SUMMARY

• Post-conflict countries or those facing the prospect of violent tension often feature a multitude of actors with widely varying interpretations of the causes and consequences of conflict and the steps that should be taken to manage future conflicts. Similarly, external actors often arrive in these contexts armed with their own technical skills, specializations and methodological approaches.

• A critical question that agencies often fail to ask themselves is how their discrete and separate interventions might lead to a coherent process for political and economic governance within a country. Without a unified, synergistic process of governance, a country emerging from conflict will not be able to function and sustain itself. Although considerable resources may be spent separately on various sectoral efforts in a country, they need to be directed towards a unified and sequenced strategy to be successful. Consequently, contemporary development discourse emphasizes the need for holistic, comprehensive strategies that integrate security and development efforts in order to be more effective in conflict prevention and peace-building. But the extent to which whole-country peace-building strategies are implemented on the ground is relatively limited so far.

• This occasional paper looks at some recent experiments in synergistic country-level peace-building undertaken by the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of the United Nations Development Programme and the independent International Peace and Prosperity Project in Guinea-Bissau, both of which explore the degree to which sustained engagement, relationship-building and collaboration can enhance a country’s prospects for peace.

• Even in an atmosphere of generally peaceful political competition, institutional capacity must be present to facilitate constructive interaction to discuss and build consensus around measures for addressing critical challenges, be it poverty, natural resource management, land reform or any other pertinent issue. Technical expertise is not sufficient. Enhanced internal capacity-building within countries affected by conflict is imperative, for if societies do not encourage and develop their own infrastructures for peace, peace is unlikely to be sustainable. The challenge for international actors is to determine how and with whom to engage through supportive initiatives that strengthen local leadership for constructive conflict management and peace-building.
What Really Works in Preventing and Rebuilding Failed States

ABOUT THE SERIES

This occasional paper is the second in a series entitled, “What Really Works In Preventing and Rebuilding Failed States.” The series is based on a sequence of public forums held in 2006 under the direction of Ambassador Howard Wolpe, Director of the Project on Leadership and Building State Capacity at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. The series aims to examine key thematic issues that arise for conflict transformation in settings of weak and conflict-prone societies. The second occasional paper of the series is based on a public forum that took place on June 20, 2006, at the Wilson Center entitled “Catalytic Initiatives for Country-Level Peace-building Strategies: What Are They Accomplishing?” Michael Lund, Consulting Program Manager to the Project on Leadership and Building State Capacity and Senior Specialist for Conflict and Peacebuilding at Management Systems International Inc. (MSI), moderated the session. The publication was compiled and edited by Georgina Petrosky and Sarah Cussen of the Leadership Project and Project Intern Jaclyn Burger.

Catalytic Initiatives for Country-Level Peace-Building Strategies: What Are They Accomplishing?

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A current mantra in the international development community is the need for holistic and comprehensive strategies that integrate security and development efforts in order to be more effective in conflict prevention and peace-building. The fundamental idea behind this emphasis on synergistic engagement in fragile or post-conflict countries is that such exercises in nation-building require a broad repertoire of actions that deal with security, politics and development. International actors need to link their disparate programs and projects in democracy-building, peacekeeping and development so that, together, they address the underlying, long-term causes of conflict as well as the immediate, shorter-term threats of violence. The complex contexts of divided societies and weak states require multi-sectoral approaches. Consequently, programs should be combined and constructed in strategic ways to address threats at all levels as appropriate to each situation.

The Origins of an Integrated Approach to Peace-Building
The discourse of holism became especially prominent after September 11, 2001, when the theme of failed states as potential breeding grounds for extremism officially entered the development discourse. Policy integration is quite explicit in the United States foreign policy doctrine, where officials have embraced the idea of a holistic approach to the complex challenges posed by post-conflict, failed and fragile states. Never more than recently have US foreign policy statements explicitly stressed not only inter-agency cooperation but also cooperation among like-minded governments that are involved in post-conflict and fragile states. The frequent mention of the need to win “hearts and minds” in places like Afghanistan and Iraq is a reflection of the wide acknowledgement that development has to have a central place in any stabilizing mission. Numerous symposiums are held in Washington, DC, around the theme of civil-military cooperation, which is one aspect of this perspective. Manuals have been issued that give the full-course menu of programs that are presumed to be needed for such effective nation-building. To try to operationalize the concept, the US State Department established the position of Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization in order to encourage more inter-agency collaboration in dealing with these countries. Similarly, the United Kingdom has underscored the need for “whole-of-government” cooperation, as has the German government. Within inter-governmental organizations, the UN has established the Peacebuilding Commission, and the European Union also has been furthering its efforts at greater policy coherence between security and development.

