

Conflict matters

As conflict issues start to rise up the political agenda, now is the time for Bond members to share their experience and analysis with the Bond Conflict Policy Group to help identify shared priorities and concerns.

“Conflict has lasted 20 years. Our children have been killed and abducted, our houses burned, properties looted. If the peace goes well, people will grow crops to sell and send children to school... If it fails I don't know what we will do.”

These were the words of a woman from the Lango region of Northern Uganda in 2007, but could equally well describe the hopes of people from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to Afghanistan, Colombia to Sri Lanka.

Everybody deserves to live free from the fear of violence. Indeed, living under the shadow of conflict and insecurity is itself a form of poverty. Conflict helps spread HIV and AIDS, prevents children from being educated, creates humanitarian emergencies, reduces economic growth, undermines efforts to provide sanitation and all too often fosters rape and sexual abuse.

Renewed attention on conflict issues

Clearly, addressing conflict and insecurity is a development priority as well as a moral necessity. In 2010, whichever party wins the General Election, addressing conflict through development assistance will also receive significant political attention.

The DFID 2009 White Paper, outlined a ‘new approach in fragile and conflict-affected countries’, and committed to allocating at least 50% of all new bilateral



• Girls collect firewood in Karamoja, an insecure region in northern Uganda © Saferworld

funding to these contexts. Similarly, the Conservative Party green paper on international development dedicated one of its three chapters to conflict, stabilisation and peacekeeping, and the Liberal Democrat Party have publicly pledged to meet all the Bond ‘Vote Global’ manifesto calls for responding to conflict.

But what does all this mean in practice? What are the implications for Bond members in DFID ‘prioritising statebuilding and peacebuilding’, and what is peacebuilding anyway? Why should DFID treat security and justice as basic services ‘on a par with health and education’? Why (and how) should we ensure our development programmes are ‘conflict-sensitive’? Would an emphasis on ‘stabilisation’ signal a threat to DFID’s independence?

Share your experience

The Bond Conflict Policy Group exists to explore just such questions, but we are not only a group for ‘conflict specialists’. We want to develop a better understanding of how conflict impacts on all our work and how we can operate most effectively in conflict-affected countries. We share our experience, ideas and political analysis, and engage in joint advocacy where appropriate.

The Conflict Policy Group currently has members from over 30 organisations and a steering committee made up of CARE International, International Alert, Saferworld, and the UK Aid Network. We would like to encourage more Bond members to sign up to the group and would also welcome anyone who would like to join the steering committee.

Beginning in February 2010, we will hold a series of open roundtables for all Bond members. We hope these events will introduce some key ‘conflict issues’ to those who may not have encountered them before whilst helping the Conflict Policy Group identify priorities and concerns that are shared across Bond.

We look forward to seeing you at one or more of these roundtables.

Written by Howard Mollett (CARE International), Tom Donnelly (Saferworld) and Gideon Rabinowitz (UK Aid Network).

More information about the Conflict Policy Group is on the Bond website:
www.bond.org.uk/pages/conflict-policy-group.html



• Women working a well in Moroto, Uganda as part of a water project which has been designed using a Conflict Sensitive Approach © Saferworld

Upcoming workshops

In coming months the Conflict Policy Group will be organising workshops looking at DFID’s commitment to promoting security and justice as basic services, conflict sensitivity and aid effectiveness, civilian-military relations and humanitarian space, and the international architecture for peacebuilding.

We will advertise these events through Bond and on the Conflict Policy Group page of the Bond website:

www.bond.org.uk/pages/conflict-policy-group.html

For any enquiries, please contact Tom Donnelly:
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UK aid, ‘fragile’ states

25 February 2010, 11.00am-5.00pm
ActionAid UK, Hamlyn House, Macdonald Road, N19 5PG

The DFID 2009 White Paper commits the UK to investing more aid in fragile and conflict-affected countries. This raises some important questions about the UK’s aid policy, including:

- How to maintain a ‘developmental’ approach to aid spending?
- How to manage aid allocations to non-fragile states?
- How DFID can work most effectively with other UK departments to deliver this assistance?

This workshop, open to all Bond members, will enjoy expert insight from relevant speakers and provide a space to discuss these issues and think about how to engage with government on them.

For more information, or to RSVP, please contact Gideon Rabinowitz: ukan@bond.org.uk