Targeted research papers for AusAID

Conflict Prevention in the Pacific

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Executive summary

Conflict prevention
- Conflict analyses discern between root causes, proximate causes and triggers.
- There are two types of conflict prevention: structural/long term and operational/short term.
- The term 'peacebuilding' is often taken to overlap with conflict prevention in post-conflict situations.
- Conflict sensitive development assistance cannot provide guarantees that violent conflict will not take place. Rather, conflict sensitive development assistance can contribute to the prevention of violent conflict by ensuring it does not cause conflict, and by attempting to target it in such a way that it strengthens those elements in society that can work against violent conflict.

Conflict analysis
- Conflict analyses identify the causes, actors and dynamics of conflict.
- Conflict analyses identify a wide array of political, economic and social factors as causes. This range of factors represents a recognition that conflict is never mono-causal.
- Early warning methodologies are analyses of *potential* conflict.

Peace and conflict impact assessment
- Peace and conflict impact assessments are tools to assess the impact of development assistance interventions on peace and conflict. They are based on the premise that aid is not neutral in conflict prone situations.
- One of the best-known methodologies is the *Do No Harm* framework, which analyses conflict sensitive situations according to *dividers* and *connectors* in society.
- Peace and conflict impact assessments can inform development assistance to ensure it is sensitive the conflict vulnerabilities and does no harm. They can also help direct aid so that it support the factors in society that can help prevent conflict and build peace.

Conflict in the Pacific
- Pacific Island states suffer in varying degrees from conditions such as poverty, poor economic growth and the weakness of state institutions. Although many of these issues can be identified as root causes of recent violent conflict, this does not mean that all Pacific Island states facing these issues are vulnerable to large-scale violent conflict.
- Aggravating factors such as cleavages in society, the spread of small arms, and the political interference of police and/or armed forces have been important in many of the conflicts in the region, but in different ways.
- Triggers of violent conflict are often linked to personal motivations.

Conflict sensitive development in the Pacific

- Conflict sensitive development assistance can contribute to the prevention of violent conflict in the Pacific, but it is important to be modest about its role. It is difficult to predict the outbreak of violent conflict precisely. External actors can face constraints to conflict prevention efforts for reasons of sovereignty but also because of overriding strategic political considerations.
- Anthropological research shows that local level conflict can be part of everyday life in Pacific Island communities, and can play a transformative role in natural processes of change. External actors focusing on conflict prevention must take care not to preclude these positive roles played by conflict.

Different levels of conflict

- The Pacific region has seen some instances of large-scale violent conflict. Because these conflicts are often triggered by personal motivations and manipulations, their exact prediction is difficult.
- Local level conflict is the most relevant to the people in Pacific Island societies.

Local ownership of conflict prevention initiatives

- External support for conflict resolution processes needs to be based on and directed by local knowledge and ownership of these processes. Analyses and impact assessments need to be conducted in such a way as to empower people.

No checklist approaches

- Development assistance can impact on different conflict vulnerabilities within society, and sometimes these impacts may conflict. Therefore, conflict sensitive development assistance cannot be reduced to a check-list of responses. Rather, it implies a careful weighing up of impacts of interventions on different conflict vulnerability factors in society.

Attribution problems of peace and conflict impact assessments

- It is difficult to attribute conflict prevention or peacebuilding outcomes to development assistance interventions, as evidenced by three recent evaluations of community development projects in the region. However, it is important that evaluations capture outcomes related to social harmony or associational life in communities.
- Recent evaluations of community development projects show that income-generation projects can have divisive impacts on communities.

Articulating conflict prevention aims in project design

- A first step towards addressing the problems in attributing conflict prevention and peacebuilding outcomes is the articulation of such aims in the design of development assistance interventions.

Flexibility

- Given the complexity of conflict and its dynamic nature, it is important that interventions in conflict vulnerable societies can adapt to changing circumstances. This can clash with the extensive reporting and monitoring requirements of many donor-driven development assistance interventions.

Long-term involvement

- The need for flexibility leads to a need for longer timeframes. Conflict prevention and peacebuilding ultimately are long-term processes. Since it can be difficult for a single donor to commit to such long-term involvement, coordination between different actors is important.

Focus on process

- A focus on the process of the delivery of development assistance is important to ensure conflict sensitive development. Such a focus can bring out conflict prevention and peacebuilding outcomes of projects.

Implementation of analyses within AusAID

- The types of analyses discussed in this paper can best inform development assistance policy when they are written in a concise way, and are complemented by the verbal briefings of findings.

Conflict sensitive approaches of other actors

- It is important that other actors intervening in societies vulnerable to conflict, such as international companies, are also informed about how their work can impact on peace and conflict.

Conflict analysis and 'fragile state' analysis

- The literature on 'fragile' or 'failed' states often conflates the weakness of state institutions with a vulnerability to violent conflict. However, the weakness of state institutions is only one partial cause of (potential) conflict. This means that not all Pacific Island states with weak institutions are vulnerable to conflict. It also means that the strengthening of the workings of state institutions alone does not automatically prevent conflict.

Introduction

The decade since the early 1990s has witnessed the growth of a field of research and practice aimed at resolving and preventing violent conflict. Research on violent conflict has led to a number of different theories on causes of violent conflict, many of them based on the study of large-scale, protracted conflicts in Africa and the Balkans. Advocates of conflict prevention have linked longer-term root causes of violent conflict to aspects of underdevelopment, and tensions inherent in development processes.

Although the exact links between underdevelopment and conflict remain unclear, most observers agree that much of the world's most violent and protracted conflict takes place in developing countries. As the humanitarian aid world became involved in providing relief in the complex environments of the protracted wars of the 1990s, it became clear that in these instances, aid is not neutral but becomes part of the context of conflict.

These two links between conflict and development – underdevelopment as a root cause of conflict, and development assistance as having an impact on conflict situations – have led many aid agencies and donors to incorporate conflict awareness into their strategies and programs. Different tools have been developed to analyse potential conflict and find ways in which programs can be made more conflict sensitive.