The recognition of the value of multi-sectoral strategies actually emerged earlier in the post–Cold War era through research and experience on the ground in post-conflict countries such as Namibia, Guatemala and Mozambique, where sustained peace has been achieved, as well as in countries such as FYR Macedonia and the Baltic States, where conflict prevention programs of the mid to late 1990s were effective in avoiding potential ethnic conflicts. Proponents of holistic approaches had argued for some years that configurations of “carrots and sticks” through diplomacy, security, development, institution-building and democratization were needed to facilitate countries’ movement from tension and violence to stable peace. Even when considerable resources are spent separately on these various efforts, they need to be directed towards a unified and sequenced strategy to be successful.
Applying an Integrated Approach to Peace-Building

In the field, the integration theme has begun to be translated into practical actions in certain countries where international actors already engage in a variety of projects addressing issues such as rule of law, democracy-building, civil society, reconciliation, economic development and justice. In the late 1990s, for example, the idea of strategic, holistic and multi-actor engagement in specific countries was the focus of experiments by a few pioneering non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and inter-governmental organizations. The NGO International Alert organized a number of workshops in Kenya that brought together civil society actors to facilitate a holistic conflict assessment in order to measure the adequacy of their existing programs and to encourage interest in filling the gaps emerging from the diagnosis. The venerable War-Torn Societies Program, now called Interpeace, similarly has fostered coherent country approaches beginning with consensus-building at the grassroots level and culminating in national peace processes in places such as Guatemala, Mozambique and Somaliland. Although the UNDP works more directly with governments, it is also actively trying to develop more balanced strategies. It has adopted some of the holistic and participatory procedures involved in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper process (PRSP) and applied them to conflict prevention and peace-building approaches.

However, the extent to which whole-country strategies are implemented on the ground is relatively limited so far. The aim of this occasional paper is to look more closely at some recent experiments in synergistic country-level peace-building undertaken by non-governmental as well as inter-governmental actors in order to examine how they work and what they have achieved so far.

Analyzing Current Initiatives

Before assessing the results of these initiatives, it is important to understand key aspects of how they were organized, such as the criteria used in the country selection, which key actors and constituencies in the targeted country were engaged, which types of conflict assessment frameworks and facilitation techniques were used in the workshops and consultations and the activities undertaken. In view of the varying perspectives of the participating entities, it is of interest to determine how a balance was sought between the need for rigorous analysis and understanding of the conflict situation, on the one hand, and the need for obtaining international or local buy-in and ownership of such voluntary, nonhierarchical processes on the other hand. In view of this challenge, “cooperation,” “collaboration,” “coherence” or “concertation” are better words to use than “coordination,” as nobody wants to be coordinated, but more cooperation might be realistic, and more de facto coordination might actually result.

Once the nature of the intervention has been understood, the analysis can turn to more evaluative questions. The most fundamental evaluative question is the extent to which purposive, inter-organizational collaboration can actually be achieved. Initiatives to foster collaboration face serious obstacles, including the budgetary constraints under which NGOs and governments work, the competitive “turf wars” for funding among these various actors and their divergent values, goals, timetables and implementation methods. A second basic question is the kinds of country contexts in which these efforts are likely to have the greatest impact, for example in small or large countries or during the pre-violence or post-violence stages of conflict.

For insights about the existing experiments in collaborative action to date and to stimulate further discussion, we turn to two analyst/practitioners who have considerable recent experience in specific countries. Each of our contributors has been involved in initiatives intended to act as catalysts to mobilize and engage a variety of actors towards a wider peace-building goal, so they are imminently qualified to explore the questions above.
Post-conflict countries or those facing the prospect of violent tension often feature a multitude of actors with widely varying interpretations of the causes and consequences of conflict and the steps that should be taken to manage future conflicts. In addition, external actors often arrive in these contexts armed with their own technical skills, specializations and methodological approaches. Different sectoral specializations, ranging from security sector reform, justice and economic reconstruction to public administration and human rights, constitute the array of programmatic portfolios in post-conflict contexts. In the mêlée, a critical question that active agencies often fail to ask themselves is how their discrete and separate interventions might add up to a coherent process to promote good political and economic governance within a country. Without a unified, synergistic process of governance, a country emerging from conflict will not be able to function and sustain itself. The case of Sierra Leone illustrates this point.

Critically Examining UN Interventions
Towards Synergistic Processes: The Case of Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, significant progress has been made with the support of a UN peacekeeping mission in reviving the security sector and in rebuilding the economy and institutions destroyed by over a decade of violent conflict. Yet key actors and sectors within the country continue to have highly divergent views on a range of critical national issues including the model of representation that should be used for national and local elections; the most effective methods for the apportionment of the country’s wealth including diamond income; and the role of the traditional chieftaincy-based local government vis-à-vis the newly elected district councils. Despite several post-conflict achievements, national capacity for resolving these differences on the basis of dialogue, consensus and participation still needs to be developed if these differences are not to lead to future violent tension. In addition, a new national security architecture, centered on district- and provincial-level security committees that bring together local law enforcement and government officials, has been put in place. However, this architecture still lacks the basic capabilities for resolving local disputes and tensions in a viable manner and in collaboration with civil society and traditional chieftains. In other words, despite important national and international efforts and achievements, the process of governance still needs significant support if it is to address in a unified manner some of the tensions that led to violent conflict in the first place.

In view of this situation, the UN proposed a new model for peace-building efforts in Sierra Leone in 2005 and 2006. The new model supported an array of Sierra Leonean actors including government officials, civil society organizations and political parties in working together to develop what is now referred to as a Peace Consolidation Strategy (PCS). Through this facilitated internal process, the UN asked local actors to focus not only on the material and technical demands of post-conflict transition, but rather on how the disparate branches of Sierra Leonean society could and would work together as one system to develop relevant policy. In developing the PCS, stakeholders attempted to understand what was missing from their interactions, what the main issues were and what kinds of disputes and controversies hindered their effective collaboration. The focus was on how stakeholders could develop a synergistic and catalytic framework for working
together. The UN, with the support of these local stakeholders, distilled their ideas to develop the PCS document.

