

# Investing in long-term peace? The new Conflict, Stability and Security Fund

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The Conflict Pool, which has supported the UK's work in addressing conflict and fragility, will be replaced by a new £1 billion Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) in April 2015 under the direction of the National Security Council (NSC).<sup>1</sup> This briefing by international peacebuilding NGOs Saferworld, Conciliation Resources and International Alert, asks what this change might mean for the direction of the UK's work on conflict prevention. It provides recommendations for how parliamentarians can ensure that a progressive long-term vision for peace is at the core of the CSSF and the UK's broader approach to engagement in conflict-affected and fragile states.

The UK has consistently recognised that it is in the national interest to invest in building a more peaceful world, setting out a forward-looking vision for promoting long-term peace and stability in 2011's *Building Stability Overseas Strategy* (BSOS). This strategy outlined the UK Government's ambition to co-ordinate development, defence and diplomacy to promote 'structural stability' abroad, based on the consent of the population, and resilience in the face of shocks. Decision-making around dedicated spending on this issue is now shifting from the Department for International Development (DFID), the Ministry of Defence (MoD), and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to the NSC, bringing together defence, diplomatic, development, security, and intelligence capabilities. In setting the strategy for this fund, it is crucial for the NSC to reassert the centrality of a progressive vision of peace and stability for effective UK engagement in conflict-affected states, as well as the value of investing in an upstream conflict prevention approach.

## Building on the legacy of the Conflict Pool

The Conflict Pool, jointly owned by the FCO, DFID and MoD, has been a valuable 'venture capital fund for peace activities' for more than a decade.<sup>2</sup> Building on the legacy of the Conflict Pool, a new Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) will come online in 2015, overseen by the National Security Council and including new departments in project delivery. With this shift there may be a risk of pursuing short-term interventions which could undermine longer-term peace and stability if 'national security' is defined too narrowly.

It is therefore crucial for the National Security Council to remain true to and promote the principles outlined in the BSOS when implementing the CSSF and when making decisions about UK engagement in fragile contexts more broadly. This means ensuring that there is buy-in to the vision of 'stability' that is at the heart of the BSOS across all departments who are implementing projects under the fund, including the Home Office and intelligence services. The BSOS defines stability as "political systems which are representative and legitimate, capable of managing conflict and change peacefully, and societies in which basic needs are met, security established and opportunities for social and economic development are open to all." As additional departments become involved in project delivery under the CSSF, it will be extremely important to be clear about how activities are promoting this vision.

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<sup>1</sup> HC Deb, 19 December 2013, c130W

[http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131219/wmstext/131219m0001.htm#131219m0001.htm\\_spm11](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131219/wmstext/131219m0001.htm#131219m0001.htm_spm11)

<sup>2</sup> ICAI evaluation of the inter-departmental conflict pool, p.10 <http://icai.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Evaluation-of-the-Inter-Departmental-Conflict-Pool-ICAI-Report1.pdf>

## Continuing to invest in addressing the causes of conflict

*“In the field of international conflict, it is often observed that prevention is better than cure. The costs of major post-conflict interventions are so large in both human and financial terms that effective investments in conflict prevention should provide good value for money by comparison. This proposition is, however, rarely put into practice. Funds are usually mobilised only once international crises reach the headlines, when it is too late to talk of prevention.”*

– Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI)

The UK Government has long recognised the value of investing in a conflict prevention approach. However, as crises emerge there is likely to be pressure on the NSC to focus UK resources on rapid response at the expense of addressing the long-term causes of conflict. While rapid response is crucial and can prevent violence from breaking out or escalating, it will be important to ensure that in addition to this, the UK continues and scales up investment in longer-term interventions to address the causes of conflict before violence breaks out. As such, a shared understanding of ‘upstream conflict prevention’ and its value should also be established across the NSC and its departments.

**‘Upstream conflict prevention’** requires a long-term approach based on understanding and responding to the underlying causes of conflict and instability before they result in violence.<sup>3</sup> For the government, this means taking a context-specific approach that is holistic, in that it looks at the whole of the UK’s engagement in that conflict, and is based on a broad context analysis which includes the perspectives, needs and priorities of people affected by violence.

### Conflict prevention: proven intervention

The UK has demonstrated important leadership through its investments in conflict prevention, and should continue to build on this initiative under the CSSF. These include programmes in areas such as governance and security sector reform as well as support to dialogue and peace processes. The UK has also provided vital support to international and national non-governmental organisations, who work with a range of constituencies in conflict-affected societies building trust, capacity and commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflict. Some examples demonstrating the effectiveness of upstream conflict prevention initiatives taken from our own experience are provided below:

#### Preventing election violence in Kenya

There were grave concerns that the 2013 Kenyan national elections would see a repeat of the 2007-2008 bloodshed, which left 1,300 dead, 600,000 displaced, and reinforced deep divides over land, ethnicity, and access to political power. However, because of improved preparation and coordination among key peace, security, and election management actors to prevent conflict and violence – supported by Saferworld and partners – the elections and the period since passed without large-scale outbreaks of violence.

