

CHAPTER 24

Building National “Infrastructures for Peace”: UN Assistance for Internally Negotiated Solutions to Violent Conflict

Chetan Kumar

THE LIMITS OF TRADITIONAL MEDIATION

Based on publicly available information on rising levels of interethnic tension, deep impasses on core issues, rapid onset of turbulence or transitions, or increased linkages between politics and criminality, 87 countries in all of the world’s regions can currently be identified as facing the prospects of potential violence, prolonged deadlock, or a relapse into violent conflict over the next two-to three-year period. Of these, only 23 are currently receiving formal mediation assistance from the UN, including by the virtue of a peace operation.¹

Some others have benefited from the peacemaking efforts of regional or non-governmental organizations, but for the majority, there is no internal political consensus on receiving external assistance for mediation, especially where violent conflict has not erupted on a sufficiently significant scale. For many, external mediation would also constitute a fundamental interruption of sovereignty.

Beyond the lack of entry points for external mediation, the factors currently precipitating potentially violent tensions in many of the vulnerable countries may not be susceptible to external mediation alone. Yet, the need for peacemaking intended as intentional response to actual and perceived threats is great. Although mediation remains a critical tool, it may not be sufficient for the following type of situations:

1. Situations where the conflict is not limited to the primary protagonists alone, but extends through the different levels of society, from political and civic leaderships down through to communities; in these situations, which are especially correlated with interethnic tensions or exclusion based on identity,

an external mediator, even if backed by a very large team, may not be able to reach to and resolve every level and type of conflict.

2. Situations where ongoing or potential violence is not a variable of a centralized conflict, but decentralized violence over land, natural resources, allocation of mining and other land use rights, and chieftaincy which nevertheless affects national stability; West Africa in particular has been plagued by this type of conflict.²
3. Situations of deep, rapid, and continuous political or socioeconomic transformation, or even revolution, where the challenge is not the resolution of a specific conflict, but providing continuous accompaniment to all relevant actors engaged in a necessary transition so that the eventual outcome is based on inclusion and consensus and does not lead to more instability or repression; many countries in the Middle East are undergoing this transition.
4. Situations where potentially violent instability may result from the creeping influence of illicit trafficking, especially in weapons or narcotics, over the political system; the core conflict prevention challenge in these cases, mostly to be found in Central America and parts of Africa, is to build sufficient confidence between the state and communities so that they can work together to address chronic insecurity.³

In all these situations, attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible actions are needed, reinserting peacemaking among the options available to all relevant actors. This is why external mediation may need to be complemented or substituted where entry points do not exist, with the development and application of national and local capacities for conflict prevention and for internal mediation. Such capacities can be described variously, but the best descriptions are offered by their users.

DEFINING NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURES FOR PEACE⁴

Meeting in Naivasha, Kenya, in February 2010, representatives of governments, political parties, civil society, and UN Country Teams from 14 African countries agreed on a definition of infrastructures for peace, or the “dynamic network of interdependent structures, mechanisms, resources, values, and skills which, through dialogue and consultation, contribute to conflict prevention and peace-building in a society.” Participants then committed to concrete plans to promote and develop this infrastructure in their countries. In doing so, they also agreed to draw on the experiences of countries such as Ghana and Kenya, which have recently developed and applied these infrastructures for resolving local conflicts or for ensuring a peaceful election (Ghana, 2008) or referendum (Kenya, 2010).

Such infrastructure, which can also be stated as constituting a society’s collaborative capacity, can help a fragile, divided, or post-conflict society, or a society in rapid transition, to make and sustain peace by

1. managing recurrent conflicts over land, natural resources, apportioning of mineral wealth, and contested elections, especially where development itself has exacerbated these conflicts;

2. finding internal solutions, through a mediated consensus or a multi-stakeholder dialogue, to specific conflicts and tensions, especially in circumstances where concerns over sovereignty are paramount;
3. complementing external mediation targeted at the primary parties with internal negotiations that bring together actors at different levels of the society and polity, often inaccessible to itinerant external mediation, or a wider group of stakeholders, including civil society, thus broadening the base for peace; and
4. negotiating and implementing new governing arrangements in an inclusive and consensual manner, especially after periods of turbulent political or socio-economic transition.