This PCS is currently being implemented in Sierra Leone by another innovative experiment, the UN Integrated Office. This Office is jointly led by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and has been developed with the support of other UN agencies and departments. Within the Integrated Office, the in-country UNDP Representative directs UN developmental work in addition to serving as the political representative of the Secretary-General and coordinator of all UN agencies on the ground. This integration was a radical step necessary to facilitate unified UN engagement with Sierra Leone to complement the integrated, internal country process.

Reassessing UN “Successes”: East Timor and the Solomon Islands

East Timor has recently been featured in headlines again, not for its laudable UN-supported peace-building efforts, but for the looming threat of political instability. Hitherto, East Timor has been considered one of the UN’s most successful interventions. The UN peace mission in East Timor invested significant resources in building an extremely professional police sector, oversaw perhaps the most perfect elections ever held in Southeast Asia and facilitated the installation of an extremely popular government under a Nobel Peace Prize–winning leadership. The leadership had led an exceptionally popular liberation struggle, and as a result, East Timor appeared to have great internal cohesion. However, to the surprise of many, conflict recently erupted anew in East Timor. The initial response of some in the international community was to push for a return of peacekeepers. Others thought otherwise, wanting first to understand what critical aspect had been absent from the initial mission that allowed the country to revert back to conflict and instability.

Initial critical analyses indicate that some of the capabilities for developing the internal consensus that needs to be consolidated in Sierra Leone are missing to an even greater degree in East Timor, despite the apparent cohesion of the country. Even in a country as small as East Timor, certain geographic areas felt excluded and discriminated against. These fractures became evident as the various parts of government were unable to successfully integrate different geographic areas and societal sectors, especially in the context of the security sector, into one inclusive decision-making process. Clearly, the UN and the international community had not done enough to encourage internal cohesion. The mistaken assumption of full cohesiveness undermined the efficacy of peace-building efforts—irrespective of the integrated and collaborative nature of the international intervention.

The Solomon Islands offer a similar cautionary tale. The UN supported key actors to undertake a national conflict assessment exercise. The UN team saw this dialogue as a positive signal that the Solomon Islanders had developed a common understanding on how to work together. However, even as the results of this assessment were consolidated, violent conflict broke out again in the capital, and Australian peacekeepers had to return. What did the UN miss in the case of the Solomon Islands? The supporters of the conflict assessment announced upfront what action should be taken—the implementation of a national conflict assessment exercise in order to build consensus on critical needs. However, the Solomon Islands, as a society, functions on the basis of multiple levels of conversation with many complex meanings. The Solomon Islanders initially responded positively,
communicating what they thought the UN wanted to hear. This apparent agreement hid some of the deeper divisions and conflicts, especially over questions of land and identity.

Case Commonalities
In the cases of Sierra Leone, East Timor and the Solomon Islands, one notes that large resources can be poured into countries to build up the capacities of different sectors without necessarily decreasing their vulnerability to conflict. Sierra Leone currently has one of the best uniformed and equipped police forces in West Africa. Similarly, in the mid 1990s, the Haitian National Police was perhaps better resourced than any other Caribbean police force. Large amounts of money were allocated to East Timor and the Solomon Islands. The UN and the international community may make these worthwhile investments, but if internal coherence is lacking, sustainable peace is not very likely. A sustainable degree of internal cohesiveness and collaboration is a critical factor that allows countries to move towards lasting peace.

Established Successes: Mali, South Africa and Niger
Among post-conflict societies that appear to have established a relative degree of stability are Mali, Niger and South Africa. Mali is instructive with its lessons on how minimal UN support can be successful in helping countries in transition. Mali had a largely indigenous process of transformation and transition. It was internally driven, despite two decades of conflict, authoritarianism and violence, and external support was modest, as was UN support to encourage indigenous processes. Mali’s transition in the early 1990s shared many common features with the South African case, which is another good example of a successful post-conflict transition where UN support played a minor role. In South Africa, the UN supported national processes that were the outcome of internal negotiation and dialogue exercises held among the former antagonists. Niger is a third relatively stable example. Despite widespread poverty and recurring food crises, Niger remains democratic even in the aftermath of many years of authoritarianism.

The common denominator in the cases of Mali, South Africa and Niger is that at various stages, the UN was able to relate directly to the mélange of actors who were in a position to drive attitudinal change within each society. The UN had to discreetly support the key actors, be they civil society representatives, decision-makers or politicians, who could constitute a new catalytic element within these societies. These catalytic elements needed modest UN support to facilitate transformative processes that would drive political, social and individual attitudinal change within their respective societies. The concept of internally derived attitudinal and behavioral change distinguishes these successful examples. Key actors in these cases internalized the reality that they could not continue to deal with conflicts in the same way as before. These catalytic actors were ready to apply new and innovative ways of managing their conflicts before they turned violent. Innovative frameworks for engagement supported by new forms of international assistance were also critical.