Initial conflict prevention steps taken by Saferworld and partner organisation Local Capacities for Peace International (LCPI) involved setting up and working with a peace and security coordination forum. This included community representatives from youth groups, religious leaders, women, elders, media and government officials from the provincial administration, the police, and the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC). The forum identified areas of concern and worked together to diffuse tension. As a result, local police were prepared to consult with civil society organisations, before responding to early warning information – a remarkable change in dynamics given the context. There was also evidence that communities acted together to prevent violence in situations where no police or security forces were present.

The success of this conflict prevention work is reflected not only in the reduction in violence in the areas where Saferworld and partners worked during the March 2013 elections but also in the continuing interaction between community, county and national level actors.

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<sup>3</sup> Saferworld, (2012). *Upstream conflict prevention: addressing the root causes of conflict*, <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/688-upstream-conflict-prevention-addressing-the-root-causes-of-conflict>

## **Transforming politics in Lebanon**

In Lebanon, political options tend to be coloured by sectarian positions which limits opportunities to explore common interests. This creates a risk for peace in the long-term. International Alert is working on upstream conflict prevention by encouraging representatives of eighteen political parties to use dialogue as a new way of exploring issues.

Since 2009, Alert has worked with party leaders on trust-building; knowledge of democratic processes, power-sharing and post-conflict relationships; and problem-solving, communication and collaboration skills.

The space created by this dialogue process has allowed political party youth leaders to discuss issues critical to peace and conflict in Lebanon, which would otherwise have remained unaddressed. The fact that party representatives see the dialogue forum as a safe space is evident in the increasing frequency of meetings and a willingness to discuss more sensitive issues in the midst of a hardening context influenced by civil war in Syria. Meetings have been inclusive, with all the large parties engaging, despite increasing polarisation on the national scene. Whereas once security issues were “no-go” topics for discussion, they now top the agenda.

Building on the change in attitudes and relationships and the common understanding of divisive issues, the party leaders have moved to effect policy change with the purpose of improving conditions for broader sets of interests than those of their constituencies. They have engaged political elites to push for a legal framework that ensures oil and gas revenues contribute to sustainable and equitable development. This represents the project’s most positive result. The project evaluation identified various successful examples of conflict prevention including genuine cross-party agreement on policy messages, conflict resolution on university campuses, and outreach between youth activists on common, yet difficult, issues of interest (including agreement on rights and conditions of Palestinian refugees).

*“I never cared to hear the opinion of the other side and I always dismissed them. Now I can see their point of view, I can listen until they finish their argument and I can happily sit down with them to talk.”*

- Youth Party Leader Participant

## **Mediating peace in the Philippines**

On 25 January 2014, the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) successfully concluded 16 years of negotiations. The Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro marked the end of more than four decades of conflict in the southern Philippines, which led to some 100,000 deaths and about a million displaced people. The Agreement provides for the creation of a new self-governing entity known as the Bangsamoro, a territory inhabited by over 3.8 million people.

The Agreement was the culmination of peacebuilding efforts by multiple actors over many years. It is an illustration of the long-term commitment that was required to address the underlying causes of the conflict. The protracted negotiations allowed an innovative and complex peace-support architecture to develop, in which Conciliation Resources played a contributing role, supported by the UK Government and other donors. Conciliation Resources was a member of the International Contact Group (ICG) from 2010, the first and only international mediation support mechanism where NGOs and diplomats worked together in a formal and sustained setting. As part of the ICG, Conciliation Resources supported the peace negotiations between the Government and the MILF, advising and shuttling between the conflict parties. A 2013 project supported by the UK Government also ensured the inclusion of the voices of civil society, particularly the marginalised voices of Muslim and indigenous women, in the process informing the future constitution of the Bangsamoro. Inclusivity and public participation increases the legitimacy of a peace process and its implementation, and thus the sustainability of any peace agreement and prevention of future conflict.

### **Recommendations on the CSSF:**

As international peacebuilding NGOs, we see it as imperative that the UK Government continues to build on its commitment to conflict prevention under the new Conflict, Stability and Security Fund. As such, we recommend that:

1. All government departments involved in implementing projects under the fund work together to produce a unified, public vision of what the CSSF should deliver based on the principles outlined in the BSOS.
2. The National Security Council uses this BSOS-based vision and develops a practical filter for determining strategic allocations, so that CSSF support is aligned with an upstream conflict prevention approach.
3. Ministerial and parliamentary oversight of the CSSF formally tracks and publicly reports on the proportion of funding spent on upstream conflict prevention

### **Recommendations to parliamentarians:**

1. **Increase scrutiny of National Security Council decision making on conflict issues through the work of relevant select committees (International Development, Foreign Affairs, Joint Committees on National Security Strategy, etc.).**
2. **Call on all ministerial departments carrying out projects under the new CSSF to develop a unified, publicly available vision based on the BSOS.**
3. **Table debates and parliamentary questions on conflict prevention issues and conflict resources.**
4. **Participate in international parliamentary networks (i.e. Commonwealth Parliamentary Association) and support the capacity of parliamentarians worldwide to engage in democratic processes and practice good governance as a contribution to conflict prevention.**