These concerns have now arrived in the Pacific region, as several bilateral and multilateral donors have become interested in these tools and methodologies. This research report will first briefly set out the main concepts used in the discourse on conflict prevention, and present a summary of the tools and methodologies that have been developed in recent years to inform conflict sensitive development assistance.

Next, this report builds on the analysis of relevant previous conflict analyses and conflict impact assessments[1] in the Pacific region, to address a number of issues relating to conflict sensitive development in the Pacific. These issues were put forward during consultations based on an earlier draft of this report.[2] The report also provides an overview of different organizations and donor agencies in the region that are involved in conflict prevention.[3]

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[1] A list of previous conflict analyses and impact assessments in the Pacific region can be found in annex 1.
[2] This report has benefited from consultations with relevant organisations in Suva, as well as a workshop at the ANU in December 2005. Our thanks to everyone for their important contributions, and to Oxfam Australia and Oxfam NZ for allowing the inclusion of their evaluations in this report.
[3] An overview of recent initiatives in the Pacific related to conflict prevention can be found in annex 2.

Conflict prevention

Conflict analyses often present conflict as a series of phases that are cyclical: from a non-violent dispute, to a violent conflict, and back to a dispute again if the violence is halted with a cease-fire agreement, after which the actual resolution of the conflict can follow.

Many conflict analyses discern between *root causes* – longer-term, structural elements in society that may lead to conflict; *proximate causes* – those aggravating factors and medium term developments that make the possibility of violent conflict more explicit; and *triggers* – those factors that push a volatile situation over the threshold into violent conflict.

Although often left undefined, most of the literature on the links between conflict and development focuses on large-scale, protracted armed conflict with significant numbers of casualties, which often implicates or impacts on the government in the country in question. It is important to note that the Pacific region has not seen many large-scale violent conflicts of a long duration. We will return to this point in subsequent sections of this paper.

The literature on conflict prevention distinguishes between two types of conflict prevention. *Short-term* or *operational* conflict prevention refers to action to prevent immanent crises. *Long-term or structural* prevention refers to the underlying root causes of violent conflict.

Since the early 1990s, there has been an increasing involvement by external actors in post-conflict interventions. Interventions have typically focused on peace settlements, and the economic and political reconstruction of war-torn societies. These latter activities are often labelled 'peacebuilding', a term coined by former UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali's *Agenda for Peace* to designate 'action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict' (UN, 1992). Therefore, in a post-conflict context, the concepts of peacebuilding and conflict prevention are often used in an overlapping way.

Rather than a specific policy sector, or a single technique or method of intervention, Lund defines conflict prevention as a 'pro-active orientation, a potential policy and bureaucratic "culture of prevention" that ideally cuts across a wide range of major policy sectors and organizations' (Lund, 2003: 8). Since international organisations are already present in a wide array of post-conflict or unstable countries, the mainstreaming of conflict prevention concerns essentially means a re-orientation of analyses and interventions so that they take concerns about the prevention of violent conflict into account.

It is important to stress the tensions inherent in assuming that development assistance can and does play an integral role in conflict prevention. The term 'conflict prevention' perhaps promises more than development assistance is capable of

delivering. *Conflict sensitive development assistance* (a better term perhaps) to date cannot provide guarantees that violent conflict will not take place. Rather, when we talk about the connections between development assistance and conflict prevention, we are looking for ways in which development assistance can be implemented in a conflict sensitive manner. Conflict sensitive development assistance can contribute to the prevention of violent conflict by ensuring it does not cause conflict, and by attempting to target it in such a way that it strengthens those elements in society that can work against violent conflict.

Tools and methodologies: conflict (vulnerability) analyses

There are a number of methodologies available to identify potential vulnerabilities and deconstruct the structural, security, political and economic factors that can create conditions of conflict. Methodologies may differ in approach but they all use similar classifications and indicators in order to identify key vulnerabilities to and causes of conflict. These *conflict analyses* use a framework or set of approaches to identify the key underlying factors contributing to the conflict; the roles played by the various parties to the conflict; and the conflict dynamics. These factors are interlinked and can be assessed at a country-wide or local level. The range of structural factors incorporated in any conflict analysis represents a recognition that armed conflict is never mono-causal but the result of intersecting political, economic, and societal factors.

Early warning methodologies refer exclusively to the analysis of *potential* rather than *actual* conflict situations. It has been pointed out by many observers that the collection of early warning data, regardless of how alarmist its nature, does not automatically lead to intervention. In other words, early warning and early response are not always linked. When contemplating options for conflict prevention, it is paramount to keep in mind the specific circumstances, options and constraints of the potential interveners.

Tools and methodologies: (peace and) conflict impact assessments

The interest in the assessment of the impact of interventions on conflict situations stems from the critical reflections by academics, donors and inter-governmental agencies of the causes of the violent escalation of conflicts in Somalia (1993), Rwanda (1994) and Liberia (1996). These reflections ascertained that the activities of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance had not been monitored adequately, particularly in terms of the negative impacts (albeit unintended) on conflict dynamics. Against this background, awareness rose of the need to analyse the interaction between project work and conflict, and numerous organisations have looked in greater depth at this issue. These critical questions were first put forward in the field of humanitarian aid, but the growing realisation of the importance of the impacts of project activities on the course of conflict and vice versa rapidly led to a more systematic examination of these issues in development cooperation as well. The

best known of the methodologies to arise from this era is the *Do No Harm/Local Capacities for Peace* framework, the main premise of which is:

'When international assistance is given in the context of a violent conflict, it becomes a part of that context and thus also of the conflict. … When given in conflict settings, aid can reinforce, exacerbate, and prolong the conflict; it can also help to reduce tensions and strengthen people's capacities to disengage from fighting and find peaceful options for solving problems' (Anderson, 1999: 1).