Harnessing the Positive Potential of Conflict
It is important to remember that conflict in and of itself, if kept within certain bounds, can be a force for positive change within a society. Many societies have undergone dynamic and progressive change that has generated new kinds of more inclusive and participatory economic, political and social structures as a result of internal tensions.
that challenged the status quo. These societies also have often had some internal
capacities to ensure that conflict is mediated, channeled and managed in a produc-
tive manner. But if internal tensions are not constructively channeled, they can build
up and lead to increased violence and destruction that may destroy inter-group relations
for generations. International assistance has the potential to increase the grievances and
agitate conflict if not received and channeled via improved systems of absorption and
management. Restoring these relations and overcoming tendencies of distrust is an exception-
tially difficult and sensitive undertaking.

National Capacities for Conflict Prevention

Recognizing the potentially positive and negative effects of conflict in a society, the UN has
increasingly tried to invest in building national capacities for conflict prevention and to
strengthen the internal mechanisms for constructive conflict management and resolution
within societies. Entry points for building national capacities mainly fall into two categories:
institutional and individual. In potential conflict situations, institutions may exist, but may not
have the capacity to deliver services or effectively deal with key issues confronting the country.
In post-conflict situations, even in some of the most devastating contexts, some residual institu-
tional capacity will usually remain intact. In either case, sufficient capacity is needed in min-
istries, the judiciary and mass-mobilization organizations, such as political parties, to engage
each other and their respective constituencies in a constructive manner. Even in an atmosphere
of generally peaceful political competition, institutional capacity must exist in order to facilitate
constructive interaction to discuss and build consensus around measures for addressing critical
challenges, be it poverty, natural resource management, land reform or any other pertinent issue.
Quite often technical expertise is not sufficient.

These institutions need to acquire constructive processes in addition to technical expertise.
However, various factors may inhibit such processes from emerging. In some cases, the stumbling
block has been inertia. In other cases, such as land reform in Zimbabwe, issues have been politi-
cized in a conflictual way. In Zimbabwe, the legacy of a violent independence war, violent internal
struggles between the north and south and the resulting violent political tradition, prevented a
cohesive, internal machinery for the resolution of internal disputes from becoming firmly
entrenched. In Zimbabwe, as well as other cases, emerging institutions were willfully manipulat-
ed and distorted by political leaders who wanted to pursue their own self-serving agendas.
Regardless of the reason for weak institutional capacity, sustained support is needed to build and
transform structures that are no longer able to deliver constructive, consensual, participatory
dialogue and policy. Concerted support must be given to encourage not only technical
know-how, but also inclusive and constructive processes within institutions.

The second category of entry points for engagement is that of the individual capacities
of key actors. A core group of individuals lead and direct powerful sectors within most
societies. However, networks that bridge institutions and sectors enable a variety of indi-
viduals to engage each other across the boundaries that might otherwise divide them.
These networks are often vital to maintaining and promoting societal cohesion. If these
networks and relationships among individuals in various leadership positions do not
exist, there is potential for growing conflict. Whether conflict manifests itself as
institutional, inter-group, political or ethnic, it can often be traced back to a lack of
such relationship webs.
As a response to this evident lack of national capacity for conflict prevention in many cases, the UN has instituted pilot programs in a number of both pre- and post-conflict countries including Ecuador, Guyana, Lesotho and Sudan. The array of targeted countries displays vastly different contexts but the countries share some common parameters. To illustrate the nature of these UN programs, the cases of Guyana and Sudan are presented below.

The Guyana Case: The Social Cohesion Program
Guyana, situated in the Caribbean, has a long history of antagonism between two major ethnic groups: the Indo-Guyanese and the Afro-Guyanese. This competition is reflected in political party competition where the major political parties often reflect ethnic affiliations. Politics in the country have tended to mirror this ethnic divide. Guyana’s origins, the history of its independence struggle and the way in which political parties have subsequently engaged have all contributed to dysfunctional politics, despite the existence and functioning of formal democratic institutions.

In 2002, as during most post-election periods in Guyana, ethnic antagonism produced an upsurge in violence. Unsuccessful contenders felt they had not just lost the election, but lost access to government resources for their particular ethnic-based constituencies. In response, the UN engaged the government and civil society in order to determine the best means for developing national capacities to prevent future violence. Many key actors, especially the political leadership, were reluctant to engage directly with the issue of conflict or conflict prevention, but concurred that greater social and institutional cohesion in the country could prevent violent episodes and help sustain development gains.

The UN did not find an entry point in Guyana for traditional diplomacy or mediation due to the fact that an invitation for this type of intervention by the UN often connotes to many societal actors a failure on the part of the concerned government to manage effectively the relevant issues. In the case of Guyana, the UN’s traditional conflict mitigation and prevention approach was replaced by a proposal to work with the government in developing the basic skills, competencies and capabilities to better manage the development process. This approach elicited a very constructive response. The emphasis shifted from the negative connotation of managing conflict to the positive connotation of improving development capabilities. This interaction with the Guyanese authorities led to the UN Social Cohesion Program, which is still ongoing. The term social cohesion was coined by the Guyanese based on their understanding of the challenges they faced in achieving long-term peace. This program works in close coordination with other bilateral partners in the country. The program has been able to launch and sustain many kinds of dialogue and collaborative policy development processes to deal with issues such as police reform that the UN and other actors had not previously been able to engage in because of the perception of outside interference.