The World Bank's World Development Report for 2011 focuses in particular on the challenges of addressing protracted and endemic armed violence and fragility through the reform of institutions, especially the security sector. In doing so, it highlights the extended period of time required for meaningful transformation, and the necessity in this context of internal collaboration, especially inclusive enough coalitions that can generate the collective political will for reform. The bargaining and internal mediation that is in turn required to sustain these coalitions highlights the necessity for infrastructures for peace, and the report mentions Ghana's National Peace Council (detailed later in this chapter) as one good example.

The United Nations system, and especially the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in close collaboration with the Department for Political Affairs (DPA), is currently supporting efforts to establish such infrastructures or to conduct specific dialogue or conflict management activities leading to such infrastructures, in approximately 30 countries.⁵

Against baselines of previous rounds of violence, emerging patterns of tension similar to those that have led to violence in other countries, and prolonged periods of deadlock that have obstructed common efforts to achieve development objectives, successful conflict prevention in these instances is being measured through an increase in cooperative behavior leading to consensual solutions, peaceful political transitions, and reduction in levels of ongoing tension and violence. In the past five years, such results have been obtained with UN assistance in 15 countries, or one-third of the 45 countries where it is currently being provided.

An important emerging concept that relates to infrastructures for peace is that of insider mediation. In November 2010, a group of African nongovernmental organizations providing mediation assistance in different parts of the continent met in South Africa, with the support of the Peace Nexus Foundation, a Swiss organization, and UNDP to launch an "African Insider Mediators' Platform." As opposed to mediators who are invited from the outside to assist with the resolution of a conflict, insider mediators are seen as being endogenous to a situation, either by virtue of being resident in the country as part of permanent international presences, such as UN Country Teams, trusted bilateral partners, or regional organizations' offices, or by being viewed as neutral or autonomous citizens or domestic institutions with specific capacities and skills for mediation and negotiation.⁶ Insider mediators are in a significantly

better position to reach the different levels of conflict in a society and to also accompany protracted processes of change and institutional transformation.⁷

INFRASTRUCTURES FOR PEACE VERSUS TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO CONFLICT PREVENTION

The emphasis on building and applying national and local capacities for conflict prevention, and the associated concepts of infrastructures for peace and insider mediation, marks an important departure from traditional approaches to conflict prevention:

- *First, the traditional dichotomy between structural and operational prevention, first proposed by the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflicts, is now transcended.* The UN's development presence is currently seen as an important vehicle for conflict prevention, not just by doing more or better-quality development, but also by equipping national and local actors with the skills and tools to manage specific conflicts and tensions in the short to intermediate term. Hence, development is the vehicle not just for structural but also operational prevention. Conversely, the political arm of the UN now increasingly supports the building of national capacities for conflict prevention (Ghana's National Peace Council received assistance from both UNDP and DPA) as complements or substitutes to more traditional diplomacy. Many of these activities can be described as preventive peacemaking, actions intentionally designed to reduce the occurrence and severity of violent, destructive conflicts.
- *Second, the traditional divide between development and diplomacy as distinct tools of promoting peace and security is also transcended.* On the one hand, development is now recognized as bringing new resources, actors, and interests into society and hence inevitably generating new conflicts which can lead to violence if not well managed and greater inclusion and progress if channeled into positive change. Again, the key difference lies in a society's collaborative capacity. Conversely, diplomats recognize that external interventions may at best freeze complex and multilayered conflicts if not accompanied internal or endogenous processes of change. Conflict sensitive development and effective diplomacy, therefore, require the same tools, which are national and local capacities for conflict prevention.
- *Third, the onus for action in this new approach shifts decisively to internal actors who are part of a situation, as opposed to external actors alone.* Bilateral and multilateral partners are no longer the ones preventing conflict, but are instead supporting a diverse group of domestic actors to do so. The upside of this approach is that it ensures both greater local ownership as well as the longevity of solutions thus developed. The downside is that where public or civic space is largely contested or polarized, widely trusted change agents or internal mediators either may not be available or may not have the political space in which to facilitate the right conversations or behavioral change.
- *Fourth, the profile of technical and professional staff employed by international organizations to support efforts to build national and local capacities for conflict prevention is also significantly different from the more conventional categories and matches more closely the expertise found in professional civic or private organizations*