The *Do No Harm/ Local Capacities for Peace* framework analyses conflict prone and conflict affected situations according to two key elements: those systems, structures, processes and actors that *divide* society, and those that *connect* society. Consequently, the Do No Harm framework can help ensure that an intervention does not do harm by negatively influencing conflict dynamics. For example, development assistance can promote further conflict by unfairly distributing monies and projects so that community divisions are reinforced rather than healed such as happened in Somalia; by distorting the local micro economy as happened in Cambodia; by introducing and promoting systems of inequity where some are privileged over the majority; by creating a system of dependency; and by unwittingly engaging with belligerents rather than supporting local peacemakers (Anderson 1999, Spence and McLeod, 2002).

In certain circumstances, intervention may be targeted in such a way that it helps to strengthen the factors in a society that work against conflict by focusing upon the connectors. An excellent example of this is the UNICEF Children as Zones of Peace in Sri Lanka, where development assistance is specifically targeted at education and health initiatives that benefit both Sinhalese and Tamil children.

The Do No Harm framework is one example of a range of methodologies that have become known as *Peace and Conflict Impact Assessments (PCIA)*. These sets of tools and methodologies have been devised to monitor and evaluate (potential) conflict and the impact of development assistance on conflict situations. They are a relatively new addition, still evolving and the subject of much dispute amongst academics and practitioners as to their use and validity. The objective of a PCIA is to monitor the impacts of development assistance on peace and conflict dynamics and conversely, the impacts of peace and conflict dynamics on development assistance. PCIAs can analyse the effects that development assistance interventions have on the mitigation or exacerbation of already existent conflicts; their contributions to building peace by addressing the root causes and consequences of conflict; and how they may increase the potential for conflict by creating new tensions through ill-informed programming decisions. Impact assessments can be made before the start of an intervention, during its lifespan, or at its end.

Conflict in the Pacific region

In recent years, a number of crises and violent conflicts in the Pacific region have prompted rising concerns amongst observers, and images of an 'arc of instability', stretching around the Northeast of Australia. Although the region had earlier seen a

long-lasting conflict in Bougainville, wide-spread violence in East Timor and Irian Jaya, and the 1987 coups in Fiji, it was the year 2000, with its coups in Fiji and Solomon Islands closely following one another, that seems to have (re) ignited these concerns. Comparisons with Africa and the Balkans were made, followed by a number of reports casting (parts of) the Pacific region within the literature of 'failed', 'failing' or 'fragile' states. These developments are also linked to concerns about the vulnerability of the region in terms of access for terrorists and transnational crime.

Although concerns about violent conflict, the weakness of state institutions, and terrorism are sometimes placed under the same heading, the focus of this paper is on the prevention of violent conflict in the Pacific region. This leads to a first observation that the region has not seen any *inter-state* violent conflict in recent times, nor is this likely to develop in the foreseeable future. The focus therefore is on (potential) *intra-state* or *internal* violent conflict.

Instances of state-level, wide-spread *internal* conflict in the Pacific region have been mainly confined to Melanesia. Furthermore, although conflicts in Bougainville, East Timor and Irian Jaya have been of a significant scale, the conflicts in Fiji, and 1998 – 2003 tensions in Solomon Islands have been relatively small. This is not to belittle their occurrence or dismiss the grief they caused, but it is an important observation to make for the purpose of this paper, since the conflict prevention tools and methodologies under discussion here have developed in the context of the large-scale, protracted violent conflicts that took place in Africa, the Balkans and elsewhere.

It is obvious that the Pacific Island states face a number of serious challenges. Aid providers are attempting to help address issues such as poor economic growth, poverty, rapid population growth, unemployment, the weakness of state institutions, corruption, uneven distribution of development benefits between urban and rural areas, and questions surrounding the use of land. Many of these issues, in varying combinations, can be identified as *root causes* of recent violent conflict in the region. However, for violent conflict to erupt, other elements need to come into play – *aggravating factors* such as cleavages in society, the roles played by military and police forces, and the availability of weapons.

Across the Pacific region, these factors have played a role in the armed conflicts that have occurred. Although in general, the illicit arms trade in the Pacific region is relatively small - with the exception of guns coming into Papua New Guinea - a recent survey shows how profoundly disruptive they can be on communities in Pacific Island states (Alpers & Twyford, 2003: 16 & 29-53). In Solomon Islands, people have expressed how taking the guns out of the hands of young people is only a first step; the question now becomes how to take guns out of their minds (UNDP, 2004: 20). In both Solomon Islands and Fiji, armed conflict was related to the interference of military and/or police forces in political affairs. In Papua New Guinea, the PNG Defence Forces have long suffered from instability, although observers seem to estimate the risk of an actual military coup in PNG as low (Fraenkel, 2003: 11).

Cleavages played a role in the violent conflict that broke out between two militia groups from the islands of Guadalcanal and Malaita in Solomon Islands. In Bougainville, violent conflict broke out initially between a group of Bougainvilleans directly affected by the Panguna mine and PNG government troops. Fiji presents a classic conflict scenario, with its two very different and divided ethnic groups. However, it is important to note that cleavages such as these are not stagnant, but can develop over time. Identities can shift and different cleavages can form, and these processes are closely linked to wider processes of development (Fry, 2000; Reilly, 2004). Although there is no one ethnic group of Malaitan or Guale people in Solomon Islands, the large-scale migration of Malaitan people to Guadalcanal combined with other factors led to increasing tensions between Malaitan and Guadalcanal people over a number of years. As the war in Bougainville continued, different groups took different sides, and often switched from one to another, with traditional conflicts being fought as a part of the overarching war of secession (Böge & Garasu, 2004). Even in Fiji, the overarching cleavage between ethnic and Indo-Fijians masks divisions within these two groups (Reilly, 2004).

Although all these aggravating factors have come into play in the different conflicts in the region, no one factor alone has caused violent conflict. Rather, each of the conflict scenarios as they have played out in different Pacific Island states have seen a different series of events, with different roles for the issues identified here in each. Furthermore, the *triggers* that have pushed situations into violent conflict have often been linked to personal motivations and power play, eg. in Fiji and in Solomon Islands. It is clear that, even though some of the Pacific Island states may face similar problems, this does not mean they are all prone to outbreaks of violent conflict (Fry, 2000).