The Sudan Case: National Center for Conflict Prevention
The UN engagement in Sudan offers a completely different context for the promotion of national capacities for peace. In December 2005, the UN received a request from the Joint National Transition Team (JNTT) of the newly formed Government of National Unity in Sudan. This new government is an outgrowth of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed between the north and the south. The request was for
assistance in establishing a National Center for Conflict Prevention. The initial reaction from the UN was that it was too late for conflict prevention as the devastating conflict in Darfur continued to rage and engagement would go well beyond prevention. However, upon further deliberation, the UN concluded that such a national capacity would be vital to sustaining peace in the south and also to preventing future conflicts.

While the problems that beset Darfur and the legacy of a brutal north-south war have captured the attention of the international community and media, very little attention has been given to the fragility and potential instability of eastern Sudan. The three easternmost provinces, including the Red Sea province, could potentially erupt into violence of proportions that will dwarf the crisis in Darfur. Separatist tendencies and resentment towards the national government are strong in this region, which has traditionally been the stronghold of the ethnic Beja. The south was the target of northern insurgency control measures for decades. However, now that they have been folded into the power structures of the state, many national authorities who originate from the south have also proposed methods for dealing with the insurgency in the east similar to the policies used historically by the north to deal with the south.

This development reinforces the idea that certain habits of dealing with conflict can emerge as the dominant political tradition within a national context. The mere fact that the CPA was signed in Sudan does not automatically mean that the country will not deal with future conflicts in the same manner that it dealt with them in the past. There is a certain modus operandi that comes to dominate political paradigms and traditions over the course of time. In Sudan, the political tradition has tilted towards combating insurgencies rather than dialoguing with them. Once an insurgency and its constituents have been brought under sufficient control and their resource base and constituencies controlled, then the powerbrokers might talk from a position of strength. Upfront dialogue is not considered an option. This legacy now overshadows the new Unity Government and impacts both northern and southern officials in Khartoum.

The request for assistance in establishing the National Center for Conflict Prevention came to the UN from mid- to senior-level officials within the JNTT, which was comprised of former or current Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) members and former government officials from the north who managed the initial implementation of the CPA. Actors like these, with the potential to drive attitudinal change, should receive support and engagement from the international community. The UN held collective meetings with officials from the north, south, east and Darfur to discuss a program for building lasting national capacities for conflict management.

Local discussion groups provided innovative and interesting ideas to induce attitudinal and operational change in conflict resolution techniques amongst Sudanese. Such innovative thinking challenged the conventional wisdom of political tradition in Sudan and evidenced the existence of individuals willing to drive change even within a society facing violent conflict. The challenge for international actors is to determine how to engage with these individuals and support initiatives that encourage local leadership in strengthening capacities for constructive conflict management.

Assessing Capacity-Building Initiatives

The cases of Guyana and Sudan raise the question of what type of institutions or processes the UN should support in bolstering national capacities for peace. Recognizing that such processes would differ from country to country, flexibility is imperative to be
able to support a variety of specific, internal mediation capacities, broader efforts within civil society and political parties and still larger parliamentary-level initiatives. To illustrate this, the UN has undertaken support for local groups in Ghana, Guyana and Kenya to experiment with local-level peace committees. Such committees bring together local officials, the police, the army and civil society groups to form a systematic template for conflict management at the local level before violence erupts. In Ghana, this process has been labeled the National Architecture for Peace.

The above-described programs are examples of the kind of national and local capacities that the UN is trying to encourage. However, it is important to ask specifically what and how much such capacity-building programs actually achieve. The short answer is that we do not know yet; time will tell. One cannot determine the success of such programs by assessing whether particular conflict issues have definitively been resolved; issues are never definitively solved, rather they often mutate into a different set of issues. Additionally, the process of change within societies is slow and quite often the best way of assessing the success of such kinds of interventions is to monitor “process indicators.” For example, process indicators take stock of how many times local actors turn to each other when resolving internal issues rather than referring to the UN or external agencies for assistance. Such assessments critically monitor the nature of the conversation that takes place between key political and civic leaders. Specifically, they assess whether the levels of engagement between political and civic leaders is increasing; what kinds of inter-ethnic dialogues are occurring internally; whether the paradigm within which the local media frames domestic stories is changing; and whether the conflict management culture is changed.

Clearly, enhanced internal capacity-building is imperative. If societies do not encourage and develop their own infrastructures for peace, peace is unlikely to be sustainable.
Many analysts and practitioners in conflict prevention would agree that the lessons in the field are well documented but underutilized, resulting in a significant “knowledge-action” gap. While the science underlying conflict prevention is well understood and most practitioners are familiar at least with such techniques as facilitation, track-one and track-two dialogue, mediation and problem solving, practitioners do not actively draw upon the available resources.

