



Mainstreaming Conflict Prevention

A Study of EU Development Cooperation with ACP Countries

The Quaker Council for European Affairs

Produced by the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA)

This study is based on research through interviews with European Commission staff in Brussels and in the delegation in Uganda, and through desk-based research. This report is the second in a series; the first is available to download at: www.quaker.org/qcea

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The Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) was founded in 1979 to promote the values of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in the European context. Our purpose is to express a Quaker vision in matters of peace, human rights, and economic justice. QCEA is based in Brussels and is an international, not-for-profit organisation under Belgian Law.

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Executive Summary

The European Union (EU) introduced the approach of ‘mainstreaming’ conflict prevention into all elements of its programming and policy-making through the European Commission Communication on Conflict Prevention of 2001 and the Partnership Agreement signed between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries in Cotonou, Benin in 2000 (the Cotonou Agreement). This has since been reiterated in several documents. For example, the European Security Strategy (2003) and the European Consensus on Development (2005) both state that there cannot be sustainable development without peace and security, and that without development and poverty eradication there will be no sustainable peace.

Despite the large number of commitments made to tackle conflict prevention and development coherently, there are still gaps between policy and practice. The Commission Communication in 2001 states that streamlined decision-making and managerial procedures are important, but a common political will to respond is fundamental. The European Council in Göteborg 2001 claimed that ‘the highest political priority will be given to improving the effectiveness and coherence of [the EU’s] external action in the field of conflict prevention’. **Yet, conflict prevention is not included as one of the cross-cutting themes in the European Consensus. This has strong implications for the programming and the availability of funds, and in order to give the issue the political backing it needs, QCEA recommends that conflict prevention be added to the cross-cutting themes.**

Progress has been made since the first commitment to mainstream conflict prevention, in 2001. It is worth mentioning the recent country strategy paper (CSP) for Uganda as one example, where conflict sensitivity is mentioned as a cross-cutting issue to be mainstreamed. Another example is the guidelines, or programming fiche, on conflict prevention provided by the Commission’s interservice Quality Support Group (iQSG) to assist the officials drafting CSPs and making decisions on programming. It seems, however, that achievements made depend to a large extent on the commitment of interested individuals within the institutions. It is clear that the governance section of the European Commission’s delegation to Uganda is committed to ensuring that conflict prevention is mainstreamed throughout the Commission’s work there. Even then, an official interviewed for this study suggests that continued advocacy by for example civil society organisations is necessary to keep the issue high on the agenda and to ensure that it is not forgotten. **QCEA appreciates the important role attributed to civil society, but also calls for mechanisms to be put in place centrally by the Commission, to ensure that conflict prevention is mainstreamed in all of its development cooperation, and especially in partner countries that are experiencing conflict or fragility.** Appropriate mechanisms could include awareness raising and training of staff and making conflict analysis mandatory in the preparations of all country and regional strategy papers.

In the case of Uganda, conflict is taken into consideration when the Commission works in the conflict-affected areas. It has completed a conflict analysis and integrates peacebuilding efforts into its work both within rural development and through the projects relating to democracy and human rights. Some of these projects deal specifically with conflict prevention, whereas others have adopted a conflict-sensitive approach, for example through the selection of implementing

partners. As was highlighted in the first report in this series,¹ such a dual-track approach is necessary in order to deal with the complexity of conflict. There seems to be a gap in the sectors focusing on the whole of Uganda, however, namely budget support and infrastructure. The conflict analysis does not cover these sectors either. A lot of the Commission's support to infrastructure is allocated through sector budget support and deals with large transport networks. Potential effects on conflict are not taken into consideration in either the planning or implementation. The same is true for general budget support (GBS), where conflict prevention is described as a sensitive issue and difficult to deal with within the dialogue related to GBS.

This report highlights one of the dangers of GBS: if government spending benefits particular groups, this practice may unintentionally lead to conflict by deepening and prolonging economic inequalities. This is also true for transport infrastructure, where efforts may or may not be perceived as prioritising certain regions. Well-functioning roads are important for economic development and well-used routes often benefit people living along the way through for example, increased trade opportunities and better access to services. **QCEA therefore recommends that greater attention be paid to conflict also in sectors dealing with countries as a whole, and emphasises that no sector can be defined as conflict-neutral.**

The European Commission does not use budget support as a strategic political tool in the same way as some other donors do and has, for example, continued to provide budget support to Uganda even through the 2006 elections. Without taking a position for or against GBS, QCEA emphasises that it needs to be conflict-sensitive. This applies especially where doubts have been expressed about the government's commitment to democracy and where, at least in the past, concerns have been raised about favouritism of certain regions or groups. Conflict is a sensitive issue but, especially where partner governments have recognised conflict as a core issue in their poverty reduction strategy papers, they should be held accountable as to how they aim to deal with this through their budgets. Accountability to the EU as a donor, if done transparently, should lead to better accountability to the citizens of the partner country, and this should be the ultimate aim. Budget support should also be accompanied by measures to support national accountability measures in the partner country, such as to the national parliament, local civil society and the media. **QCEA recommends that the risks entailed in GBS concerning conflict be studied further. Additionally, efforts need to be made to develop a strategy on how to deal with sensitive issues also in the dialogue related to GBS. QCEA calls for the European Commission to be given a stronger political mandate by the EU Member States so that it can provide GBS with the full potential of reaching its objectives of development.**