That same point has also been made in regard to Vanuatu. In 2001, AusAID commissioned a report on the sources of instability in Vanuatu. The report notes how Vanuatu exhibits a number of sources of instability similar to those in other Pacific Island states, eg. the interference by the Vanuatu Mobile Force in politics; high levels of unemployment; and political instability. However, the possibility of large-scale, protracted conflict is judged to be limited, because of the ethnic diversity in Vanuatu, and the strength of indigenous conflict resolution strategies (Morgan, 2001). A more recent examination commissioned by UNIFEM of the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict in Vanuatu affirms these conclusions, based in part on interviews and focus group discussions with ni-Vanuatu (McLeod, 2004).

Conflict sensitive development in the Pacific

Development assistance in the Pacific region can contribute to conflict prevention by ensuring that it is sensitive to conflict vulnerabilities and helps to strengthen the capacities of Pacific Island societies to handle conflict in a non-violent manner. Conflict analyses can inform development assistance in conflict prone societies so that it can be steered away from aggravating conflict vulnerabilities, and directed in

such a way as to strengthen capacity for non-violent conflict resolution. Peace and conflict impact assessments can inform a specific development assistance program or project, to see how it has impacted or is likely to impact on conflict vulnerabilities and capacities for peace.

Although the tools and methodologies outlined above can help analyse Pacific Island countries so as to inform conflict sensitive development, there is a need to be modest about the role that development assistance can play. Conflicts are very complex and dynamic processes. Although conflict analyses can help determine the factors, actors and dynamics of conflict processes, it is not possible to predict the precise outbreak of large-scale violent conflict.

Even when external actors possess a firm knowledge of conflict dynamics, or analyses have warned of impending crises, involvement in conflict processes is a highly political enterprise that can face many constraints, the most obvious of which the fact that external involvement in internal conflict processes can be difficult for reasons of sovereignty. In addition, higher level political strategic concerns are often placed above the need for assistance to internal conflict; the case of Australia's initial attitude to events in East Timor being a good example.

The strategic interests of external actors can have other impacts on (potential) conflict and its prevention. The Pacific rim states each have their own relations with, and interests in the different Pacific Island states. This is not only the case for (former) colonisers like Australia, New Zealand, the US and France. More recently, China and Taiwan have also been seeking to assert their influence. In terms of the relationship to (potential) conflict, these influences can be negative, for example where handouts to politicians influence local politics. They can also be positive, for example where relations with other states bring the possibility of emigration to alleviate population pressure (Fry, 2000).

Furthermore, conflict is often part of change processes. For example, a number of observers have argued that conflicts are part and parcel of daily life in the highlands of Papua New Guinea. Social rules are not written down, so argument becomes an important part of reaching agreement. In addition, as Weiner puts it "(…)it is the tension, as it were, of unbalanced and uncompleted exchanges which maintains the social relationship between the original parties [to a conflict]" (Weiner, McLeod & Yarra, 2002). External actors can try to support the prevention of violent conflict, but in doing so care must be taken not to preclude the natural and transformative roles played by conflict more generally.

Different levels of conflict

As noted earlier, most of the literature on conflict and development focuses on large-scale, protracted violent conflict. However, in the Pacific region, this kind of conflict has been relatively rare. East Timor, West Papua, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea (Bougainville) have all seen violent conflicts that implicated or impacted

upon the state, with substantial numbers of casualties But violent conflict more often takes place at different levels of society, for example between different clan groups in the highlands of Papua New Guinea. In Solomon Islands, the Townsville Peace Agreement brought an end to the conflict between two armed groups, but subsequent years saw a rise in general law and order problems that are now seen to have been part of a 1998-2003 'period of tensions'. In Papua New Guinea too, and in other Pacific Island states, rising levels of crime, in particular in urban areas, are a matter of great concern.

These different levels of violent conflict and the roles played by conflict more generally in Pacific societies lead to questions regarding what conflict aid interventions should aim to prevent. Manuhuia Barcham makes a similar point in a recent working paper where he criticises the tendency of donors to see all conflict as negative, as something in need of resolution, whereas in Pacific Island societies – as seen earlier – conflict and community may actually be part of one another (Barcham, 2005: 2). How do we make sure that we take into account the positive and necessary role that conflict can play?

Because the outbreak of large-scale conflict entails complex processes, and triggers are often related to domestic political and personal power plays, they are very difficult to predict, especially for external observers. Early warning analyses can indicate conflict vulnerability factors in societies that can be monitored, but the prediction of large-scale conflict entails a thorough knowledge of the local cultural context, politics, and personalities.

Local level conflict is the most relevant to the majority of Pacific Islanders. The vulnerability analysis of Vanuatu states that 'Because the seeds of graver conflict may be contained within these grievances [i.e. low-level conflicts] (…) organic conflict resolution systems should be considered essential means of ensuring peace and stability' (Morgan, 2001, p.4). The UNIFEM analysis of women, peace and security in Vanuatu also states that 'it is these conflicts, namely inter-personal and inter-group conflicts at the community level, with which ni-Vanuatu are primarily concerned' (McLeod, 2004: 17).

Local ownership of conflict prevention initiatives

Local level conflict and conflict resolution processes are difficult for external actors to understand, let alone support. Examples of externally assisted dialogue include the Talanoa process in Fiji that has been led by Dr Sitiveni Halapua of the East-West Center in Hawaii since the coup in May 2000. More recently, Dr Halapua facilitated dialogue and reconciliation processes in the Solomon Islands, with Tok Stori gatherings on Isabel and the Weather Coast (Pacific Islands Development Program, 2006). Local ownership of non-violent conflict resolution processes is paramount. If external actors want to contribute to the support and strengthening of these indigenous processes, then local knowledge needs to direct this support.

An inherent difficulty with the promotion and use of conflict prevention and analysis methodologies concerns the ownership of the information. If external interventions into conflict are predicated upon an externally driven analysis, responses may well be informed by the particular geo-strategic and political interests of those that fund the analysis. The decision on the part of bilateral donors to pledge monies is essentially a political one. Shared understandings and analyses from both an internal and external perspective are crucial to finding the most appropriate methods for addressing conflict. If conflict analyses and responses to conflict are going to be relevant then they will need to be well grounded in the context and sensitive to the social and cultural nuances of that context. Some of the recent conflict analyses and impact assessments provide relevant examples.