Based on this presumed gap, experts within the field began to promote the deliberate application of the practical lessons learned and to advocate for support of three- to five-year pre-conflict interventions to demonstrate the potential for effective violence prevention. In preparatory run-up meetings that preceded the formation of the International Peace and Prosperity Project (IPPP), Michael Lund proposed to a group of peace-building professionals that a pilot initiative in conflict prevention be implemented in a particular country threatened by violence. Lund outlined the basic steps that would be involved in such an initiative, identified some of the lessons that have been learned in this field and defined criteria that could be used to select countries to serve as the focus for a demonstration project. Using these criteria, Carleton University in Ottawa surveyed the existing early-warning lists to provide options for the project’s country focus. One of the countries that was identified by several lists as a potential hot-spot for violence in the coming three years was the West African nation of Guinea-Bissau. As a result of this research, the IPPP was launched in 2004 to conduct a violence prevention demonstration in Guinea-Bissau.

The International Peace and Prosperity Project in Guinea-Bissau

The IPPP grew out of the observation that despite extensive study of state failure, the international community does not respond early enough or effectively enough to the triggers that often set off violence in poor and politically unstable countries. As a result, the IPPP approach was born as a collaborative, research-based, action-oriented, strategic, flexible and catalytic project to address this gap. The IPPP aimed to work with existing local and international actors to create a shared, coherent, indigenously designed and adequately resourced conflict-prevention approach that would achieve maximum peace-building and development effectiveness in a weak state such as Guinea-Bissau.

Project Design

In developing the IPPP design, the need for multi-sectoral and integrative approaches was emphasized. The IPPP wanted to avoid the “mandate trap” that often limits the work of many NGOs to a certain set of pre-selected projects no matter the context. Instead, the project wanted to be free to work towards effective and locally relevant conflict prevention. The IPPP thus sought out local leaders, mostly within civil society, who would respond favorably to an initiative based on an integrated approach for peace and prosperity in the country. The role of the IPPP would be largely facilitative, not prescriptive. The project aimed to convene a group of local stakeholders and assist in providing some analytical tools to facilitate joint diagnostics. It adopted the understanding that local stakeholders are familiar with the problems confronting the country and that they are most
capable of articulating the main causes of potential conflict, once engaged around a set of key questions. The IPPP was also committed to long-term engagement and would be active in Guinea-Bissau for some time to come.

Ten days before the team departed for Guinea-Bissau on its initial scouting mission, the media broadcast the assassination of the Head of the Armed Forces in Guinea-Bissau. This news confirmed the early warnings that Guinea-Bissau faced the risk of violence, but it also raised the questions of whether the project could work there and still be considered a “prevention” intervention and how early or late into a conflict scenario prevention can begin.

The suddenly altered context highlighted the convoluted and oftentimes unpredictable nature of pre- or post-conflict interventions. The rhetoric of peace-building as a notion akin to systematic bricklaying is sophistic and fails to account for the reality of such a dynamic process. Within this framework, while undertaking peace-building, violence prevention or recovery operations, conflict recidivism is possible if not inevitable; the path to peace is not straight. The assassination of the Head of the Armed Forces reinforced the lethal environment within which this project was operating. Therefore, the IPPP did not treat violence euphemistically; rather it reaffirmed its commitment to violence prevention in the short term including its ability to undertake a project in a country like Guinea-Bissau and still be relevant in such a hostile and volatile context. Following the initial visit in October 2004, the IPPP became active in efforts to stabilize the country through short-term crisis prevention. Specifically, the IPPP was active in the months leading up to presidential elections in August 2005. Once those immediate crises had passed in February 2006, the IPPP facilitated a multi-stakeholder process to develop a longer-term National Action Plan for Peace and Prosperity.

In addition to emphasizing collaboration with local partners and a holistic in-country strategy, a distinct feature of the IPPP was its linkage of action on the ground to scholarship and external advocacy on behalf of the country. Many action-based NGOs or practitioners are wary of advocacy and therefore adopt a “don’t bite the hand that feeds you” mentality, thus obviating the peace advocacy function while remaining active in-country. On the other hand, some activists and advocates are extremely effective at exercising political pressure on the relevant parties, but are unwilling to get involved in the field. The element of scholarship was critical in incorporating project evaluation early on in the project design.

Stabilization Efforts: The 2005 Presidential Elections
Approximately eighteen months after conceiving of such a demonstration project in Guinea-Bissau, the IPPP was instrumental in catalyzing the formation of an effective, multi-stakeholder civil society group. This group emerged on the eve of the 2005 presidential elections, and was subsequently credited by the European Union and others as having played a positive role in stabilizing the pre-election political campaign environment. In undertaking facilitative and supportive violence prevention measures, the IPPP, in conjunction with local stakeholders, identified three potential triggers that could result in violence.

First, eligibility for presidential candidacy needed to be resolved. The intention of two formerly deposed presidents to run as candidates and seek office again had the potential to instigate violence. Of these deposed leaders, one had been removed from office via a coup d’état and another via war. One of these potential candidates had also signed a document pledging not to run for office during a stipulated period of time. Second, candidate behavior and conduct had the potential to lead to violence. Many of the
presidential candidates were known to mobilize their constituencies via kinship networks, thus encouraging ethnic animosity within the society. They were also known to use strong-arm tactics. Third, the election process itself had the potential to erupt into violence at the polling stations.

