA indicator of 'a downward trend in the number of conflicts globally') and the limited realm of the easily quantifiable (counting the number of workshops held or training programmes delivered). Upstream conflict prevention will often be largely about promoting changes in institutional and individual policies, attitudes and behaviour which are difficult to 'count' meaningfully and will need qualitative indicators to accurately assess, as much as quantitative ones.

Developing ways of assessing this impact is widely and rightly recognised as challenging. Saferworld believes that a key part of such evaluation could be the measuring of public perceptions of safety and security in conflict-affected and fragile states, undertaken through a co-ordinated range of activities such as large scale surveys, key informant interviews and in-depth assessments at a local level⁶, along with corresponding qualitative assessment of elite behaviours (such as attitudes towards the media and opening of political space).

As upstream conflict prevention is such a long-term endeavour, assessing the quality of the *process* – whilst in no way a substitute for rigorous assessment of impact – will be important in ensuring that conflict prevention efforts 'stay the course'. In this regard, and given the importance of inclusion and participation in successful security-building, Saferworld believes that it would be valuable to include an assessment of how well conflict-affected communities have been included in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the UK's conflict prevention work in such process evaluations.

Conflict prevention 'venture capital'

Saferworld understands the pressures to get better at not only demonstrating impact and results, but also 'value for money'. Indeed, international efforts to prevent conflict and promote security have met with only mixed success and so a focus on understanding how to measure tangible impact is certainly to be welcomed.

However, given that developing new and more effective approaches to addressing conflict and fragility will require some significant 'research and development', it is important to recognise that, if lessons are properly learnt, programme failure can lead to the design of better future programmes. HMG will need access to funds where the tolerance rate for such programme 'failure' is set at a level that does not stifle innovation. If there is an expectation that any project which does not meet all of its specified objectives is automatically a 'failure' this is likely to lead to the setting of very simplistic objectives that do not get to grips with the tough issues which need to be addressed.

⁶ See, for instance: Saferworld's series of annual public perceptions surveys tracking changing perceptions of security and justice provision in Nepal (*Treading water?* (2010); *On track for improved security?* (2009); *Public safety and policing in Nepal* (2008)) and findings of selected district assessments (*Security and justice in Nepal, March 2010*), or – from Kosovo – *A matter of trust* (2010).

Saferworld suggests that the Conflict Prevention Pool could be a useful resource in this regard, although would highlight that BSOS should provide an explicitly preventative focus to the Pool to protect against the way it has historically been used less to finance efforts to *prevent* conflict and more often to finance the UK's *response*.

Parliamentary oversight of BSOS implementation

Saferworld believes that strong parliamentary oversight to the implementation of BSOS will be critical for both the continued development and refining of the UK's approach to promoting overseas stability and generating the support and buy-in of relevant policy communities that will be important for success.

Strong parliamentary oversight should be seen as a valuable mechanism for gathering a wide range of expert opinion from a diverse constituency of external actors which can be used to inform the evolution of the UK's ongoing approach. As the policy communities with relevant experience to the continuing development of BSOS will be varied, HMG should think about whether the existing parliamentary structures – particularly individual departmental select committees – provide an adequately coherent framework for providing effective scrutiny and input into the BSOS going forward.

Saferworld recognises that it is not HMG's place to decide how Parliament provides scrutiny of its work. However, we would suggest that the BSOS team work closely with both parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to establish an effective way of providing oversight to this fundamentally cross-departmental endeavour (perhaps through the existing National Security Strategy select committee, for instance, or a new committee drawing on different 'feeder committees' – such as the Committee on Arms Export Controls).

UK defence and security exports: Matching actions to words

Taking a principled and strategic approach to international engagements in pursuit of upstream conflict prevention is about much more than the export of UK defence and security equipment to authoritarian regimes. However, the UK's defence and security exports do give one clear and measurable benchmark of the UK's commitment to matching its rhetoric with action.

The recent violence in Libya has raised concern over the export of defence and security equipment to a country long regarded as a problematic destination for arms – and which was under an EU arms embargo until 2004.

The lifting of the embargo saw a decision by many EU members, including the UK, to supply Libya with military and security equipment. Yet there remained serious questions about Libya's status as a responsible arms importer (for instance, repeated attempts to source orders that outstripped its defence needs, the re-exporting of imported weapons to Darfur and numerous reports illustrating the authoritarian nature of the regime).

In line with the EU 'Common Position', the UK is required to undertake a rigorous risk assessment before issuing an export licence and to refuse transfers where there is a clear risk that equipment might be used for 'internal repression' or 'aggravate existing tensions'.

Yet too often these obligations have been compromised for reasons of political and commercial expediency. The problem is not confined to Libya alone, however, and merely serves to highlight the serious flaws in how the UK puts its own rules into practice.

Saferworld will be elaborating on this issue in more detail in its forthcoming submission to the MOD's *Equipment, Support, and Technology for UK Defence and Security: A Consultation Paper*.

Conclusion

There has at times been a tendency for the international community to instrumentalise corrupt, violent and repressive actors in the pursuit of wider policy goals. Saferworld accepts that such goals may be real and tangible but alliance with these problematic elites has consequences and frequently returns as entrenched corruption, abuse of power and, all too often, further conflict.

In navigating a complex, multi-polar world to promote upstream conflict prevention, the best compass the UK can have is a clearly defined commitment to its core principles. There is of course a balance to be had between meeting short-term objectives and long-term goals. Saferworld believes that getting this balance right could be aided by a systematic approach that prioritises the reinforcement of actors genuinely committed to human rights, governance and sustainable development; the pursuit of objectives through multilateral legal frameworks; and a consistent concern for the wellbeing of people affected by conflict and fragility.

BSOS provides the opportunity to define how the UK will use its various departmental assets in pursuit of such a long-term approach to upstream conflict prevention. Ultimately this will pay handsome dividends for the UK through its share of a more prosperous, peaceful world for all.