Since 2000, the international community has placed increasing emphasis on assistance to countries in conflict. This is evidenced by the patterns of official development assistance as well as international and regional peacekeeping and international administration.

Between 2000 and 2004, the share of total aid going to conflict countries rose from 27 percent to 34 percent. In 2000, conflict countries received 20 percent more aid than the global average. By 2004, this had increased to 50 percent (see Table 8). This is partly explained by the war on terror; if Afghanistan and Iraq are excluded, then the increase is much smaller, rising only 1 percent by 2004. Even without Afghanistan and Iraq, aid to conflict countries is much higher than the global average. However, the more important question is whether this aid has contributed to an improvement in human security.

The increase in aid has been accompanied by important changes in the strategy towards conflict countries, in which the United Nations has taken the lead. In November 1999, the Security Council discussed how to increase the focus on conflict prevention. And in March 2000, in preparation for the Millennium Summit, the UN Secretary-General established a

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Net ODA receipts (US$ millions)</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing countries, TOTAL</td>
<td>50,327</td>
<td>52,153</td>
<td>60,825</td>
<td>70,608</td>
<td>78,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected countries receiving BCPR assistance, TOTAL*</td>
<td>13,464</td>
<td>15,204</td>
<td>19,668</td>
<td>27,002</td>
<td>26,498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total ODA for conflict countries as percent of global total</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing countries, AVERAGE**</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected countries receiving BCPR assistance, AVERAGE</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*45 countries: see footnote.17
** Mean, calculated by the London School of Economics from : Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) figures, excluding all ‘unallocated’ and ‘unspecified’ amounts.


panel to provide a clear set of specific, concrete and practical recommendations on how best to conduct peacekeeping operations in the future. Lakhdar Brahimi, the chair of the panel, submitted his report in August 2000. The report noted in particular the changed nature of UN missions, the broader scope of mandates and the resulting need for more cohesion and more effective integration between the activities of the peacekeeping operation and those of other members of the United Nations system.

The Brahimi Report was a turning point, and most peacekeeping operations approved by the Security Council since 2001 are both ‘multidimensional’ and ‘integrated’. As multidimensional operations, they address a broad range of issues, such as the creation of a secure and stable environment, support to political processes, the promotion of human rights and the facilitation of humanitarian assistance and economic recovery. As integrated missions, they aim to better merge various components of the UN system, including a very specific role for UNDP (see below). However, although development is now included in the integrated mandate, it is not funded like the rest of the peacekeeping operation and is dependent on a separate pledging drive.

From the case studies, it can be concluded that the overall increase in assistance and, more importantly, the presence of peacekeeping forces, has helped stabilize these countries. Thus, they resulted in an improvement in human security, although this was also true of previous missions, such as those in Cambodia and Mozambique. In Sierra Leone, Guatemala and Tajikistan, the international presence helped to sustain peace agreements. In Sierra Leone, for example, there were several previous agreements. It was only after the deployment of a substantial UN peacekeeping force and after that force began to act in more robust ways to protect civilians and carry out a process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration that it became possible to implement the agreement and begin a genuine process of peace-building. In Haiti, where there has been prolonged political turmoil, no less than six different United Nations missions were deployed to the country between 1993 and 2001, each generally considered a failure. It was only starting in 2004 that the international community recognized the need for a long-term commitment to the future of Haiti. And, although it is too early to make judgements, there does seem to be an improvement in political and economic stability. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Afghanistan, stability has improved in the areas where there is a strong international presence. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the establishment of an inclusive Transition Government in June 2003, the full deployment of peacekeeping troops in the second half of that year, and the adoption of a more robust approach by these troops as from mid-2003 are all factors that led to a significantly improved security situation in the eastern provinces. The situation in Afghanistan is, of course, complicated by the insurgency and the war on terror in south-eastern parts of the country.

Nevertheless, in all six countries studied, human security remains precarious and the conditions that gave rise to conflict persist. These conditions represent a risk that conflict may erupt again in the future, especially if the international presence is not sustained. Particularly noteworthy in all six countries is the fact that the developmental underpinnings of newly created institutions were not addressed early enough.