supporting conflict resolution and mitigation efforts. The UN, in particular, has taken the lead in moving beyond the traditional categories of diplomats, analysts, and program managers. UNDP and DPA jointly deploy peace and development advisers (PDAs)⁸ through UNDP Country Offices to support national counterparts with their own conflict prevention and management efforts. These advisers combine strong skill for analysis, competencies for mediation and facilitation, and leadership of programmatic initiatives that help national and local actors acquire and apply skills and tools for conflict resolution. In other words, they are diplomats, analysts, and program managers rolled into one.⁹

- The presence of appropriately skilled staff is also crucial given that a focus on national and local capacities requires a nuanced, politically sensitive, and careful understanding and analysis of the actors who are best placed to support the transformation of conflicts into avenues for positive change or to promote the peaceful and consensual resolution of potentially violent tensions. UNDP, for instance, has developed and is currently upgrading a conflict-related development analysis (CDA) methodology¹⁰ that brings together relevant national and international actors in-country, often facilitated by PDAs or similar specialists, to develop joint or shared analyses of the precipitants of possibly violent tensions or significant deadlocks that could stymie the achievement of key development goals, and to propose common solutions. The analyses then prepare the basis for appropriately equipped and autonomous forums or individuals to help move forward, in a negotiated and inclusive manner, the implementation of the commonly identified innovations and reforms.
- *Fifth, and finally, the new approach has helped move the discourse on conflict prevention more toward the global South.* Many developing countries, and especially rising powers such as Brazil, Turkey, and India, have traditionally been skeptical of the conflict prevention agenda as articulated by primarily northern institutes and think tanks, especially as the agenda has hitherto focused primarily on external interventions into internal conflicts. The emphasis on building national and local capacities for conflict prevention, and based primarily on southern experiences—such as Ghana’s National Peace Council,¹¹ Kenya’s increasingly functional system of “district peace committees,”¹² Nepal’s Ministry for Peace and Reconstruction, and Timor Leste’s Department for Peace-Building and Social Cohesion¹³ in the Ministry of Social Solidarity—again places the responsibility and the onus for conflict prevention on the concerned governments and civil societies themselves. This has led to a significantly greater numbers of entry points for preventive action than is the case with the traditional, more interventionist approaches.
- For example, following the experience-sharing exercise in Naivasha referred to at the beginning of the chapter, Togo requested assistance for establishing a national peace architecture similar to Ghana’s. The National Governing Council of the African Peer Review Mechanism Process of Uganda convened a high-level consultation in July 2010, based on feedback from the Ugandan delegation to the Naivasha meeting, on establishing a national peace architecture to address the country’s burgeoning conflicts over land, natural resources, and traditional authority. The prime minister attended the consultation, and the process to establish a viable conflict management system is expected to gather momentum in 2011. Similarly, the Tanzanian delegation, which included the

Inspector-General of Police, applied ideas developed during the course of the Naivasha meeting to the peaceful and successful conduct of the Zanzibar referendum later in 2010.

The Naivasha meeting underscored the degree to which the sharing of experiences and learning among developing countries themselves remains under-used as a tool for generating entry points for preventive action.

EXAMPLES OF RECENT UN ASSISTANCE

Much of the ongoing UN support for the development and application of conflict management capabilities is active in the approximately 45 countries in which it is being provided; that is, it involves ongoing and sensitive processes of internal dialogue and negotiation. Hence, an indicative sample and summaries of country-level results for 15, or one-third, of the countries are provided here:

1. *Guyana*: In 2006, after a period of rising political tension, Guyana conducted its first ever violence-free elections. An independent external evaluation conclusively attributed this result to a UNDP-supported national initiative known as the Social Cohesion Programme. A national dialogue, a network of local mediators to help ease tensions among communities, and agreements among political parties were some of the instruments used.¹⁴
2. *Bolivia*: In 2008, oil-and-mineral-rich Bolivia almost descended into social violence over a dispute over constitutional reform that followed a period of rising political tension. Working through instruments such as independent public surveys, credible information on the technical issues faced by the parties, and facilitation and observation through its country team when requested, the UN discreetly assisted internal negotiations in reaching consensus around a new constitution.¹⁵
3. *Ghana*: Ghana is West Africa’s most stable democracy. Yet in December 2008, chieftaincy-related conflicts in parts of the country, and the discovery of oil led to new tensions as the country approached national elections, and the prospects for violence increased. When the elections were held, the narrowest margin of votes recorded in an African election—50,000 votes—separated the winner and the loser. With tensions rising, the National Peace Council, an autonomous national statutory body established with UNDP assistance, helped mediate a peaceful political transition. According to Emmanuel Bombande, a Ghanaian and the founder of the West Africa Network for Peace, “When it mattered most in an extremely difficult moment during Ghana’s elections in 2008, the National Peace Council was there to save Ghana.”

Previously, the UN had discreetly assisted the mediation efforts of the Asantehene, the Ashanti king, and the Northern Region Peace Advisory Council (the precursor to the National Peace Council) in brokering peace in the long-standing violent conflict in the Dagomba kingdom on Northern Ghana, thus also ensuring violence-free elections in 2004.

4. *Ecuador-Colombia*: Over a five-year period from 2004 to 2009, a UN inter-agency initiative assisted national efforts to stabilize Ecuador’s northern border region with Colombia. Already facing internal social conflict, Ecuador

was also confronted with spillovers from the activities of armed groups in Colombia, with communities along the border overwhelmed with refugees, gang violence, and illicit trafficking. By 2009, levels of crime and violence had been reduced in these areas, services improved, and dialogue established to resolve local conflicts. More importantly, despite upswings and downturns in Ecuador–Colombia relations, lasting bilateral collaboration had been established between both governments to address these issues.

5. *Kenya*: In 2010, Kenya, which is Africa's second-largest non-oil economy, held a constitutional referendum without single incident of violence. This followed the failed 2007 elections when 1,500 people were killed, and an additional 300,000 displaced. In advance of the referendum, UNDP provided quiet support for successful national efforts to reach a political agreement on the new draft constitution and helped government and civil society implement an early warning and response system—the Uwiano Platform¹⁶—that prevented over a hundred incidents of potential violence in the volatile Rift Valley region alone. Local peace committees were strengthened in all of the country's districts and played a critical peacemaking role during the referendum. Following the vote, UNDP is now assisting interparty dialogue on the implementation of the new constitution.
6. *Togo*: The 2005 national elections in Togo had seen about 250 deaths. However, in 2010, the establishment of a platform for political dialogue prior to national elections and the ability of civic actors to conduct a sustained peace campaign led to a reduction in tensions and peaceful elections, as well as a stable post-electoral period. Specifically, an agreement on critical postelection governance reforms was reached *prior* to the February poll; an agreement among political parties was reached in March 2010 to develop a national conflict management architecture (drawing on the experience of Ghana's National Peace Council was also reached); and a political party code of conduct and a public peace campaign were developed and implemented with UNDP assistance. The further development and consolidation of a national peace architecture will be a priority in 2011.
7. *Solomon Islands*: The 2005 national elections in Solomon Islands had seen the burning down of half of the capital city of Honiara, especially during the tense period of jockeying for the position of prime minister that followed the polls. In 2010, no violence occurred during or after the national elections. UNDP had supported a nationally led truth and reconciliation process that helped heal wounds from previous rounds of violence and therefore helped reduce tensions. During and after the elections, a small joint UNDP/DPA monitoring team assisted national negotiations with quiet observation and facilitation.
8. *Timor Leste*: East Timor's fragile peace process almost collapsed between 2007 and 2009 as the return of refugees and internally displaced persons caused a significant increase in conflicts over land. With UN assistance, a network of community mediators was trained and deployed, and their conflict resolution efforts had enabled the return and resettlement of 13,000 families by 2010. In recognition of these efforts, the government is now working with UNDP to establish a new department of peacebuilding, in order for the country to have its own standing system for internal mediation.
9. *Kyrgyzstan*: In Kyrgyzstan, potentially violent tensions (after the April 2010 political regime change and subsequent violence) were de-escalated before and during the constitutional referendum and parliamentary polls later that