The civil society group, with the assistance of the IPPP, had to determine how they should begin to address these potential violence triggers and what effective, practical action could be taken to reduce the threat. In response, the group created a movement centered on a nucleus of key civic actors that to this day continues to take action to promote peace and minimize the triggers of violence. In the lead-up to the elections, the group mobilized an increasingly open and independent media, elicited a commitment from the military to remain removed from the field of politics, gained the public commitment of all but one candidate to an electoral code of conduct and obtained an international legal opinion about the eligibility of candidates. The opinion was registered in the Supreme Court of Guinea-Bissau. In short, with limited funds but unlimited hands-on support for a few timely local initiatives, the IPPP was able to help a citizens’ group stabilize a potentially much more hostile political environment.

**Developing a National Plan for Peace and Prosperity**

Having contributed toward the relatively peaceful elections in the fall of 2005, the IPPP turned to the task of facilitating a multi-stakeholder joint diagnostic exercise. Recognizing the need to create more favorable, deeper and longer-term conditions for the reinforcement and consolidation of peace and the importance of dialogue between political actors and civilians, the IPPP facilitated a multi-stakeholder dialogue in February 2006 to formulate a broader peace-building plan for the country. An Executive Committee composed of civilian community members organized the meeting with the aim of gathering opinions from different sectors of society to undertake a joint diagnosis of the main problems. The ultimate goal was to collaborate on developing solutions that would be the base for a National Action Plan for Peace and Prosperity in Guinea-Bissau.

Approximately twenty participants, including religious figures, army personnel, politicians, civilians, social communicators and members of youth and women’s associations, met as a group to analyze the current problems of the country using the conflict analysis method known as the conflict tree. Participants identified discrete problems in Guinea-Bissau and the key causes and consequences of these problems as outlined in Tables 1–3.

In undertaking the joint diagnostic exercise, many members of the multi-stakeholder group indicated that what Guinea-Bissau needed was not more dialogues, but rather employment creation and concrete action towards economic dynamism. Consequently, the resulting outcome document, the National Plan for Peace and Prosperity, placed equal emphasis on the need for development initiatives to enhance prosperity in addition to conflict-resolution interventions to establish peace within Guinea-Bissau.

**Analysis of IPPP Engagement in Guinea-Bissau**

The IPPP conducted an internal evaluation at the end of the first year of operation. The consultants and staff who had been part of the team were consulted. Simultaneously, the IPPP solicited the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) to conduct an external in-country evaluation. WANEP engaged local stakeholders in the evaluation process. In addition, a meta-level evaluation was conducted by Royal Roads University in Canada. At the request of the IPPP, the Royal Roads University
### Table 1: Key Problems in Guinea-Bissau

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<th>KEY PROBLEMS</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Lack of a trade culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Lack of education and professional training</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Lack of political tools to solve ethnic, religious and military issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Lack of a national identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Lack of effective government administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Lack of justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Army dissension</td>
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<td>- Economic stagnation</td>
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### Table 2: Key Causes of Problems in Guinea-Bissau

<table>
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<tr>
<th>KEY CAUSES</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Crisis in state affirmation</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Lack of qualified human resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Lack of clear goals in the educational and professional training systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Mistrust in win-win dialogue</td>
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<td>- Manipulation of national security and defense forces for political means</td>
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<td>- Lack of favorable climate for business and investment</td>
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<td>- Increase of non-conciliatory interest groups</td>
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<td>- Struggle for power</td>
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assessment integrated the results of the internal evaluation work, WANEP’s findings during the external evaluation and other relevant sources. The Royal Roads University assessment identified two significant elements of the IPPP approach: flexibility and relationship-building.

The IPPP’s flexibility made it effective in its cross-sectoral undertakings—facilitating vertical as well as horizontal integration. The IPPP was able to work vertically to integrate an array of external donors who supported the programming, and the project worked horizontally to effect cross-sectoral impacts within Guinea-Bissau. Sustained relationship-building allowed the IPPP to help empower local groups with relatively limited finances over an extended time period. Thus, the project’s low-level assistance was consistent, not over-extended and successful in building relationships with local partners.

The distinct approach of the IPPP was once described as a “peace guerrilla” mentality. The actions and support projects undertaken by the IPPP were fairly low-key and subject to constant evaluation. The IPPP was responsive to the pulse of a very fluid and potentially regressive, volatile environment. Based on this constantly dynamic approach, the IPPP was empowered to target its initiatives in a strategically informed manner that encouraged longer-term stability. IPPP staff members and projects were unified by the common purpose of non-violence and strategically informed actions. By the same token, the IPPP did run the risk of being viewed as a maverick—unconventional, flexible and responsive. Initially this unconventional approach might have been viewed as strange and potentially risky, but eighteen months later, the IPPP is viewed as a committed friend. The ability of the IPPP to act as an agile catalyst is in fact now being embraced by the wider local and international community in Guinea-Bissau. For example, the ability of the IPPP to be light on its feet led to an appeal, supported by the UN Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS), for assistance in aiding the Military of Defense in crafting its White Paper on Military Strategy.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>KEY CONSEQUENCES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
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<td>Strikes and late payments of salaries</td>
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<td>Permanent political crisis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of strong political will</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extreme poverty</td>
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</table>
Ongoing Engagement in Guinea-Bissau

Based on the first IPPP mission to Guinea-Bissau, initial impressions were dominated by the mass disenfranchisement of a people who were struggling for their daily survival. Public engagement in politics did not exist, and the political sphere was run by a powerful oligarchy—a cluster of five to eight families running the country behind what could be described as a Shakespearean curtain, concealing their actions and operating on a platform removed from the rest of society. Occasionally the veil of secrecy would be lifted to reveal a political assassination or turmoil behind the scenes. This political tradition ensured that Guinea-Bissau was eternally in the grip of uncertainty.