20 Through its resolution S/RES/1484 of May 2003, the Security Council authorized the deployment to Bunia of an ‘Emergency Multinational Force’. By resolution S/RES/1493 of 28 July 2003, the Council, acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, authorized the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to “use all necessary means to fulfil its mandate in the Ituri district and, as it deems it within its capability, in North and South Kivu.”
What are the weaknesses in the role of the international community that need to be addressed if lasting peace is to be established? From the outset it is important to stress that each conflict is context-specific. It is difficult to generalize from one context to the next. Nor can one assume that what works in one place will necessarily work in another. That said, certain conclusions can be drawn from the case studies—and questions asked—about what worked or did not work and why.

3.1 PROTECTING CIVILIANS

The presence of peacekeeping troops is still no guarantee that civilians will be protected. Such troops need to be restructured for human security tasks instead of fighting wars. The job of the military in a human security framework is to protect individuals and create public security rather than to defeat enemies, while cooperating with development agencies so as to build an interrelated approach to security. The failure to deploy international security forces outside Kabul, for example, in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Taliban, is one reason why power remained in the hands of former commanders and why the insurgency, which receives cross-border support, is growing. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there needs to be much greater and more sustained deployment of UN troops in the eastern parts of the country. And in Haiti, peacekeeping forces need to be able to assist the police in dealing with illegal armed groups.

3.2 ESTABLISHING LEGITIMATE POLITICAL AUTHORITY

3.2.1 Top-down politics

The political approach in conflict-affected countries tends to be ‘top-down’ and dominated by those who mediated a peace agreement. Political agreement is reached first at the centre, often leaving a vacuum in rural areas. In addition, more emphasis is often placed on stability than on human rights and justice, including accountability for the commission of war crimes. Thus in Afghanistan, Tajikistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, former commanders and their militias have been co-opted into the security forces and the political process. While the short-term imperatives of stabilization have to be taken into account, this has led to continuing human rights abuses and a culture of impunity, which undermines the legitimacy of the newly established political and security institutions. This is partly a consequence of an inadequate security presence. But it is also the result of failing to include civil society activists and groups in the political process, especially women’s groups. Generating an atmosphere in which inclusiveness and respect for justice prevails is just as important in underpinning political authority and the rule of law as security. Similarly, an emphasis on macro-economic stabilization often means that there is not enough money in the national budget to pay civil servants, establish public institutions or deliver public services. This also causes loss of trust in a new regime and undermines its legitimacy.

In all the case-study countries, the international community replicated a political strategy in which elections constituted a key benchmark. Elections were supposed to establish legitimate governments and offer an exit strategy for the international community. There is no doubt that elections play an important symbolic role in such countries, and that the first post-conflict elections usually have very high turnouts. But the effort devoted to organizing quick elections may divert attention from the important institutional and structural underpinnings of democracy, such as rule of law, including functioning
and independent legal institutions, and free media and association, and may fail to build local capacity. Key to democracy is the construction of a democratic political culture—democratic politics are needed to establish democratic institutions.\footnote{See Luckham, Robin, Anne Marie Goetz and Mary Kaldor. 2003. ‘Democratic Institutions and Democratic Politics.’ In: Can Democracy be Designed?, edited by Sunil Bastian and Robin Luckham. London: Zed Books, pp. 14-59.}

3.2.2. Engaging with civil society

A particular problem is the failure to engage with civil society. In several of the countries studied, civil society groups played critical roles during the conflict. For example, in Sierra Leone, the Sierra Leone Women’s Movement for Peace helped create the conditions for an end to military rule and the elections of 1996, which paved the way for the first peace agreement. However, women were marginalized both in the agreement and in the newly elected government. And in Afghanistan, development assistance during the Taliban years was delivered through local NGOs, which were frequently pushed aside in the aftermath of the Bonn agreement.

