

# Peace, Conflict and Development Policy

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June 2002



**Australian Government**

**AusAID**

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# 1 The challenge



Street scene in Dili, East Timor as life begins to return to normal following the prolonged period of violence and unrest.

Since 1980 almost one half of the world's least developed countries have suffered a major conflict. Over 90% of wars now take place *within* states rather than between them. During the 1990s alone, wars claimed over 5 million lives. The toll in terms of human suffering, economic dislocation, and wasted development opportunities has been enormous.

For Australia, in the Asia Pacific region, promoting peace and stability is a major foreign policy priority.

Australia's aid program has an important role to play in promoting peace and stability because of

the strong links between poverty and conflict. Violent conflict is a powerful reverser of development gains and a primary cause of poverty, while high levels of poverty can increase the risk of violent conflict. Lack of economic opportunity, inequitable resource distribution, discrimination based upon religious or ethnic divisions within society, poor governance, and the mismanagement or illegal exploitation of natural resources can also cause conflict.

# 2 The aid program's experience



Liz Clements (AusAID) and Captain Robyn Fellows with women working toward peace in Bougainville.

Over three quarters of the Australian aid program's major bilateral programs operate in countries that are vulnerable to, experiencing, or recovering from conflict. Traditionally, the role of aid agencies in conflict-affected communities has been to deliver relief assistance and provide short-term support for social and economic reconstruction. Australian experience has highlighted the central role that development assistance can play in conflict prevention, peace building and security. Working in close concert with broader diplomatic and



The Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Sir Mekere Morauta, signs the Bougainville Peace Agreement, 30 August 2001.

peace-keeping initiatives, the aid program has helped promote peaceful outcomes to disputes in the region, address grievances, provide incentives for peace and protect human rights. The following brief examples serve to illustrate this.

In **Bougainville**, the program evolved from its primarily humanitarian and NGO roots in the early nineties to cover a comprehensive range of peace-building and reconstruction activities following the signing of the Burnham Declaration in 1997 and leading to the Bougainville Peace Agreement.

The aid program has also been integral to the Australian Government's overall effort to promote peace in the **Solomon Islands**. Humanitarian assistance has helped meet basic needs of disrupted and displaced communities. Peace building and conflict resolution activities have facilitated peace negotiations, assisted reconciliation efforts of women's and church groups, and reintegrated into productive civilian life youth and men involved in the conflict.

In **East Timor**, the aid program was a key element of the considerable Australian Government response to the crisis through assistance for the 1999 plebiscite, substantial humanitarian aid during both the crisis and its aftermath, and a continuing comprehensive contribution to post-conflict reconstruction and nation-building.

In **Cambodia**, Australia supported the peace process from its inception, providing assistance with elections, and support for returning refugees and internally displaced persons. Peace-building efforts have continued through a broad program of post-conflict institution building, infrastructure reconstruction, and demining.

The aid program's responses to conflict and instability have been more intensive closer to home where our existing bilateral programs and experience impart comparative advantages relative to other donors. Outside the Asia-Pacific region, in situations such as Afghanistan, where others are better placed to play central roles, Australian assistance supports international humanitarian efforts by channelling resources to multilateral agencies, the Red Cross and Non Government Organisations.

## 3 New directions

Building on this experience, the Government will enhance the aid program's capacity to respond to threats to peace and stability in our region. There will be greater emphasis on conflict prevention and peace-building, along side its more traditional missions of humanitarian relief and reconstruction. The program will adopt a comprehensive approach founded upon three main pillars:

- Conflict prevention and peace-building
- Conflict management and reduction
- Support for post-conflict recovery

### 3.1 Conflict Prevention & Peace-building

It is far less costly – both in human and financial terms – to *prevent* conflict than to respond once it occurs. Given the complexity and diversity of sources from which conflict can spring, however, mounting an effective preventive effort can be a difficult task. By strengthening its analytical capacity in conflict prone environments, the aid program will seek to identify and work on the root causes of instability in developing countries in our region. An enhanced understanding of the sources of instability will assist the program to fashion appropriate preventive measures. Areas the program will focus on include:

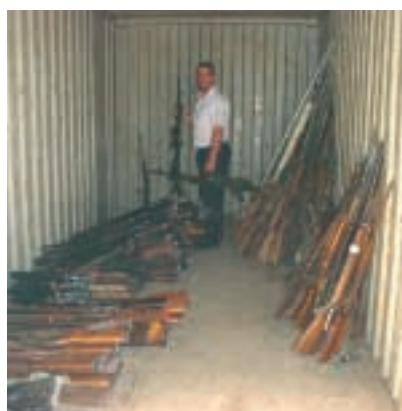
### 3.1.1 Facilitating dialogue and supporting advocates for peace

Where appropriate, the aid program will provide support to encourage dialogue between those in conflict. Support will also be provided to those elements of society – at all levels – which work for the peaceful resolution of disputes and grievances. The demonstrated role that women can play as peace-builders will be a particular focus.