year, allowing these exercises to be conducted without violence. UNDP facilitated dialogue spaces between civil society, the Central Electoral Commission, and security agencies, hitherto suspicious of each other following events of April through June. It helped establish, and then supported the confidence-building efforts of, Oblast Advisory Committees (OACs) at the provincial, Local Authority Advisory Committees (LAACs), and district levels. For example, the OAC of Issyk-Gul facilitated dialogue between law enforcement agencies and youth and conducted awareness-raising campaigns on the risks of religious extremism.

10. *Sierra Leone*: Sierra Leone’s 2007 elections marked the first transition of power since the end of the civil war. However, both prior to and during and after the elections, political tensions and the potential for violence were significantly high. UNDP equipped the Political Parties Registration Commission to play the role of an independent convener and mediator¹⁷ and also supported the deployment of local level mediators, alongside a sustained advocacy campaign for peace, led and conducted by often disempowered youth. The elections and the subsequent transfer of power to the opposition were peaceful. More significantly, calls to violence by segments of the political leadership were not answered by the youth.
11. *Lesotho*: Lesotho’s modern experience of democracy and constitutional monarchy has been characterized by prolonged deadlock, leading to violence that precipitated a SADC military intervention in 1998 and again raised potentially violent tensions in mid-2009. In the latter instance, a national church-led platform was formed to mediate among the major political actors and received very discreet UN support. While the mediation continues at the time of writing and has not yet resolved the primary political deadlock, it has lowered tensions that had brought the country to the brink again. The UN is now investing in a program to build the collaborative capacity of all key actors—government, political, and civic leaders and the private sector—so as to ensure that governance is not the platform for perennial deadlock, but delivers the services and participation that it is expected to provide.¹⁸
12. *Cyprus*: UN support for civil society-led track-two initiatives has strengthened communications across Turkish and Cypriot communities through media products jointly developed by the Cyprus Community Media Centre and through the Joint Contact Room (JCR) established to support the sharing of information between the police forces in the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities, the first such instrument of its kind.¹⁹ These and other targeted activities have led to a significant increase (as measured in terms of numbers of joint activities) in direct people-to-people contact across Greek and Turkish Cypriot boundaries in 2010 and in turn created greater political space for public leaders advocating for a resolution of the Cypriot conflict through UN-supported track-one diplomacy. As a result, the latter is expected to accelerate at the time of writing.
13. *Georgia*: The first ever systematic people-to-people contact and confidence-building, through civil society organizations working through the UNDP-assisted Confidence-Building and Early Response Mechanism (COBERM)²⁰ program, were initiated in 2010 across the administrative boundary line with Abkhazia by means of parallel technical assistance to organizations on both sides. These activities, which will be continued in the intermediate term, provide the basis for longer-term confidence-building and are significant in that,

for now, formal diplomatic options toward the resolution of Georgia's frozen conflicts have been exhausted.

14. *Nigeria*: Central Nigeria has provided the stage for significant intercommunity violence over the past 10 years. In what could be a model for other conflicts in that region, a long-standing violent conflict in the Agila local government area of Benue state in Central Nigeria was resolved in 2009 through local mediation efforts conducted by an Abuja-based women's organization, Women Environmental Development (WED), with support from local women's groups and from UNDP. The process employed modern mediation as well as traditional reconciliation methods, and the implementation of the agreement reached in 2009 combines efforts to improve both local livelihoods and the empowerment of women.
15. *Guinea-Conakry*: A national platform established in January 2010 with UNDP assistance to sustain multi-stakeholder dialogue and consensus during the political transition to civilian rule shepherded by Gen. Sekouba Konate. Together with regional diplomacy, its work led to a first round of peaceful presidential polls in June 2010 and the successful negotiation of the dates for the second round of presidential elections in October 2010. While interethnic and political violence occurred both before and after the second round of presidential polls in October–November 2010, its spread was contained through a combination of the work of the platform, together with regional and UN diplomatic efforts. UN efforts now continue to strengthen the country's own capacities for dialogue, conflict management, and interethnic reconciliation.