By civil society, this study refers to those groups and individuals who actively engage in debates about public affairs. This can include both urban intellectuals—journalists, teachers, academics, human rights activists, clergymen and imams—as well as grass-roots groups, especially women’s groups. There is a tendency among international donors to assume that civil society is a ‘good thing’ that should be assisted, without recognizing it as a source of knowledge and information and ignoring the fact that those who are less interested in winning power may be more likely to promote an understanding based on public as opposed to sectarian interests. It is true that civil society cannot be artificially created by capacity-building programmes and that large influxes of funding can sometimes be counterproductive to genuine grass-roots efforts. On the other hand, authentic local civil society is often squeezed by both UN bodies and international NGOs. What is more important than funding is engaging with civil society, taking its concerns seriously and providing a forum where civil society groups can be heard. Engaging local civil society organizations, both intellectuals and grass-roots groups at national, district and local levels, by soliciting their opinions, stimulating their activities, and encouraging civic mobilization is a precondition for building a substantive democracy, rule of law and legitimate political authority.

One reason for the failure to engage civil society is cultural. International development workers, including UNDP staff, often lack local knowledge and language skills. Moreover, locals who are recruited to work with them often come from a certain class because they speak a major European language and are less interested in communicating with local grass-roots civil society. Agency staff (both governmental and non-governmental) are often recruited on short-term contracts, which means that they lack an institutional memory and tend to ‘reinvent the wheel’; they also lack the time necessary to build solid relationships with local communities. In addition, they may be less invested in the success of a particular mission than in their next career move. This is exacerbated by the insecurity and hardships that go along with working in conflict zones, where it may be hard to get people to commit for long periods of time. Rapid turnover of international staff also means that local people have to constantly repeat themselves in explaining crucial information (if they are asked for it).

Even without these limitations, the difficulties of engaging civil society, including women, should not be underestimated. Obstacles include resistance from authoritarian parties to the conflict, the general powerlessness of civil society, as well as the problems that arise from uncivil society—including the expression of particularistic and sectarian interests. Civil society is a reflection of
broader opinion within society and is a source of extremist sentiment as well as the source of democracy. The point is rather that civil society is the arena in which these competing views can be discussed rather than fought over. Moreover, the stronger and more effective a civil society is, the more it is likely to veer in a democratic as opposed to sectarian direction.

3.2.3 Legitimacy of the international community

It is not only the legitimacy of newly established political institutions that is crucial, but also the legitimacy of the international community. To gain such legitimacy, international actors must act in accordance with international law and in a transparent manner—whether they are engaging in the war on terror or in peacekeeping.

Human rights abuses committed by UN peacekeepers and other internationals (NGOs and international NGOs) have become the subject of Security Council debate and a number of reports within the UN system. For example, following a 2002 report by the Office of Internal Oversight Services on sexual exploitation of refugees in three West African countries, including Sierra Leone, the Security Council included an explicit reference to the need to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation when it renewed the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (resolution 1436, 2002). The March 2005 report of the Secretary-General, ‘A Comprehensive Strategy to Eliminate Future Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations’ (UN Document A/59/710), specifically discusses the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It describes the fact that sexual exploitation often occurs through the exchange of sex for food and contributes to a downward spiral towards prostitution with its attendant “violence, desperation, disease and dependency.” Sexual exploitation undermines the image and credibility of the peacekeeping operation. The report makes recommendations on issues including respect for the codes of behaviour, disciplinary action and training.

3.3 PRIORITIZING DEVELOPMENT

Insufficient attention is paid to economic and social development, especially job creation. Instead, immediate post-conflict priorities tend to focus on humanitarian relief and macroeconomic stabilization. Civil and political rights are favoured over economic and social rights. Development concerns are usually relegated to the ‘post-recovery’ period. In all six countries studied, high levels of unemployment, especially among young men, created a condition for renewed conflict, since the only way they may be able to marry and make a living is through criminal activities or by joining a militia.

3.4 MAINSTREAMING GENDER

Much more effort needs to be devoted to mainstreaming gender into all policies, practices and programmes in conflict-affected countries. In addition to the demographic imbalance registered in most post-conflict environments and the increased incidence of female-headed households, such countries tend to have high levels of violence against women both during and after conflicts and unequal gender relations. While no clear link has been established between domestic violence and conflict, it is reasonable to infer that unequal gender relations are among the conditions that are conducive to conflict. Moreover, the active

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role played by women's groups in peace processes suggests that greater involvement of women can contribute to improved human security.

