Peacebuilding Centre

... *Promoting People, Peacebuilding & Transformation*

Characteristics of Fragile States:

Assessing the Risk of State Failure

The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) notes "The international community is increasingly concerned with the implications for stability and progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) resulting from state fragility. A third of the world's poor live in countries where the state lacks either the will or the capacity to engage productively with their citizens to ensure security, safeguard human rights, and provide the basic function for development.

Fragile states…confront particularly severe development challenges such as weak governance, limited administrative capacity, chronic humanitarian crises, persistent social tensions, violence of the legacy of civil war. The spill over effects resulting from state fragility – violent conflict, organized crime, migration, drug-trafficking – resonate with concerns about international stability and global development."*

Fragile states take many forms and are referred to by a variety of terms – weak, failed, failing, poor performing, or collapsed states. Fragile states are home to the poorest of the poor, and occupy the lowest positions in the Human Development Index (HDI) - countries that also are more likely to experience violent conflict. Decades of investment in development can be lost in one civil war. Whatever form they take, the facts are clear - fragile states pose both a moral and a development challenge to the pursuit of sustainable peace.

*OECD/DAC. Policy Commitment to Improve Development Effectiveness in Fragile States. DCD/DAC(2007)29. (http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/48/38293448.pdf

The OECD/DAC has identified an irrefutable link between conflict and underdevelopment, and their *Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development*, (May 1997), and their supplement, *Helping Prevent Violent Conflict*, *Policy Brief*, (October 2002), clearly demonstrate that sustainable development cannot be achieved without being sensitive to the tensions that divide communities.

The DAC Guidelines (www.oecd.org/dac/conflict) also advocate that efforts should be made to 'mainstream' conflict-sensitive skills throughout development programs and other institutions, particularly in fragile states, and this workshop is a response to that recommendation.

One of the skill-sets required to engage more effectively in fragile states is the ability to recognize which countries are vulnerable in the first place. By using *country risk assessment* models, one can develop practical skills to determine the vulnerability or likelihood of state failure early enough to engage in preventive action. There are many credible and tested tools available to identify countries "at risk" of failure that can assist in determining whether special care needs to be taken for engagement with certain countries.

Considerable efforts have been made to document lessons learned and good practice in assessing state fragility. It is relatively straightforward to assemble good practice and "learn", but it takes professional facilitators with directly relevant field and operational experience to assist in building this capacity in institutions.

IN, ON OR AROUND CONFLICT

Peacebuilding refers to all activities, whether before, during or after conflict, that deal directly with conflict and peace issues. While peacebuilding may be initiated at any point during a conflict cycle, it is much less costly in both human and financial terms if it is done early.

An institution needs to decide whether to improve its skills in working IN or ON conflict as opposed to AROUND it. There are many models and tools available to identify countries "at risk" of failure that can assist in determining whether special care needs to be taken for engagement in these communities

Objectives

Fragile States is a specialized workshop aimed at improving the understanding and skills for assessing state vulnerability. It will assist in preparing participants to conduct Country Risk Assessments, as well as to identify those countries for which specific conflict prevention and peacebuilding programs should be initiated.

Participants

This workshop is intended for those who program in developing countries that may also be fragile states. It will be valuable to those who wish to develop skills in assessing state vulnerability in order to identify key entry points for conflict sensitive engagement.

Methodology

Fragile States takes a dynamic, participatory approach. The workshop makes extensive use of good practice and lessons learned from the field. The focus is on understanding essential concepts and developing practical skills needed for conducting country risk assessments and designing conflict-sensitive approaches to fragile states.

Presentations, case studies, group work, and exercises are used to give participants the opportunity for an in-depth review of the subject matter. At the end of the workshop, participants will have a risk assessment toolkit and relevant resource materials needed for conflict-sensitive programming.

Workshop Elements/Concepts

The workshop covers an overview of concepts, terminology, methodologies and applications as practised by various donors, institutions, and respected peacebuilding practitioners, and brings together key resources and operational frameworks, which assemble good practice from many sources.

- Working IN, ON, or AROUND conflict
- Fragile States: Policy and Good Practice
- Characteristics of Fragile States
- Comparative Approaches to Country Risk Assessment
- In-depth Review of Risk Assessment Tools
- Application of Risk Assessment Tools to specific fragile states

Facilitators

The workshop facilitators are international subject-matter experts who are recognized in their fields. The President of the Peacebuilding Centre, Susan Brown, currently delivers training to the EU REACT (Rapid Expert Assistance Cooperation Teams) program which prepares civilians for deployment to peace operations, teaches at Royal Roads University (Canada) Masters Program in Human Security and Peacebuilding, and Wilfrid Laurier University (Canada), in the Political Science Department, and works in Africa on conflict-sensitive business practice. She is formerly the:

- Director, Peacebuilding Programs, Pearson Peacekeeping Centre
- Chief of the Peacebuilding Unit, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
- Canadian Representative to the OECD/DAC Task Force on Conflict, Peace and Development
- Advisory Council member, Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), Stockholm, Sweden
- Advisory Council Chair, War Torn Societies Project (now Interpeace), Geneva, Switzerland

For more information, contact SBrown1160@aol.com