In 2001/2, Save the Children Fiji and Save the Children New Zealand decided to trial a Participatory Impact Assessment (PIA) to measure the effectiveness of the Peace and Reconciliation Project they established with the Women's Action for Change play theatre group. This project had brought 53 performances to schools across Fiji after the May 2000 coup, aiming to open up space for dialogue on issues of racism after the civil disturbances that had followed the coup. Through a series of workshops, data was collected from several communities where the WAC theatre had played. The PIA was conducted in such a way as to maximize community participation through the identification and selection of committee members and facilitators (Safe the Children 2002).

Similarly, the UNIFEM Gendered Early Warning project trained and employed Solomon Islander staff to direct the process of the project, run the workshops, and collect the data (UNIFEM, 2005). For the report on the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict in Vanuatu, the author held individual and small-group interviews, as well as larger community focus groups (McLeod, 2004: 5-6). As a result, the report provides significant insights into the types of conflict that are the main concern of ni-Vanuatu, as well as the methods used to diffuse these conflicts, and ways in which external actors can support these processes (McLeod, 2004: 29-32).

No checklist approaches

Conflict analysis and impact assessment tools often generate a list of (potential) causes of violent conflicts, organised according to different categories such as political, social, economic, etc. For example, the UNIFEM Gendered Early Warning Reports of Solomon Islands include a list of indicators that are assessed according to their level of risk by means of community surveys. Each of these indicators is then complemented by response options at the community and national level (UNIFEM, 2004).

However, development assistance programs can impact on different factors within society, and sometimes these impacts may conflict. For example, in Solomon Islands, concerns about the erosion of traditional governance, including capacity for non-violent local conflict resolution, are wide-spread, and are said to be one of the root causes of conflict (UNDP, 2004). However, to support the strengthening of these traditional structures may further undermine the position of young people, who are often not given a voice in traditional structures. The alienation of young people was an aggravating factor in the conflict, with alienated and unemployed youth presenting a ready pool of potential fighters. Therefore, the targeting of traditional governance structures and young people can conflict in terms of conflict sensitive development.

In another example, the conflict vulnerability analysis of Vanuatu also highlights the tensions inherent in designing and implementing programs to address structural vulnerabilities. It recognises that indigenous conflict resolution strategies have to date effectively dealt with conflict, and suggests that strengthening these systems will ensure a conflict preventative effect. However, the analysis also points to the fact that strengthening indigenous conflict resolution systems will mean strengthening the power of chiefs and this may in due course lead to conflicts in priorities and policy for organisations that are aiming to empower women and youth (Morgan, 2001).

The vulnerability analysis of Vanuatu also points to higher-level potential policy contradictions. Donors often place a heavy emphasis on the need for economic growth when providing development assistance. However, this may bring the exploitation of resources, which has often been linked to conflict in the Pacific region where it has been imposed by central governments, and where the benefits have been distributed unequally. (Morgan, 2001).

From the above examples, it is clear that conflict sensitive development assistance calls for a careful weighing up of impacts of interventions on different conflict vulnerability factors in society. Rather than providing a checklist of responses for policy makers to 'tick off', conflict analyses should be used to inform decision-making processes so that interventions can take conflict vulnerabilities into account.

Attribution problems of peace and conflict impact assessments

An often-cited problem of PCIA is that of attribution. This problematic plays out on two levels. Firstly, the question is how to attribute conflict prevention impacts to a specific intervention. How to prove that a specific action has resulted in a non-event? How long should there be no violent conflict before an effort can been deemed 'successful conflict prevention'? Secondly, it is difficult to show the impact of one particular program on the bigger picture or a wider peacebuilding strategy (see for example Anderson & Olson, 2003: 14). In other words, how to link an impact at the *micro*-level to the *macro*-level? How to prove that a positive result in conflict prevention or peacebuilding in particular communities actually contributes to the prevention of violent conflict at a country level?

In May 2004, Oxfam New Zealand produced an evaluation of its Bougainville Community Development Program (1998 – 2003). This program provided seed funding for a number of community based programs in Bougainville, and resulted in the establishment of the local NGO *Osi Tanata*. The report confirms the difficulties of finding 'objective' indicators to measure the extent to which the program brought about rehabilitation, especially regarding the goal of reconciliation: 'While there is little quantitative evidence of the extent to which reconciliation has occurred, there was a strong feeling among informants, and considerable qualitative data, that suggests that here lies a potentially significant and lasting impact of the work (…)'(Part A p.11). Qualitative evidence referred to included the fact that opposing sides were working together in project-related activities; increased social harmony in project communities; and the reconnection of youths/ex-combatants to traditional power structures.

The PCIA of AusAID's Community Peace and Restoration Fund (CPRF) in Solomon Islands (2000-2004) assessed the effectiveness of the CPRF in addressing recovery needs and contributing to longer-term peacebuilding. It is partially based on anecdotal evidence from community focus groups as to how a CPRF project impacted upon associational life within communities. The PCIA found that CPRF contributed to the revitalisation of associational life by focusing on projects that benefited the entire community rather than individuals, and by using local resources, labour and expertise. (AusAID, 2005: 11-12).

In March 2005, Oxfam Australia produced an evaluation of their Small Grant Scheme in Solomon Islands (2001-2004). A partial aim of this evaluation was to examine the peacebuilding impacts of the projects. To do so, the evaluation team combined a number of peace indicators with community definitions of peace to create four categories of peacebuilding impact: an increased ability to meet basic needs; improved community relationships and cooperation; decrease in conflict, crime, violence and anti-social behaviour; and the empowerment of women and young people (Oxfam Aus, 2004: 9-10).