Mainstreaming gender requires analysis of gender relations within a particular society that does not make assumptions about the relative positions of women and men. Such an analysis requires consultation with local women.26

3.5 MOVING BEYOND PHASES AND TIMELINES

A major problem has been a preoccupation with a phased approach to dealing with conflict: the notion of a prevention phase, which deals with the grievances that cause conflict; a relief phase that provides humanitarian assistance as well as some form of political/military intervention; a recovery phase in which the emphasis is on stabilization; and finally, a reconstruction phase where development gets a greater priority. In fact, all these phases are intermixed. A failure to address conflict holistically results in a vacuum and an exacerbation of those structural factors conducive to conflict, rendering the recurrence of conflict more likely. This is why so many peace agreements fail. This analysis of conflict suggests that prevention requires, above all, dealing with the conditions that are conducive to conflict rather than with grievances that are sometimes constructed or exaggerated to justify violence. These conditions involve the sorts of policies that are usually considered relevant to recovery and reconstruction. What is needed is a longer-term commitment and a mix of policy approaches that are relevant to each situation.

In a questionnaire addressed to 24 countries or areas receiving assistance from UNDP’s Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, only seven said that they did not follow a phased approach. Among the remaining respondents, most followed the kind of phases defined above, although not all were standard phases.

3.6 FOCUSING ON THE REGIONAL DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT

Not enough attention is paid to the regional dimensions of conflict. Dealing with the nexus between corrupt governments, insurgent groups, drugs, minerals or other valuable primary products and weapons is crucial to dealing with most chronic internal armed conflicts. Of the six case-study countries, only in Sierra Leone and, to an extent, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (through the Great Lakes region conference), were there clear efforts to develop a concerted regional programme to tackle insecurity. In West Africa, this has entailed cooperative efforts in four main countries (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Côte d’Ivoire) through the establishment of the Mano River Union and dialogue and cooperation among border communities. This effort is helping to develop ways to limit the smuggling of arms, people, drugs and diamonds. In Afghanistan, the need to develop a regional approach to deal with insurgents coming from abroad is crucial in confronting the growing insurgency. The international community and UNDP have been involved in the administration of a border management project involving two of the case-study countries, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, though a visit to the Afghan-Tajik border showed few signs of border forces. In Central America, UNDP, in collaboration with UNHCR and other agencies, managed an area-based programme called PRODERE with linkages across sub-regional borders in response to cross-border migration in the midst of conflict.

26 One example is the inter-agency legal working group on domestic violence in Kosovo. The UN-appointed expert was a male professor of family law who asserted that “it would be unthinkable to forbid all kinds of domestic violence” in Kosovo. This became the accepted position of the working group until the late intervention of a female prosecutor from Kosovo who strongly asserted the opposite viewpoint. Kvinna Till Kvinna. 2001. Gender Awareness in Kosovo. Getting it Right? A Gender Approach to UNMIK Administration in Kosovo, p. 16.
Nevertheless, the architecture of the international community and of sovereign states renders it far more difficult to address cross-border issues than domestic ones. Yet in many instances, domestic conflict cannot be effectively tackled without addressing its cross-border dimensions.

3.7 AVOIDING A HEAVY ‘FOOTPRINT’

In most conflict countries, one of the parties to the conflict has dominated the various branches of government and has often been complicit, if not directly responsible for, human rights violations and other atrocities. Despite the now widely recognized importance of national ownership and the need to support national institutions, a weighty international presence, or ‘footprint’, is often required to ensure a level playing field for all parties to the peace agreement, adequately monitor its implementation and ensure that structural changes essential for long-term peace-building are implemented. In most instances, this has entailed the creation of temporary parallel structures with a large expatriate staff. In other cases, such as Guatemala, it has also involved the establishment of temporary stand-alone commissions for monitoring and tracking implementation.

These parallel structures absorb the most skilled national staff and are often criticized for undermining the capacity of national institutions. Especially where there is a sudden influx of agencies and NGOs and where donor fashions tend to determine the scale of the effort, these parallel structures can create layer upon layer of donors, implementing agencies, contractors and subcontractors, each taking their share of the budget and generating a competitive culture in which the self-interest of each agency may come before the goal of helping the victims of conflict. A heavy footprint can also mean a preponderance of administrative staff over operational staff, lack of accountability to the local population, a confusion of mandates and a tendency for both duplication and gaps. Even where, as in Sierra Leone, the international effort has been relatively effective, there remains a problem of the diversion of scarce national skills and of the legitimacy of the Sierra Leone Government.

