

Essay on Development Policy

Development for Peace: How Development Cooperation Can Support Peacebuilding

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Development and peace are mutually reinforcing. Likewise, developing countries can be caught in a vicious circle of insecurity and underdevelopment: Insecurity adversely affects both human and socio-economic development, while, at the same time, poverty increases the risk of armed violence and conflicts.¹ These linkages are particularly relevant from the perspective of development cooperation, which often operates in the poorest and most conflict-prone environments.

Over the last two decades, civilian peacebuilding² has received a lot of international attention. In the 1990s, more than 40 percent of all armed conflicts relapsed into violence within five years of their termination.³ Hence, post-conflict peacebuilding has increasingly been understood as a key complement to military peacekeeping.

In the following essay, I will discuss the implications of this new focus on peacebuilding in terms of development policy, drawing partly on my personal experiences in post-conflict Sierra Leone. First, I will present key findings of conflict researchers on current conflict trends as well as on the linkages between low income and conflict. Secondly, I will outline the rationale behind UN Peacekeeping Operations and Peacebuilding Missions as the international community's main tools for conflict management. Thirdly, I will put forward a number of key peacebuilding challenges that can be addressed by development cooperation in order to facilitate a stable recovery over the critical first decade after the end of a conflict and support civilian peacebuilding. Finally, I will discuss instruments that international development agencies have started to apply in order to make their programmes and projects in challenging environments more conflict-sensitive.

¹ For the purpose of this essay, armed violence shall be defined as the intentional use of illegitimate force with weapons or explosives. Armed conflict shall be defined as a major event of organised armed violence based on a contested incompatibility which relates to government and/or territory and results in 25 or more annual battle deaths. The latter is based on the definition by Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) 2012.

² Whereas peacekeeping is mainly military stabilisation to stop hostilities, peacebuilding encompasses mostly civilian efforts aimed at the consolidation of peace in a post-conflict setting.

³ Human Security Brief 2006, p. 20.

1) Low income and conflict

Contrary to popular belief, the number of armed conflicts worldwide has been decreasing since the end of the Cold War. Outright wars between two or more states have become particularly rare. Over the last few decades, the typical armed conflicts have taken place *within* a state, more precisely, within a low-income country. Conflict research suggests that low income, especially in combination with low economic growth, is a major risk factor for the outbreak of an armed conflict.⁴ Moreover, conflicts in poor countries tend to last longer than in middle- and high-income countries.⁵ In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of non-state armed conflicts has remained particularly high in comparison to other continents,⁶ which may be due to particularly weak government capacity to control their respective national territory and protect their population from severe threats to human security.

While low income and slow growth increase the likelihood of armed conflict, the linkage between underdevelopment and conflict also works the other way around. Insecurity is not only a result of low income, it is also a major obstacle to development. In an insecure environment, transaction costs, such as the costs of transport and sales, increase to levels that can become prohibitive for private businesses. Moreover, insecurity leads to unproductive expenditures that could otherwise have been invested in productive ventures: such opportunity costs are present, for instance, in higher expenditures for the armed forces (national level) and private security services (private businesses and persons). Finally, even armed conflicts of low intensity put infrastructure as well as the health and education system under enormous stress, which negatively impacts future development prospects. According to the World Bank, a “civil conflict costs the average developing country roughly 30 years of GDP growth, and countries in protracted crisis can fall over 20 percentage points behind in overcoming poverty.”⁷

In recent years, researchers and policy-makers have raised awareness about the fact that there are similar linkages between underdevelopment and organised violence in

⁴ Humphreys and Varshney 2004, p. 9.

⁵ Collier, P. 2007, p. 26.

⁶ Human Security Report Project 2011, p. 174.