These three initiatives all attempted to support community development in conflict prone situations. Both the Oxfam and the CPRF interventions noted how income-generation projects often divided communities, rather than rebuild trust and associational life. The Oxfam report concludes: '(…) income generation projects (…) generally did not have a significant impact on peace building within communities. Given the preference for income generation within family units rather than community groups, the projects have encouraged families to work separately to earn income for themselves (…)'. Indeed, the CPRF also noted the divisive impacts of income-generating projects. Based on this, the Fund decided to shift focus to the (re)building of infrastructure such as schools and clinics that could benefit whole communities.

These program evaluations testify to the difficulties of capturing outcomes related to social harmony or associational life in communities, but also show the importance of doing exactly that. The evidence captured shows how people affected by conflict are able to recognise the peace and conflict impacts of assistance. Mary Anderson states that '[people] 'know' whether an aid agency's programmes fuel the fires of suspicion and competition or are seen as fair, even-handed and inclusive.' (Anderson, 2003: 11).

Articulating conflict prevention aims in project design

One of the main recommendations to result from the Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment of the CPRF, is the need to specify conflict prevention or peacebuilding aspects of interventions in the design, so that they can be adequately monitored and clearly articulated to other actors: 'Clear definitions of what is meant by contributing to peace and development and to whom the activity is referring when it advocates building peaceful relationships are necessary to set the parameters of what the activity can be expected to achieve' (AusAID, 2005: 8).

Similarly, the analysis of the Oxfam Small Grants Scheme in Solomon Islands recommends that '(…) if peace building impacts are desired, this will need to be specifically factored into the design and implementation of the scheme itself, and of projects supported by it' (Oxfam Aus 2005: 18). This point is also confirmed by an informant quoted in the evaluation of the Oxfam New Zealand Bougainville Program: "They [Oxfam staff] are seeing that just by getting people together, to plan together to interact they are promoting confidence and trust and co-operation. There needs to be a range of indicators beyond just income generation. This would reveal positive impact in terms of social harmony" (Oxfam NZ, 2004a: 32)."

Flexibility

The need for flexibility in interventions in societies that are vulnerable to conflict is raised in much of the literature on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. This has been brought out in particular with regards to the need to match initial humanitarian intervention to alleviate immediate crisis situations with longer-term development assistance, but it is important in a broader sense as well. Given the complexity of conflict and its dynamic nature, it is important that interventions in conflict vulnerable societies can adapt to changing circumstances. In addition, these interventions should be able to react to opportunities that may present themselves to strengthen local capacities to resolve conflict in a non-violent manner, or support space for dialogue to diffuse crisis situations and prevent violent conflict.

The 6-year program of Oxfam New Zealand in Bougainville is a case in point. Throughout these years, the program changed its mandate to adapt to local circumstances. Initially, Oxfam focused on the education sector, and combined relief

activities with the piloting of a community development model. Once basic education was re-established throughout the island, the program switched focus to vocational skills training for income generation. This was again adapted once the promotion of social harmony in communities was discovered to be an important possible 'side effect' of the projects. Reconciliation and increased social harmony came to be seen as a major goal of the program (Oxfam NZ, 2004b). The conclusion of the evaluation report confirms the importance of this flexibility: 'As a result of the reflective and adaptive mode of work, the approach taken constantly evolved to the unique and dynamic situation in post-conflict Bougainville' (Oxfam NZ, 2004a: 33). The CPRF PCIA also confirms the need for flexibility to ensure conflict sensitive aid interventions. The fact that the CPRF was set up as a fund ensured that a certain level of flexibility was built into the design of the intervention (AusAID, 2005: 22).

It is important to point to the contradiction between this need for flexibility and the conditions that are regularly attached to development assistance. The frequency of the reporting necessary in many donor-driven projects to meet funding demands, and the efforts necessary to ensure that this is done in a timely and efficient fashion, can constrain activities that are truly responsive to changing conditions.

Long timeframes

The need for flexibility leads to a need for longer time frames. The PCIA of the CPRF provides a relevant example. Although the structure of the CPRF as a fund provided flexibility, the PCIA found that the Fund had not changed its overall strategic direction significantly during its four years of operation. One of the reasons for this was the fact that it was operating according to short time frames which were extended several times (AusAID, 2005: 23).

Because it is difficult to expect a single donor to fund very long-term interventions, coordination with other actors, and finding a place within an overarching plan or vision for the future of a society is paramount for sustainable peacebuilding and the prevention of future conflict. John Paul Lederach is one of many writers on peacebuilding who has emphasized the need to for longer timeframes when aiming to prevent conflict and build sustainable peace. He argues the need to reconceptualise time frames to move away from a quick fix mentality where the urgency of the situation requires a rapid ad hoc response, to a longer-term view of the multiplicity of peacebuilding activities, all of which require time for conceptualisation, enactment and outcome (Lederach, 1997)

Focus on process

A focus on process in the delivery of development assistance is important to ensure conflict sensitive development. The decision of the CPRF to employ a network of locally based provincial coordinators to verify project proposals and engage

communities in participatory planning processes was seen as highly successful. The provincial coordinators were trained in Do No Harm methodology and employed this with great success in communities to ensure that the projects that were funded by the CPRF were conflict sensitive, benefited the whole community, and brought people together in their implementation (AusAID, 2005).

Similarly, the Oxfam New Zealand program in Bougainville discovered during the course of the intervention that the projects they implemented should be evaluated not just according to their quantitative outcomes, but that they had additional benefits and outcomes that were not captured by more traditional forms of evaluation. These benefits of increasing social harmony later became a major aim of the program (Oxfam NZ, 2004a).

Implementation of analyses within AusAID

During discussion of the draft paper for this report, participants noted that the incorporation of the conclusions of analyses in programming can be difficult. Therefore, the authors interviewed relative AusAID employees to learn about how two recent analyses informed programming.