The most justified criticism is that, while peacekeeping missions are a necessary evil and perform an essential function in the short term, their exit strategy is not sufficiently thought through and national capacity is not sufficiently developed to take over upon their departure. Such an exit strategy needs to be planned for from the very outset of the peacekeeping operation, taking into account all of the inevitable mitigating factors such as low national salaries, insufficient national revenue bases and recurrent budgets. To the extent possible, these parallel operations should attempt to skew national employment conditions as little as possible so that long-term sustainability of national institutions is not undermined.

3.8 ENSURING SECURITY

The final problem is security. Although there have been numerous attacks on UN offices, vehicles and staff before, the attack on UN headquarters in Baghdad in August 2003 was a watershed in that it was systematic, premeditated and of significant proportion. It also constituted a precedent that has since been emulated. Also, for the first time, lower and mid-level officials most directly responsible for security in Iraq were severely disciplined. This and subsequent strict tightening of security measures (confined living areas, barriers, armed guards, geographic restrictions on travel, curfews, armed escorts, etc.) have had a marked effect on the work of all UN agencies, including UNDP. More specifically, and to varying degrees, it has:

27 The discussion of ‘light’ or ‘heavy’ footprints was particularly intense in Afghanistan where, despite the efforts of Lakhdar Brahimi to mount a UN mission with a ‘light footprint’, the actual size and cost of the mission became a matter of concern for many observers.
Dramatically raised the level of caution and the reluctance of the organization to take risks

Reduced access to UN premises by nationals who are not UN staff because of the severe security restrictions

Reduced the mobility of UN staff considerably because of restrictions on the areas to which staff can travel without additional, sometimes armed, escorts and the time that they can return to their home bases

Reduced the ability of staff to interact with people at the local level, including to assess needs and monitor programmes thoroughly

Created a psychological barrier between UN personnel and the ordinary person on the street and even between UN and government officials

Rendered it considerably more difficult to recruit or assign staff to offices in conflict zones—particularly because of the implications for families

Forced the UN to work through intermediaries—particularly through subcontracted national NGOs and consulting firms for whom UN staff do not have the same level of responsibility for their safety

Raised considerably the cost of programmes and the UN presence at the country level

Required the UN and its executing agents to seek innovative, and sometimes quite expensive, solutions for the monitoring of project implementation

Led to more frequent delays in the mounting of missions because of the potential for danger

Reduced the willingness of managers to take risks due to the potential for disciplinary action, forcing them to err on the side of caution

Created a siege-like mentality that can lead to overreaction and the likelihood of further escalation of violence, with an emphasis on military responses, not on policing.

Security is a particularly difficult problem to overcome and a very sensitive one as the perceived threat is increasingly real. The usual tendency of a bureaucracy caught short is to subsequently err on the side of extreme caution. A delicate balance needs to be struck and the overall objective should be to do everything possible to ensure that interaction with civil society as well as government is negatively affected as little as possible.

In the case-study countries, security problems were most notable in Afghanistan. But the effect of the war on terror may make the situation of the UN more risky in other places as well. In answer to the question ‘Does the security situation and the constraints introduced by UN security regulations hamper your ability to carry out your mission?’ only 11 of the 24 respondents in the survey said no. Of the majority that said ‘yes’, a number of shared concerns were raised, including restrictions on travel inside a country, the dangers associated with working in particular areas, and restrictions on contact between members of particular ethnic groups. Other practical limitations include having to adopt security measures for offices or, in more extreme cases, evacuating staff, and/or relocating offices. The resource implications of these measures (in both time and money) were explicitly pointed out by respondents.

28 Extreme examples include: 1) in Iraq, the implementation of UNDP’s infrastructure programme is monitored by consulting engineers from Jordan and elsewhere with the use of remote closed-circuit televisions; and 2) in Afghanistan, the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) has also recruited Gurkha companies to provide security on their projects. Generally, because of cost considerations, some of these more innovative and effective solutions can only be implemented on large infrastructure projects.