Following the recent devolution of the European Commission's external action, the delegations play a stronger role. The Directorates General (DGs) in Brussels dealing with development cooperation, DG Development, DG External Relations and EuropeAid, therefore, have an increased responsibility to support the delegations, and to ensure quality and coherence through, for example, training and providing models that are easily adaptable to the local situations. A good example of this is the programming fiche on conflict prevention provided by the iQSG. Unfortunately, delegations are not required to use this very practical tool in their work. **QCEA is of the opinion that its implementation should be mandatory for all country desk officers in DG Development and for the staff in the delegations responsible for a specific sector.**

Another aspect of importance is the overlap of responsibilities between the three DGs. All three have a unit or at least a desk responsible for conflict prevention in development, but they do not appear to coordinate sufficiently among themselves. The Lisbon Treaty² provides the basis for better coordination between the directorates and, if the Treaty is ratified, it will provide an opportunity for more efficient use of resources and to improve the potential of the DGs in

¹ QCEA, *Mainstreaming Conflict Prevention - A Study of EU Action in ACP Countries* (2008), available at <http://www.quaker.org/qcea/mainstreamingcp/index#report>

² The Lisbon Treaty was adopted by the Council of the EU in December 2007. The treaty will not apply until and unless it is ratified by each of the EU's 27 Member States. The Irish electorate voted against ratification of the treaty in June 2008, and it is still unclear if and when the treaty could come into force.

promoting conflict-sensitive development. The Lisbon Treaty also emphasises poverty eradication as the main objective of all EU external action and the **QCEA calls on the EU to honour this commitment and bear it in mind when restructuring the institutions to serve the Treaty better.**

The awareness of the commitments made and what efforts are being made to honour these varies significantly among the Commission officials contacted for the purpose of this study. One or two mentioned that there is training available, but it does not appear to be sufficiently wide-spread. **QCEA believes that an effort needs to be made to raise awareness among officials of the complex dynamics of conflict, of the potential of Commission support to improve the situation, but also of the risks of development aid fuelling further violence. QCEA believes that practical and results-oriented training needs to be developed, which should be based on the programming fiche for conflict prevention and on the European Commission's checklist of root-causes of conflict. Such training should be made widely available to staff both at headquarters in Brussels and in the delegations.**

The European Commission's development cooperation in ACP countries is funded through several financial instruments. Neither the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) nor the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) make any clear reference to conflict prevention. The short-term Instrument for Stability (IfS) cannot replace long-term development programmes, and QCEA is disappointed that this situation has been allowed to develop. Considering that the European Commission's competence in relation to peacebuilding has been clarified through the recent Court Case there is no reason why this situation should remain. **QCEA believes that if the EIDHR and the DCI specifically mentioned how they could be used for peacebuilding they would become more powerful instruments, which would be a step on the way to more effective and sustainable development cooperation.** One aspect that, unfortunately, is not covered specifically by the instruments is the need to ensure a smooth transition from short-term responses under the IfS to long-term development cooperation. **The mid-term review (2008/9) of the financial instruments provides a good opportunity for these improvements.**

Most development cooperation with ACP countries is funded through the European Development Fund (EDF), however. The connection between development and peace and the importance of working on conflict prevention are well covered in the Cotonou Agreement, which governs this instrument. There is therefore no reason why the EDF should not fund conflict-sensitive development. The EDF is also used to fund the African Peace Facility (APF), which mainly funds African military peacekeeping operations. **QCEA recommends a stronger focus on civilian peacekeeping, and that a greater part of the APF be spent on capacity building of the African institutions.** If this were the case it would be more acceptable to use money ear-marked for development to fund it.

The EDF is not included in the EU budget, but funded through contributions from the Member States. As a consequence, decisions are made by a committee of representatives from the Member States, while the other financial instruments are governed through co-decision between the Council of the EU and the European Parliament. It also means that the Parliament does not have the right to monitor the implementation of the EDF. **QCEA recommends that the EDF be included in the budget so that the Parliament can democratically control that the Commission implements its commitments concerning conflict prevention and development.**

The European Commission's conflict prevention policy will be evaluated shortly. The process has just started and it is estimated that it will be concluded in 2010. QCEA believes that the evaluation is a good opportunity for the Commission to scrutinise its efforts. **QCEA recommends that the mainstreaming of conflict prevention in development cooperation be made an important part of the evaluation, since conflict-sensitive development has a great potential of prevention and of tackling the root causes of conflict. QCEA further calls for concrete conclusions on how to better coordinate between the different DGs and ensure the effective implementation of commitments made.**

Throughout this study, the importance of a thorough conflict analysis has been emphasised. There is an apparent lack of conflict analysis in the current CSPs. The recent peer review, by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD-DAC), of the European Community's development cooperation, likewise, identified conflict analysis as one of the weaknesses of the Commission's work. Since then commitments have been made by the Council of the EU to improve the situation within the process of drafting CSPs. **QCEA welcomes this development and recommends that the European Commission makes this a priority in the near future, so that conflict analysis of high quality will be part of the process in drafting the next strategy papers.** A good starting point for analysis could be the Commission's checklist of root causes of conflict. As suggested by an official at EuropeAid, it would be good for the Commission to contract experts familiar both with conflict sensitivity and the relevant country. The Commission needs to start considering how it should do this, and draft terms of references if it is to be carried through effectively in the next CSPs. **QCEA also believes that such an analysis needs to be updated annually since conflict and fragile situations often transform quickly.**

In an increasingly interconnected world, progress in the areas of development, security and human rights must go hand in hand. There will be no development without security and no security without development.

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