In 2004, AusAID PNG desk undertook a *Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) analysis of the Southern Highlands Province*. The analysis identified several strategies for intervention based on key actors who had the capacity to work constructively with existing AusAID programs. The LICUS analysis recommendations suggested that weak government did not mean incapable government and that AusAid should adapt existing programs to focus on those actors that had integrity and capacity. On the basis of this analysis, AusAID programs were expanded to include key actors in provincial government and local community groups who were already working for constructive change. Previous to the analysis the Community Development Scheme (CDS) had not existed in the Southern Highlands. As a result of the findings the PNG desk enlarged the CDS to incorporate the Southern Highlands. The CDS is implementing projects with the identified community groups that focus on peace and reconciliation activities.

The analysis also suggested that AusAID, in the absence of responsible government, partner with private sector companies that were already operating in the province. AusAID then identified those companies that were already demonstrating corporate social responsibility and partnered with them in order to implement programs that would otherwise not have taken place. The LICUS analysis suggested that it is crucial to identify and resource those actors at a meso and micro level that have proved their ability to continue working constructively even in the midst of declining government services, and increasing conflict. It suggested that rather than withdrawing from conflict prone societies, it is important to maintain a presence even if this means changing the focus of the program from a donor-to-government focus, to an individual or community focus.

At the start of 2005, AusAID undertook a *Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment of the CPRF* just before a follow up program – the Community Sector Program (CSP) – was started. The PCIA had a impact on the subsequent design of the CSP, in particular with regard to its conclusion that the geographic spread of projects across the whole of the Solomon Islands was good peacebuilding practice. The CSP was created with a rolling design, so that it can be adjusted to changing circumstances in Solomon Islands. AusAID is also looking to use the PCIA to inform a wider peacebuilding strategy as it relates to community development, encompassing the CSP and projects implemented under the AusAID Solomon Islands NGO cooperation scheme.

From these examples, it is clear that analyses can indeed inform policy. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests that, in order to facilitate the communication of findings, a certain categorisation or bullet point-style reporting is important. In addition, verbal briefings of findings are also important.

Conflict sensitive approaches of other actors

The donors and NGOs that implement development assistance are not the only interveners whose activities can impact on issues of peace and conflict. In the Pacific region as elsewhere, the extraction of local resources by external companies has had and is having major impacts on local communities. In order to work in a sensitive manner in societies that are vulnerable to conflict, it is important that these other interveners are also informed about how their work can impact on peace and conflict.

Conflict analysis and 'fragile state' analysis

In Melanesia in particular, there is a large gap between state institutions and the remainder of society. The penetration of the state beyond urban areas is limited, resulting in serious problems in the delivery of services. In addition, the state is not the only deliverer of services. Civil society organisations, including churches in particular, play important roles in these aspects.

With regard to the 'service' of justice and the non-violent resolution of conflict, the role of the state is also complemented by indigenous structures of governance, and traditional ways of resolving conflict. In the Solomon Islands, the overlap and confusion that exists between these different spheres of law and order has been identified as a cause of the tensions (UNDP, 2004).

Related to these issues is the personalised character of the state, often referred to as 'wantokism', and linked to the corruption of state officials found throughout the region. Although most of the countries in the region have seen continuing democratic rule (Fraenkel 2003, 25), political instability, understood as loose parliamentary

allegiances and frequent no confidence votes for example, has been a feature of many Pacific Island countries.

As noted above, the recent literature on 'failed states' tends to see the weakness of state institutions as the major problem currently facing the international community, at least partially because it is being linked to the threat of terrorism. Although some authors make a clear distinction between conflict and state failure (Wallensteen, 2000; von Einsiedel, 2005), most of the 'failed state' literature does not address the relationship between state and conflict in detail. Violent conflict is mentioned as characteristic of failed states (e.g. Rotberg 2004), or seen as synonymous with state collapse (Zartman, 2005).

When deliberating how to strengthen fragile states, it is important to stress that the weakness of state institutions is only one partial cause of (potential) violent conflict. This means that not all Pacific Island states with weak institutions will suffer from violent conflict, and that the strengthening of the workings of state institutions alone does not automatically prevent conflict.

Conclusion and recommendations

This report provides a background study to support the implementation of conflict sensitive development assistance in the Pacific. It draws on relevant previous conflict analyses and peace and conflict impacts assessments to provide insights into the options for policy makers in regards to conflict prevention and conflict sensitive development assistance in the Pacific.

As several donor agencies in the region have recently become interested in these aspects of development assistance, it is important to draw together the knowledge that is being accumulated, and the lessons that are being learned. In order to facilitate such a process, the first appendix to this report includes an overview of relevant conflict analyses and impact assessments that have been commissioned by various donors in the region. In addition, appendix 2 provides an overview of donor agencies, NGOs and academic institutions that are developing expertise in the area of conflict prevention in the Pacific.

Recommendations for policy and further research

- Conflict analyses and impact assessments can support conflict sensitive development assistance in the Pacific by:
- – Ensuring that development assistance does not aggravate tensions in conflict prone societies;
- – Assisting the direction of development assistance so that it can support and strengthen conflict resolution processes and opportunities.

- The prediction of large-scale violent conflict in the Pacific is difficult because the outbreak of such conflicts entails complex processes and is often triggered by personal motivations and manipulations. Early warning of large-scale conflict entails detailed knowledge of local context and politics in Pacific Island states.

- Development assistance can contribute to conflict prevention in the Pacific by supporting indigenous conflict resolution and dialogue processes.

- External support for local conflict resolution processes needs to be based on and directed by local knowledge and ownership of these processes. Analyses and impact assessments need to be conducted in such a way that they empower people.

- It is important that aid agencies develop monitoring and evaluation systems to capture the conflict prevention and peacebuilding outcomes of their programs and projects.

- The clear articulation of conflict prevention and peacebuilding aims of development assistance in conflict prone societies is an important first step towards capturing conflict prevention and peacebuilding outcomes. Subsequent Peace and Conflict

Impact Assessment processes can be then developed from the baseline indicators set out in the project proposal.

- Conflict sensitive development assistance cannot be reduced to a check-list of responses to conflict vulnerability factors. Development assistance can impact differently on different conflict vulnerability factors in societies. Therefore, conflict sensitive development assistance implies a careful weighing up of these impacts.