BEST PRACTICES AND POINTERS FOR FURTHER ACTION

Although a systematic analysis of UN's engagement in support of national conflict prevention efforts is still being undertaken, some preliminary best practices and pointers toward future conflict-prevention practice have emerged, as in-depth evaluations have been undertaken of efforts in particular cases, most recently Guyana, Ecuador, Kenya, and Ghana.

Complementarity between National and International Initiatives

When efforts to build and apply capacities have been undertaken together with regional or international diplomacy, they clearly demonstrate that the latter requires the former to achieve its full order of success. In Kenya, the "Concerned Citizens for Peace" initiative by a group of senior Kenyan leaders opened the domestic space for Kofi Annan's mediation following postelection violence in 2008. Subsequently, once the Kenyan leadership had declined further international mediation, internal efforts helped sustain negotiations over the draft constitution and other vital reforms. In Kyrgyzstan, local Oblast Advisory Committees were as critical as regional and UN diplomacy to maintaining peace on the ground during the referendum and parliamentary elections. However, as compared to resources currently invested in strengthening in-

ternational or regional diplomacy, relatively few efforts have been made to strengthen national mediation capacities.

The Importance of Accompaniment by Insiders

Behaviors and attitudes, vital to transforming conflicts into opportunities for progressive change, cannot be altered in consequential ways through one-shot itinerant diplomacy aimed at specific disputes or through time-bound projects aimed at limited results. Instead, the development and application of national and local capacities requires sustained accompaniment, wherein specialists assist their counterparts in overcoming initial suspicion and hostility by developing relations of trust, then impart skills for negotiation and mediation in a sensitive manner, and finally accompany them in applying these skills. In the process, they also assist them in thinking through and working together to install the institutional capacities necessary for longer-term conflict management (as indicated earlier, Ghana’s National Peace Council emerged from efforts to resolve the violent conflict in the Dagomba kingdom).

Peace and development advisers, in that they play these roles and are resident in-country with UNDP, are seen as insider mediators by their counterparts, and not as external interveners. The same could also be true for other resident in-country staff of various bilateral and multilateral partners. Again, very few resources have been expended in ensuring that these staff have the requisite skills for analysis and facilitation, and the requisite political sensitivity, so that they can play the role of insider mediators when necessary.

In an increasingly turbulent world, cascading crises will often prompt rolling transitions like the ones that are currently being seen in the Middle East, and which will not take the form of specific conflicts amenable to traditional diplomacy, even where such diplomacy is invited (certainly Egypt, Tunisia, and Bahrain have not invited any). Hence, it will be increasingly critical that discreet resources are available in-country to accompany these transitions.

The Importance of Entry Points

Conflict prevention begins and ends with the way the case is made for it. Parties that are responsible for precipitating potentially violent tensions, either directly or inadvertently through their actions, are highly unlikely to accept the reality of emerging conflict and take remedial actions if confronted up-front with their own role in it, especially by external actors. They are more likely to get their backs up and close the doors to preventive action. Most initiatives to developing national capacities for conflict prevention start therefore with an elicitive approach, wherein pertinent actors are encouraged to analyze impediments to development (rather than the fact or potential for conflict) in a manner that does not immediately threaten anyone’s positions or interests. Inevitably, as actors become more comfortable—as part of a structured, facilitated process—with confronting issues such as polarization, exclusion, or lack of ability to forge consensus, entry points emerge for preventive action, even as the attitudes of the participating actors begin to be transformed.