⁷ The World Bank 2011, p. xii.

a wider sense. Globally, there have been more victims of criminal armed violence than direct deaths of armed conflicts over the last few years.⁸ Non-conflict, organised violence can be both cause and effect of underdevelopment and may manifest itself in an entire region or only certain less developed neighbourhoods of a city, forming a vicious circle similar to that of conflict and underdevelopment. The role of criminal armed violence in the global violence toll is not surprising, as research suggests that even actors in 20th century civil wars tended to be more motivated by greed, such as natural resource predation, smuggling and other sources of finance, rather than by grievance, that is, ethnic or religious divisions, inequality or political oppression.⁹

Whatever its root causes, organised violence and political instability adversely affect a country or sub-region's development prospects. As shown in Figure 1, the gap between countries affected by violence and others is widening in terms of their success in reducing extreme poverty.¹⁰

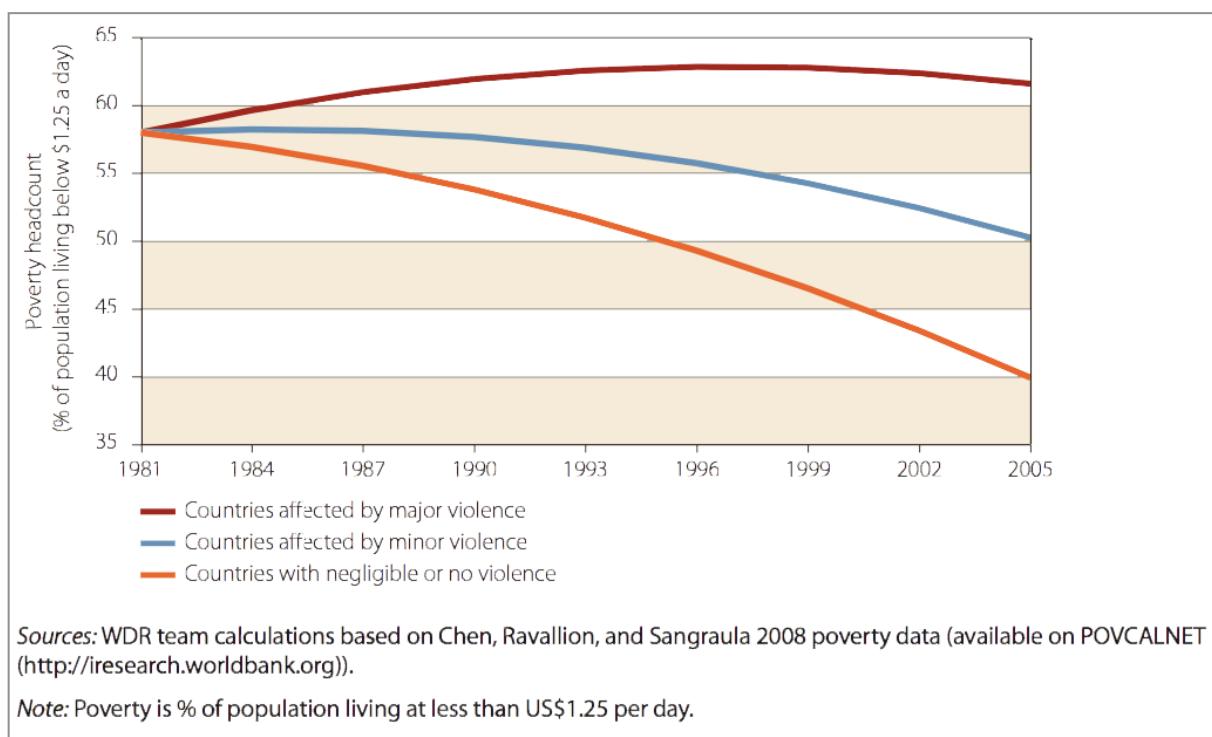


Figure 1: While poverty is declining in most of the world, countries affected by major violence (direct conflict deaths or excess homicide rates comparable to the number of battle deaths from a major war) have seen the number of inhabitants living in absolute poverty stagnate or even rise. Even minor violence is a significant burden for poverty reduction.

⁸ Geneva Declaration Secretariat 2008, p. 2.

⁹ Collier, P. & Hoeffler, A. 2002.

¹⁰ The World Bank 2011, p. 4.

2) Military and civilian conflict management by the UN

Since the end of the Cold War, most armed conflicts have been ended based on negotiations, not a military victory of one of the warring parties.¹¹ This development is not least due to increased international peacemaking (mediation) and peacekeeping efforts. Research suggests that the international community can significantly reduce the risk of such a relapse through the deployment of sufficiently funded United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping missions.¹² During the critical first decade after a conflict, such military stabilisation efforts are crucial to achieving peace and stability, which is a prerequisite for sustainable economic development and successful poverty reduction. In the case of Sierra Leone, the UN was able to withdraw its Peacekeepers after only a short deployment, as the United Kingdom gave the democratically elected government of Sierra Leone a decade-long security guarantee against potential coups or rebel movements. This security guarantee seems to have provided the same stability as a prolonged UN Peacekeeping presence, taking government's mind off safeguarding itself against violent, undemocratic challenges to its rule and instead giving it more room for manoeuvre to develop the economy.