### 3.1.2 Strengthening governance

Weak and divided states are susceptible to conflict. The Australian aid program will work to strengthen the ability of states to manage conflict within their own societies without resort to violence, with initiatives aimed at addressing corruption, public accountability and transparency, law and order including security sector reform, support for democratic processes, and human rights.

### 3.1.3 Reducing the presence and trafficking of small arms



Auki Gun Container, Solomon Islands  
International Peace Monitoring Team.



Niki Ruker (AusAID) and Captain Michelle Miller with Ruth discuss the peace issues at a Women's Meeting at Tonu, Bougainville.

The demand for and ease of accessibility to small arms have contributed to prolonged conflicts and instability, and hindered effective law and order implementation within states. Australia has significant experience in assisting with weapons collection processes, for example, in Bougainville and Solomon Islands. Working in close consultation with the Department of Defence and the Australian Federal Police, the aid program will explore further opportunities to reduce the presence of weapons at both the national and regional level in the Asia-Pacific.





### 3.1.4 Reducing rural–urban inequality

Inequitable access to resources and the breakdown of government service delivery in rural areas can be significant factors in increasing tensions. The aid program will address this issue by giving greater emphasis to rural service delivery, particularly in parts of the Pacific.

## 3.2 Conflict Management and Reduction

Where conflict already exists, the Australian aid program can play a critical role in reducing conflict as well as mitigating its effects. Multilateral agencies, such as the United Nations organisations, and NGOs are key partners in these tasks. We will assist through:

### 3.2.1 Humanitarian relief

Meeting basic human needs (food, water, sanitation, health, shelter, and protection) will remain a central part of the aid program's response to conflict. But humanitarian relief can also influence and support initiatives aimed at re-establishing lasting peace and stability, and provide a platform for reconstruction. To the extent possible the aid program will shape its humanitarian interventions to support wider peace-building efforts, and to provide a sound platform for the transition from relief to development work.

### 3.2.2 Peace dividends

At the most fundamental level, the provision of aid constitutes a flow of resources into a conflict situation. In extreme circumstances, badly designed aid can constitute a disincentive for peace, with the additional resource flows providing fuel to prolong the conflict. Thoughtfully crafted interventions, however, can create substantial incentives for peace (as demonstrated in Bougainville). The aid program will target assistance to those communities who achieve and sustain peace at the local level, in so doing providing real and tangible incentives.

### 3.2.3 Support to refugees and internally displaced persons

An important part of Australia's humanitarian assistance is the care, repatriation and resettlement of refugees and people displaced by conflict. This is undertaken through partners such as NGOs, ICRC and UNHCR.

Children from the village of Chapuru in the Solomon Islands, show the signal of arms across the chest, meaning 'No more guns'.

### 3.2.4 Support women and children

Women and children represent a significant proportion of displaced populations. Children are also often recruited or conscripted to take an active role in conflicts. Providing emergency education facilities, assisting with social rehabilitation and reintegration of war-affected children, and encouragement of women as peace-brokers are critical responses in conflict situations.

### 3.2.5 Working for peace through the media

Experience has shown that the media has the potential both to exacerbate and ameliorate conflict. The aid program will continue to provide support for well-targeted media initiatives where they play a positive role in working for peace.



Bougainville Peace Monitors have the opportunity to form special relationships with locals.

## 3.3 Post-Conflict Recovery

Australia has successfully taken a lead role in post-conflict recovery programs in its region (eg Bougainville, Solomon Islands). However, cooperation with the multilateral development banks and UN organisations is essential to ensure donor efforts are as coordinated and well-targeted as possible. Australia will assist post-conflict recovery through:

### 3.3.1 Support for peace and reconciliation processes

Australia will expand and enhance rehabilitation, reconciliation and peace-building programs to help prevent further conflict, provide incentives for peace processes and address some of the root causes of tensions. Programs will include peace education and support to women's initiatives.

### 3.3.2 Demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants

Transforming ex-combatants into peaceful and productive members of society is a critical, if challenging task. Reintegration efforts must be part of broader local development programs that include not only ex-combatants, but also their families and displaced persons.



Mines Advisory Group, mine awareness education, Cisang, Cambodia, March 1999.

### 3.3.3 Demining

Australia will continue its strong record of helping to address the global landmine problem, including by implementing its commitment of \$100 million for mine action activities in the decade to 2005.