Governments and Other Actors Are Not Monolithic

Even under the most complex and rigid political environments, the exercise of power still leaves openings for some degree of constructive change. The trick is to identify those individuals and institutions that could be change agents and then find ways of assisting them without compromising them or using them to drive externally developed conceptions of the desired change. Efforts to develop and apply the skills and capacities for conflict management allow such actors to acquire credible roles as facilitators and interlocutors in neutral settings without being seen as serving external diplomatic agendas. For example, even in Zimbabwe's highly polarized setting, key individuals in government and academia opened doorways for UNDP and the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs in 2002 for a nationwide effort to train members of parliament, civic organizations, the civil service, and the private sector in basic skills for conflict transformation and constructive negotiation. The program pointedly did not aim to resolve specific conflicts, but focused instead on building skills that all actors could find useful. Subsequently, individuals who were appropriately equipped through this program played key roles in the negotiation of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) when the conflict came to a head in 2008. Thereafter, the program has played a central role in keeping dialogue channels open and keeping the GPA from being abandoned. Although Zimbabwe's political crisis remains, the significant economic recovery attained as a result of the GPA has been sustained.

Similarly, in Fiji, once the military-backed government ended political dialogue in 2008, civic organizations, discreetly assisted by the UN, have supported key individuals in government, the private sectors, and civil society in establishing a viable dialogue platform to develop common perspectives on challenging issues pertaining to social, economic, and political reform. In an otherwise deadlocked environment, this remains the only channel for dialogue. Regional actors, who have boycotted the government until it holds elections, have also been supportive of this platform.

DIFFERENTIATING CORRELATES FROM CAUSES

Potentially violent tensions and conflict are often attributed to root causes such as the youth bulge, the resource curse, inequitable land distribution, ineffective policing, and so on. For instance, the wave of turbulence rocking the Middle East at the beginning of 2011 is already being attributed to the largely youthful populations of these countries. However, these same youthful populations have been the source of growth and innovation in India, Brazil, and Turkey, among other countries. Resources have caused violence through much of West Africa, but Ghana is developing a strategy for utilizing its new oil wealth through an inclusive process of dialogue, as did Sao Tome e Principe, with UNDP assistance, in 2004. Although many situations of conflict and fragility do correlate with issues such as unemployed youth and abundant mineral wealth, so do situations that are exactly the opposite. What makes for the difference? The UN's experience with providing assistance in this regard shows

that the answer may lie in a country’s collaborative capacity, its infrastructure for peace, or the internal ability to negotiate mutually acceptable outcomes across political and sectarian lines of division. The causes of conflict may not therefore be specific issues or challenges, but the manner in which they are addressed and the degree to which relevant decisions are made in an inclusive and consensual manner.

Elections Are Not about Elections

In recent years, elections have become a key focus for governments, civil society, and international partners. Free, fair, and peaceful elections are seen as vital to a country’s stability, and the reverse is seen as an indicator of failing governance. Significant effort is therefore expended in ensuring that elections are sound from a technical perspective. However, elections concentrate many of the political rifts and tensions within a society. This is especially the case where leaders have not acquired the ability to be able to compete at the polls, but then simultaneously and subsequently collaborate in the national interest. Hence, ensuring stable political transitions through elections requires not only the right technical assistance, but also the building of infrastructures for peace well before, during, and after elections. Peaceful elections in Guyana in 2006, Ghana in 2004 and 2008, Sierra Leone in 2007, and Togo, Kyrgyzstan, and Solomon Islands in 2010 and the successful constitutional referendum in Kenya in 2010 all took place in the context of multiyear, UN-backed initiatives to develop and apply national capacities for conflict prevention and transformation. Three elements, all of which were developed over a two- to three-year period at a minimum, were common to all these cases:

- First, the presence of national platforms or mechanisms that enabled a minimum political consensus to be reached prior to elections, or which mediated high-level tensions during the elections themselves
- Second, the presence of significant conflict management and mediation capacities at the district and local levels, often in the form of local peace committees or similar mechanisms
- Third, the work of civil society, especially religious and traditional leaders, and mass membership civic associations, in carrying out systematic advocacy for peace, and engaging especially youth in these efforts