The IPPP recognized that if it was going to be effective in achieving its mandate of reducing the threat of violence, it would need to get behind this curtain to influence powerbrokers who dictated the levels of violence and prospects for peace and development. Initially the IPPP could not access such powerbrokers; it was a demonstration project not directly affiliated with an influential international actor or NGO. However, through sustained engagement and collaboration, the IPPP has been able to forge positive relationships with people in positions of power who possess the ability to change the fate of Guinea-Bissau. Currently, the IPPP is engaged with the newly installed Head of the Armed Forces, General Tagme, who is also working with President Vieira and is committed to on-going engagement in Guinea-Bissau.
CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Michael Lund is the Consulting Program Manager to the Project on Leadership and Building State Capacity and Senior Specialist for Conflict and Peacebuilding at Management Systems International, Inc. (MSI). Author of Preventing Violent Conflicts (1996), Lund has been a leading specialist in the field of intra-state violent conflicts, with a special focus on post-conflict settings and preventing conflicts before they start. Currently, he is co-editing and writing analytical chapters for a volume of country case studies by the International Peace Academy on the respective roles of security and development programs in achieving sustainable peace. At MSI, and earlier at Creative Associates, he researched the sources of intra-state conflicts and has conducted conflict assessments in several regions, including Burundi, Georgia, Guatemala, Kosovo, Macedonia, Uzbekistan and Zimbabwe. In addition, he pioneered the formulation of systematic methodologies to evaluate the effectiveness of development and peace-building programs in reducing conflict. He has applied these methods to a wide range of development policies both at the micro (program) and macro (multi-program) levels. His analyses have been contracted by such diverse organizations as the US Council on Foreign Relations, USAID, the State Department, the World Bank, the UN Department of Political Affairs (UNDPA), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the European Commission, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) as well as several international NGOs. Lund was the founding Director of the Jennings Randolph Fellows Program and a Senior Scholar at the US Institute of Peace. He has a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Chicago and taught at Cornell, UCLA, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Affairs and the University of Maryland.

Chetan Kumar serves as the Inter-agency Liaison Specialist within the United Nations Development Programme’s Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (UNDP/BCPR). He also serves as the Program Manager for the Joint UNDP–Department of Political Affairs (DPA) Program on Building National Capacity for Conflict Prevention. His specialization is in initiatives involving the early prevention of armed conflict. He previously worked for the Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the International Peace Academy in New York. He is the author of Building Peace in Haiti (1998), and co-editor of Peace-building as Politics: Cultivating Peace in Fragile Societies (2000). He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Benjamin Hoffman is Director of the International Peace and Prosperity Project (IPPPP) based in Ottawa, Canada. The IPPPP began in 2004 as a violence prevention demonstration project in the troubled West African state of Guinea-Bissau where it continues to operate. Hoffman recently served as a Senior Fellow at The Fletcher School and a Visiting Scholar at the University of Victoria. Formerly, Hoffman directed the Conflict Resolution Program at the Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia, and served as Director and CEO of the Canadian International Institute of Applied Negotiation (CIIAN). Hoffman received an M.A. in Psychology from Wilfred Laurier University, a second M.A. in International Relations from The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, a Specialization from Harvard in Negotiation and Dispute Resolution with a concentration in International Peacemaking and a Ph.D. from the University of York, UK.
ABOUT THE LEADERSHIP PROJECT

The **Project on Leadership and Building State Capacity**, launched in June 2005, expands upon the work of the former Conflict Prevention Project and responds to the growing demand for leadership training directed at both the prevention of violent conflict and the reconstruction of war-torn societies.

There is an emerging awareness of the importance of leadership training in achieving sustainable peace. On a technical level, the art of building democratic state capacity is well understood. But the harder political task—helping the leaders of warring factions achieve their objectives, to work collaboratively in avoiding war or supporting postwar reconstruction and to build democratically accountable links between the governors and the governed—requires a careful examination of the underappreciated “leadership factor” in peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction.

Under the leadership of former Congressman and Presidential Special Envoy Howard Wolpe, the Leadership Project aims to address the missing process and leadership dimensions of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction; to expand the cadre of professional trainers capable of working in regions in conflict or emerging from conflict; and to deepen the international community’s capacity to conceptualize, implement and manage these complex interventions.

Presently, the Leadership Project is composed of three core elements: a standing Working Group on preventing and rebuilding failed states; a major capacity-building initiative in war-torn Liberia; and public forums and issue conferences.

ABOUT THE WOODROW WILSON CENTER

The **Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars** is the living, national memorial to President Wilson established by Congress in 1968 and headquartered in Washington, D.C. It is a nonpartisan institution, supported by public and private funds, engaged in the study of national and world affairs. The Wilson Center establishes and maintains a neutral forum for free, open and informed dialogue. The Center commemorates the ideals and concerns of Woodrow Wilson by providing a link between the world of ideas and the world of policy and fostering research, study, discussion and collaboration among a full spectrum of individuals concerned with policy and scholarship in national and world affairs.

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