Over the last decade, policy-makers and policy-shapers have come to the realisation that military stabilisation efforts should be systematically accompanied by civilian peacebuilding. While the deployment of international troops with a sufficiently robust UN-mandate can often be viewed as a prerequisite for stabilisation, it may not be enough to successfully consolidate peace and avoid that a country slides back into conflict after a few years. Reconstruction, governance, rule of law and reconciliation are some of the areas where external civilian support is crucial after the end of a disruptive conflict.

To bring together all relevant actors in civilian peacebuilding, the UN established the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and the Security Council in 2005.¹³ So far, the PBC has developed integrated, country-specific strategies to guide peacebuilding and recovery efforts in Burundi, Central African Republic, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone. It is a

¹¹ Human Security Centre 2006, p. 20.

¹² Collier, P., Hoeffler, A. & Söderbom, M. 2008.

¹³ Established by resolutions A/RES/60/180 (2005) of the General Assembly and S/RES/1645 (2005) of the Security Council.

major achievement that the international community is harmonising its peacebuilding efforts through the PBC. However, post-conflict institution building is hardly straightforward. The mandate and strategies of the PBC therefore have to be adjusted continually based on the opportunities and challenges faced by UN Peacebuilding Missions on the ground.

In post-conflict settings, there are many challenges that have to be addressed in order to reduce the risk of the country's relapse into conflict. How can development actors support and complement peacebuilding efforts?

3) Post-conflict development: focus on key peacebuilding challenges

Given the interrelations between poverty and an increased risk of organised violence, development cooperation has a particularly important role in post-conflict peacebuilding. In the first few years after the end of a conflict, however, most donors tend to focus entirely on humanitarian aid. The transition from relief to peacebuilding and development efforts should be tackled as quickly as feasible.¹⁴ Among the key peacebuilding challenges that development partners can help address are the resettlement of internally displaced persons, reintegration of former combatants, physical reconstruction and basic public services, truth and reconciliation efforts as well as security sector reform and good governance.

In parallel to the delivery of humanitarian aid, donors in post-conflict situations should try to offer resettlement assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) as soon as the security situation warrants it. IDPs often face unacceptable living conditions in their camps. Given the protracted insecurity of their situation, they find it particularly hard to engage in a sustainable form of economic activity, let alone to make small-scale physical investments. Thus, maintaining IDP camps long after the end of a conflict is not only hindering economic development, but can also lead to important political frustrations of the camps inhabitants.

¹⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) 2001, p. 108.

When former combatants have been successfully disarmed and demobilised by UN Peacekeepers or other military actors, their reintegration into society poses a major challenge. As combatants are usually young men for the most part, development partners can support this difficult process by addressing youth unemployment. Even beyond ex-combatants, concentrations of idle youth pose a significant threat to peace and stability.¹⁵ At the same time, youth bulges are an opportunity for economic development. Letting young people participate in rebuilding the post-conflict society, its institutions and its economy is all the more important for successful peacebuilding and post-conflict development. To support this process, development cooperation can address bottlenecks in those value chains that had been particularly employment-intensive before the outbreak of the conflict, for instance. In the case of Sierra Leone, international development partners are rehabilitating cocoa, coffee and rice plantations, establishing processing facilities and improving market access through rural infrastructure development. Such interventions have the potential to employ idle youth and give them an opportunity to contribute to the peaceful recovery of their country.

More generally speaking, aid for reconstruction has a good track record of effectiveness. International development actors can even, to a certain degree, bridge the post-conflict gap in the provision of public services. The aid inflows for such service provision has a positive side-effect which is documented by comparative research:¹⁶ as donors provide basic services demanded by a country's electorate, they take some pressure off the government's fiscal resources. This in turn allows the government to bring down hyperinflation, which is a typical result of wartime spending that can ravage the economy for many years after the end of a conflict. Bringing down hyperinflation is particularly important to restore the confidence of economic and political actors in the stability of their post-conflict country's institutions, to reduce capital flight and to normalise the financial transactions necessary for economic recovery. In Sierra Leone, dramatic hyperinflation was not a problem. Nonetheless, considerable financial support by the European Commission and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development in the areas of general

¹⁵ Geneva Declaration Secretariat 2008, p. 60.