### 3.3.4 Reconstruction

The reconstruction of the political, social, and economic foundations of a society is essential for long-term peace and development. Some of the root causes of conflict can be addressed through the remodelling or establishment of institutions, frameworks, and networks to better facilitate the transition to a stable peace.

### 3.3.5 Reviving the economy

Conflict has devastating impacts on economies, disrupting trade and commerce, destroying physical and social infrastructure, and leading to outflows of financial, human and physical capital. The aid program will work with the international financial institutions and other donors to build the conditions for sustainable economic recovery.

Conflicts are inherently fluid: violence can flare and subside several times before peace is finally secured, and their character can change drastically in short periods of time. The aid program's response to threats to peace must be flexible and tightly coordinated with Australia's diplomatic and security engagement.

## Maximising operational effectiveness

Maximising the aid program's effectiveness and preparedness to work in conflict-prone environments will require operational changes:

### 4.1 Improved Understanding and Analysis

Maximising the effectiveness of the government's response requires a thorough understanding of the nature and root causes of conflict and an understanding of the contribution relevant areas of government can make to preventing conflict or mitigating its effects. At the heart of efforts to understand the dynamics of conflict is effective analysis at both the strategic and operational levels. In particular, the aid program will:

- Expand the role of Australian and regional research groups in order to develop more effective conflict analysis and early warning systems in the immediate region.
- Enhance capacity to draw upon government officials in developing countries at all levels, local NGOs, church groups and the private sector to increase our understanding and awareness of the causes and likelihood of conflict in the "at-risk" areas in which we operate.
- Include conflict analysis as an integral part of broader poverty analysis within program strategies for conflict-prone programs.
- Given the importance of ensuring the active engagement of women in peace-building processes, improve the integration of gender principles into aid responses.
- Share our analyses of conflict prone-countries with other bilateral and multilateral donors as a means of increasing donor preparedness and developing joint approaches where appropriate.

### 4.2 Flexibility

Flexibility is an essential requirement for effective aid interventions in conflict situations. A range of possible interventions will be required in a given country or region. For instance, short-term peace building activities may be appropriate as incentives to influence the behaviour of the warring parties; medium-term projects to rebuild basic infrastructure; and long-term governance activities to strengthen the society's structural stability. Often these activities will occur in parallel.

To improve Australia's ability to respond rapidly and flexibly, the aid program will:

- Develop a rapid response capacity through the utilisation of period contracts, NGOs, and small activity schemes, to quickly contract and deploy a range of expertise and other assistance as needed.
- Enhance the capacity and skills of key partners such as NGOs, academics, private sector aid contractors, and relevant UN agencies operating in our region to respond to – and operate effectively in – conflict situations. This will include mechanisms such as stand-by arrangements, personnel rosters, and training in international humanitarian law and civil/military cooperation.

### 4.3 Coordination and Partnerships

Given the often large number of actors involved in responding to conflict situations, effective coordination and coherence of approach is essential. The aid program is committed to building effective partnerships with other international organisations to improve conflict prevention and management interventions. The program will:

- Strengthen relationships with key areas of government, (Defence, Australian Federal Police, Emergency Management Australia, etc) in both Canberra and in the field to improve coordination of Australia's response to crises. For example, the program will work to establish operational guidelines with Defence governing coordination and cooperation in crises.
- Establish engagement strategies and strategic partnerships with selected international organisations (eg. OCHA, ICRC), and Australian NGOs to develop their capacity to respond effectively to the humanitarian implications of emerging conflicts in the region, including clarity on respective roles and responsibilities.
- Enhance the ability of staff to plan, facilitate, and implement the Agency's approach to peace and conflict issues, including participation in peace monitoring groups.



An Australian soldier helps returning refugees from West Timor – Australian aid funded their transport and emergency supplies.

Preventing conflict and instability in the Asia-Pacific region is a foreign policy priority for Australia and the Australian aid program. Conflict is a central challenge to the Government's objective for the aid program of advancing Australia's national interests by reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development. Aid interventions are one of Australia's primary instruments for fostering long-term structural change to prevent conflict, and to respond to conflict when it occurs.

It is important to be realistic about what aid can achieve: by itself, it cannot eliminate conflict. It can, however, play an important role in supporting local efforts for peace, and contribute to broader Australian government peace-building initiatives. The strategy and approach described in this paper positions Australia's aid program to maximise its effectiveness as it pursues this core aspect of its work.

## Peace, Conflict and Development Policy

Australia's aid program has an important role to play in promoting peace and stability because of the strong links between poverty and conflict. Violent conflict is a powerful reverser of development gains and a primary cause of poverty, while high levels of poverty can increase the risk of violent conflict. This booklet outlines the Australian Government aid program's strategy for promoting peace and stability in our region.

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