- In order to ensure conflict sensitivity, development assistance in conflict prone societies must be:
  - *flexible* so that it can adjust to changing circumstances;
  - *focused on long-term processes*, either through long-term interventions, or through better coordination with other aid agencies;
  - *focused on the process of aid delivery*, not just the quantitatively measurable results of development assistance.

- Aid agencies may have a role to play in raising awareness of conflict vulnerability to other interveners in Pacific Island societies, such as international companies.

- Care must be taken not to conflate the weakness of state institutions with vulnerability to conflict, and the strengthening of state institutions with the prevention of conflict.

- Possibilities for further research:
  - the links between local level conflict prevention and peacebuilding outcomes, and the prevention of large-scale, higher level violent conflict;
  - the positive and transformative roles played by conflict in Pacific Island societies, and ways to make sure that development assistance focused on conflict prevention does not preclude these natural, transformative aspects of conflict;
  - monitoring and evaluation methods to capture conflict prevention and peacebuilding outcomes.

Annex 1: Conflict analyses and conflict impact assessments in the Pacific region

Conflict analyses (analyses of (potential) violent conflict):

Abby McLeod, *Women, Peace and Security. An examination of the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict in Vanuatu*, January – March 2004 (commissioned by UNIFEM)

Michael Morgan, *A Report on Potential Sources of Instability in Vanuatu*, 2001 (commissioned by AusAID)

UNDP, *Solomon Islands Peace and Conflict Development Analysis: Emerging Priorities in Preventing Future Violent Conflict*, 2004

UNIFEM, *Monitoring Peace and Conflict in the Solomon Islands: Gendered Early Warning Report No.1*, August 2005

UNIFEM, *Monitoring Peace and Conflict in the Solomon Islands: Gendered Early Warning Report No.2*, December 2005

UNOPS for the European Commission, *Conflict Prevention and Peace Consolidation in the South Pacific, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Fiji Islands*, June 2002

Peace and Conflict Impact Assessments (assessments of impact of intervention on peace and conflict)

Save the Children Fiji/NZ, *The River Divides, Participatory Impact Assessment Pilot Project of the WAC Playtheatre Peace & Reconciliation Project*

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *Social Impact Assessment of Peace Restoration Initiatives in Solomon Islands*, March 2004

AusAID, *Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment of the Community Peace and Restoration Fund*, May 2005

OXFAM Australia, *Evaluation of small grants scheme in Solomon Islands, 2001-2004*, March 2005

Oxfam New Zealand, *External Evaluation of the Oxfam New Zealand Bougainville Programme, 1998-2004*, May 2004 (parts a, b, c)

Annex 2: Recent initiatives in the Pacific related to conflict prevention

United Nations Development Program
Peace, Stability and Development Analysis for Fiji
Timeframe: November 2005 – March 2006

The PSDA involves eight regional consultations throughout Fiji that will be managed by a local NGO. The analysis includes five steps: envisioning peace and development; identifying obstacles to peace; drawing in lessons/understanding of the roots of peace; developing scenarios; and defining practical and strategic development responses. The analysis has a deliberate focus on peace instead of conflict. Also, the focus is not just on the outcome of the analysis - knowledge about how communities see peace and development - but also the value of the process itself. It is hoped that the process will help raise awareness of these issues. The outcomes of this analysis will inform conflict sensitivity of other development assistance programs. AusAID is providing support for the PSDA. There are plans to roll out similar analyses across other Pacific countries in future.

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
Research into regional early warning indicators (see USP)
Research into operationalising the Biketawa declaration (see USP)

Besides commissioning these two papers, the Forum Secretariat is also interested in training in conflict prevention and conflict sensitive development methodologies.

University of the South Pacific
Research into regional early warning indicators (for the PIF Secretariat)
Research into operationalising the Biketawa declaration (for the PIF Secretariat)

A number of scholars at the Pacific Institute of Advanced Studies in Development and Governance at USP are involved or interested in research on conflict prevention. For the Forum Secretariat, scholars are working on regional political indicators and regional early warning indicators. The regional early warning indicators will be a combination of political indicators, recently developed governance indicators, and the work done by UNIFEM on gendered early warning indicators in the Solomon Islands (see annex 1) Other research in preparation includes a paper on operationalising the Biketawa declaration.

University of Queensland
The Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies is working together with the International Peace Academy (US) on an edited volume on the development-security nexus in the Pacific. Through the presence of one of their Visiting Research Fellows at USP, the centre is also involved in the USP/Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat research on early warning indicators and the operationalising of the Biketawa declaration.

Council for International Development New Zealand/Aotearoa
Postilion Paper on Conflict Transformation
http://www.cid.org.nz/advocacy/post-conflict.html

Australian Council for Overseas Development (ACFID)
The roles of Australian and Aotearoa/New Zealand development organisations in conflict prevention.

Together with the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney, and CID (NZ), ACFID was involved in a short survey on the roles of Australian and Aotearoa/New Zealand development organisations in conflict prevention. The results of the research were published in *Occasional Paper No. 05/1*, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney.

Pacific People Building Peace Network
Coordinated by the Citizens Constitutional Forum in Suva, this network is part of a larger initiative to raise awareness of the roles of civil society organisations in the prevention of armed conflict. This global initiative is called the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), and recently brought together a large number of civil society organisations working in conflict prevention and peacebuilding at a UN meeting in New York. During this meeting, six priorities were decided upon for the global network of civil society organisations: dialogue and mediation; peace education; early warning/early response systems; civil society interaction with regional and UN agencies; governance and democratisation; disarmament, demilitarisation and arms control.
http://www.ccf.org.fj/

Pacific Conflict Transformation Network
With the support of NZAid and the Public Advisory Committee on Disarmament and Arms Control, some 30 people came together at a hui in Auckland in February 2004 to discuss the beginnings of a Pacific Conflict Transformation Network. This process is documented in a booklet published by the Auckland University of Technology and the Pacific Cooperation Foundation, edited by Peter Greener: *Sowing the Seeds: The Beginnings of a Pacific Conflict Transformation Network.*

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