¹⁶ Collier, P. 2010, p. 91.

budget support, rehabilitation of priority infrastructure and good governance¹⁷ allowed the government of Sierra Leone to improve the living conditions of its citizens without blowing the country's debt or inflation out of proportion.¹⁸

A post-conflict society has to face the rifts caused by the war in order to come to peace with its violent history. The development partners can take a leading role in supporting transitional justice and reconciliation by, for instance, facilitating the work of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) or that of a hybrid (national and international) tribunal to bring suspected war criminals to justice. When the Sierra Leone government signed the ultimately ineffective Lomé Peace Accord with the rebels of the Revolutionary United Front in 1999, the agreement included setting up a TRC. The commission started collecting statements and data after the end of the second phase of the civil war in 2002. The support by multilateral and bilateral agencies to this process allowed the victims of the conflict to establish facts about the conflict and its perpetrators.¹⁹

Citizen security and effective delivery of justice is another major challenge in a post-conflict setting. Donors can support vetting and reform of security sector institutions and personnel, including the justice system. In the case of Sierra Leone, the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office leads the reform of the Sierra Leone Police, while the British-led International Military Advisory and Training Team assists the reform of the country's armed forces. The British government, which led the UN-mandated military effort that ultimately ended civil war at the turn of the century, has combined the deployment of its military advisors with an over-the-horizon security guarantee: for a decade after the end of the war, the British promised the democratically elected government of Sierra Leone to fly in a strike force in case of a coup d'état or a renewed rebel attack.

Finally, while it may seem natural to external observers that elections should be held as soon as possible after the end of an armed conflict, this conclusion is not as straightforward as it may seem. A conflict affects not only the production base of a country, it also erodes people's confidence in the long-term benefits of a physical or

¹⁷ European Commission 2012.

¹⁸ African Economic Outlook 2012, p. 3 and 6.

¹⁹ Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2004.

educational investment. What good is a day in school or a savings account if you fear that your world may collapse around you again at any moment? Thus, political stability over the critical first decade is key for economic recovery. In a context where there is no pre-established framework of democratic checks and balances, early presidential elections may instead trigger a violent, corrupting and destabilizing winner-takes-all race for political power.²⁰ Such an outbreak of political violence is bad for post-conflict economic recovery. Moreover, it can entrench a corrupt dynamic of doubtful elections followed by years of unchecked rule by the winner. Thus, instead of seeking a democratic transition through early elections, development partners should emphasize good governance and the set-up of effective checks and balances to political power. They could help the parliament assert itself, capacitate an independent judiciary, support sub-national state entities, strengthen civil society participation in governance matters and finance independent media, such as the Sierra Leone Broadcast Corporation, which has been set up and financed by the UN.

While the international presence in Sierra Leone supported free and fair elections that led to a victory of the opposition party, development partners and the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) have arguably been less successful in strengthening checks and balances. The legislative and the judiciary are very weak compared to the executive. The country's newspapers are partisan rags that bank on defamation instead of information. Hence, the 2012 presidential election is set to become a winner-takes-all race for complete control over the state and its institutions. The opposition has nominated a former brigadier and coup leader, perhaps to demonstrate their determination to acquire power by all means necessary. The incumbent, for his part, allegedly bullied out the outspoken Executive Representative of the UN Secretary-General, apparently in an attempt to silence UNIPSIL in view of possible voter fraud on the part of the president's supporters in the forthcoming elections.²¹ Strong international support to strengthen the country's checks and balances are all the more important now, as the first series of violent clashes over the upcoming elections throw a shadow over Sierra Leone's political stability.

²⁰ Collier, P. 2010.

²¹ Akam, S. 2012.

By focusing on above-mentioned key peacebuilding challenges, development partners can support a stable recovery of the post-conflict country in question, which is a key prerequisite for ensuing socio-economic development. Whether or not a particular development project in a fragile environment addresses a key peacebuilding challenge, it should always aim to operate in a conflict-sensitive manner. Development actors in fragile contexts, such as in post-conflict countries, should consider a number of conflict-related factors from a project management perspective.

4) Conflict-sensitive development cooperation

In addition to focusing on key peacebuilding challenges, development partners should try to operate in a conflict-sensitive manner whenever they are engaged in a fragile context. This is relevant for two reasons: Firstly, as outlined in chapter 1, low income and conflict are closely linked. In fact, of the 24 countries that experienced full-fledged armed conflict²² on their territory in 2010, 23 are developing or emerging countries. 11 of them are even classified as least developed countries (LDCs) by the UN.²³ Moreover, in 2010, all instances of non-state armed conflict²⁴ and one-sided violence²⁵ took place in developing countries, roughly half of them LDCs.²⁶ Of the 18 countries that saw one or several UN Peacekeeping Operations and/or UN Peacebuilding Missions deployed on their territory in 2010, 16 were developing countries. As shown in Figure 2, the vast majority of these countries have low or medium levels of human development, measured in terms of gross national income per capita, life expectancy at birth and years of schooling.²⁷

²² See footnote 1 for the working definition of armed conflict.

²³ Calculation by the author, based on UCDP 2012, International Monetary Fund (IMF) 2010, pp. 151-152 and UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) 2012.

²⁴ Definition by UCDP 2012: "The use of armed force between two organised armed groups, neither of which is the government of a state, which results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a year."

²⁵ Definition by UCDP 2012: "The use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organised group against civilians which results in at least 25 deaths in a year. [...] Extrajudicial killings in government facilities are excluded."

²⁶ Calculation by the author, based on UCDP 2012, IMF 2010 and UN-OHRLLS 2012.

²⁷ Calculation by the author, based on UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations 2012, UN Peacebuilding Commission 2012 and UN Development Programme 2012.

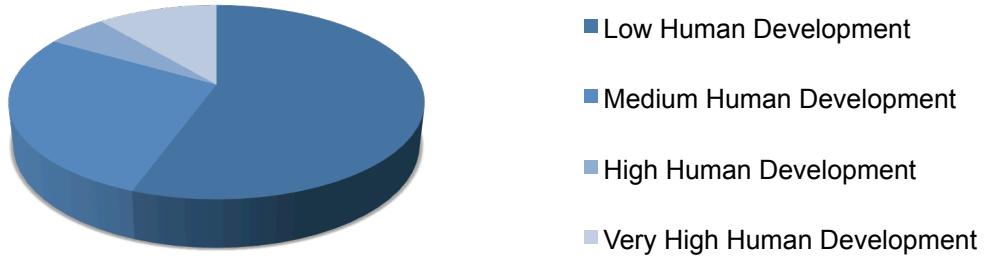


Figure 2: Countries with UN Peacekeeping Operations and/or UN Peacebuilding Missions in 2010 by level of human development. Note that, initially, the four categories of human development are defined in such a way as to encompass approximately ¼ of all countries each. Hence, countries with low human development are strongly overrepresented in terms of UN Peacekeeping Operations and Peacebuilding Missions on their territory.

The second reason why conflict-sensitivity is relevant is that development cooperation aims to bring change to the communities where it operates. Change and the transfers of power that it often involves can give rise to conflicts. Whereas arguing and bartering over who gets what, when and how is an important and continuous process among all members of society, political conflicts must not turn into violence or violent oppression by the authorities.²⁸ Therefore, development actors in fragile environments should apply tools for increased conflict-sensitivity such as Do No Harm, Peace and Conflict Assessment and Conflict-Sensitive Programme Management in a systematic and diligent manner. Moreover, they should feed their observations into the processes of the UN PBC.

The Do No Harm methodology was developed in the late 1990s based on the experience that aid is never neutral in terms of its effects on potential or actual conflict dynamics.²⁹ Development cooperation actors should therefore avoid fuelling violent conflict through the transfer of resources that their activities bring about. To ensure this, they should monitor unintended negative impacts of their projects, particularly in terms of what/who connects their beneficiaries and what/who divides them. In Sierra Leone, I gained the impression that this approach is very workable at the community-level of a development project. It is not costly and its objectives and implications can relatively easily be communicated to the target group and local partners. I successfully applied Do No Harm as a tool to discuss potential unintended impacts of a public-private partnership of a major bilateral donor, which was establishing privately run cocoa processing centres in rural Sierra Leone. The

²⁸ Wood, B. 2003.

²⁹ Anderson, M. 1999.

method allowed structuring the discussions in terms of conflict dynamics in the target communities and establishing straightforward monitoring duties to avoid the identified threats.

Whereas Do No Harm is understood as a tool for continuous monitoring of unintended side effects, the methodology of Peace and Conflict Assessment (PCA) was developed mainly as a punctual assessment. The PCA handbook³⁰ put together by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH suggests an assessment in three steps: an analysis of peace and conflict dynamics, an assessment of peacebuilding needs, an appraisal of the relevance of the development project in question against these needs, a risk management strategy. The fourth element of the PCA methodology consists of continuous impact monitoring along the lines of the Do No Harm approach. PCA is a useful and very comprehensive toolbox. As it is set at the strategic level and usually commissioned by headquarters, a PCA can enable policy-makers to shift from “working around conflict to working in and on conflict”.³¹ However, due to its complexity and the implicit requirement of extensive and potentially costly desk studies, PCA can also lead to an overburdening of project managers with paperwork instead of focusing on the constructive engagement of project staff and local partners in a dialogue on peacebuilding challenges and how to jointly overcome these.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) developed a similar methodology on the basis of an evaluation of case-specific Peace and Conflict Impact Assessments (PCIA), a precursor of GIZ’s PCA.³² In an effort to integrate conflict-sensitivity at all levels of project cycle management, SDC established Conflict-Sensitive Programme Management (CSPM) as the agency’s gold standard for projects and programmes in fragile environments. CSPM states that Do No Harm is the minimal requirement in planning, implementation and monitoring: in other words, development efforts must be vigilant not to give an advantage to dividers.³³ In addition, CSPM includes regular analysis of conflict dynamics and suggests tools to focus on the active prevention of violence, particularly by recognising increased

³⁰ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH 2007.

³¹ Paffenholz, T. & Reyhler, L. 2007, p. 85.

³² Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation 2006, p. 4.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

conflict potentials and supporting peaceful conflict transformation.³⁴ In line with the conflict prevention guidelines put forward by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD),³⁵ CSPM also encourages development actors in fragile environments to pay particular attention to clearly communicating their intentions and decision-making. For instance, it is crucial to be transparent about how and why development actors chose their beneficiaries, their partners and their employees so as to avoid grievances by rival groups.

Finally, development actors in fragile environments should not only operate in a conflict-sensitive manner, but also feed their own observations into multilateral peacebuilding fora. To understand conflict risks and dynamics, peacebuilding actors require reliable, time-critical information from people on the ground. Staff of bilateral development cooperation agencies and partner organisations can play an important role in terms of both early warning and analysis. Staff of bilateral donor agencies should try to keep their respective diplomatic counterparts up to speed about their observations. In countries under the umbrella of the UN PBC, development actors should also insure the flow of information with the resident UN Peacebuilding Mission and the respective country configuration in New York. To improve decision-making on peacebuilding, it is crucial to bridge the gap in terms of information between headquarters and the field.

5) Conclusions

Security and development are closely linked. As low income dramatically increases the risk for the outbreak of armed conflicts, development actors cannot work around the issue of violent conflict. The overwhelming majority of today's armed conflicts take place in developing countries, with least developing countries being particularly often affected by such major violence. In as much as it aims to reduce poverty, development cooperation contributes to the mitigation of structural causes of conflicts. However, economic recovery and development are very lengthy and

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³⁵ OECD 2001, p. 24.

complex processes, whereas risks of violent conflict have to be avoided in the short and medium term in order to enable long-term development.

Development actors can and should play an important supporting role in civilian peacebuilding. By focusing their work in post-conflict countries and fragile environments on one or several of the context-specific peacebuilding challenges, they can contribute to stabilisation and peaceful conflict management. Whatever the focus of their activities, development projects and programmes in conflict-prone environments should strive to systematically operate in a conflict-sensitive way. Finally, they should support multilateral peacebuilding, in particular by informing and complementing the strategic processes of the UN Peacebuilding Commission and similar fora.

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