A strong pointer in this direction, and an example of the collective failure of the international community with regard to conflict prevention, is the situation that prevailed in Côte d’Ivoire at the beginning of 2011. Despite nearly six years of international peacekeeping and diplomacy, very little had been accomplished in terms of establishing viable internal mechanisms for binding better together the north and the south of the country at the political, cultural, and social levels. No major political party or a mass-based civic organization was in existence the work or agenda of which transcended the north-south divide. Prior to the 2010 elections where Gbagbo refused to concede defeat, no thought had been given to a broad-based consultation on an inclusive

governing arrangement irrespective of the winner. When Ouattara defeated Gbagbo 52 percent to 48 percent, he did so essentially with northern votes, plus the small plurality provided by Bedie's support. Even Ouattara supporters in the capital were migrants from the north. At the time of writing, the country was polarized and on the brink of a return to violent north-south conflict. A concerted effort to establish a national infrastructure for peace in the previous decade might have averted this outcome. Alternatively, Gbagbo's refusal to step down could have been met with a massive national upsurge against his rule, rather than a further splintering and polarization of the country and the political spectrum.

Growing Interest and Ownership in the Developing World

Sierra Leone's Political Parties Registration Commission; Ghana's National Peace Council; Nepal's Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, which has led the country's recovery efforts; Ukraine's Human Security Council for Crimea, which mediates majority-minority relations; Timor Leste's Department for Peace-Building; El Salvador's Economic and Social Council (a standing dialogue capacity that is also being developed by other countries in the region); and Kyrgyzstan's new Department on Ethnic, Religious Policy and Civil Society Interaction all point to a growing trend among developing countries to establish their own institutional capacities, albeit with varying effectiveness, for conflict management and peacebuilding. These capacities do not fit neatly into the traditional donor categories of crisis response or development. Alternately, they could neatly fit into either. What is critical is that they represent a growing ownership on the part of developing countries of the agenda for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. During a period of rapid onset of turbulence and transition, they also represent the core of the resilience needed by countries and societies. Hence, they deserve systematic support.

At the time of writing, Egypt, Tunisia, and Bahrain were in the midst of convulsive political transition as key actors sought to remake their systems of governance under runaway popular pressure. Although they had access to all the technical knowledge with regard to the pros and cons of different models for constitution-making and police reform, for instance, what they continued to lack were internal platforms and mediation capacities through which agreement could be built among contending actors on the best way forward.

CONCLUSION: CONFLICT PREVENTION WORKS AND NEEDS FURTHER ASSISTANCE

Traditionally, national and local actors did development—the vaccination of children and the building of roads—and international diplomats and non-governmental organizations did conflict prevention or resolution, or the mediation of conflicts in primarily developing countries.

The examples in this chapter show that a new approach toward conflict prevention works and that it is indeed possible to equip national and local actors to resolve conflicts, prevent violence, and build consensus over contentious

issues in an inclusive and credible manner. And this approach is cost-effective. Results in Guyana, Bolivia, Ghana, Kenya, and Timor Leste were achieved, for instance, for approximately only US\$15 million. This is slightly less than the average cost of a DDR program in a post-conflict country.

In the case of the UN, a significant portion of this support was provided through UNDP’s Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) together with UNDP’s regional bureaus; through the Joint UNDP-DPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention (peace and development advisers are primarily deployed through this initiative), which is executed by BCPR; and through the Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action, which is the UN’s internal coordination mechanism on preventive action and is currently cochaired on a standing basis by UNDP and DPA and hosted permanently by UNDP. DPA’s Policy and Mediation Division, together with the department’s regional divisions, has also provided vital support to these initiatives.

However, compared to the amounts provided for the assessed budget for peacekeeping, and the US\$350 million made available to the Peacebuilding Fund for post-conflict peacebuilding, the resources available for the work detailed in this chapter are a pittance, or about US\$3 million a year. As a result, key initiatives are often not continued after the first year or two, despite concrete results, and the partner organizations (primarily UNDP and DPA) scrounge for funds to continue the deployment of peace and development advisers and similar specialists.

If the world’s countries are indeed serious about building resilience to the turbulence that will increasingly be caused by cascading economic and climatological shocks and about responding more effectively and inclusively to rapidly mutating popular demands, then they will invest in building infrastructures for peace.

The views expressed in this chapter are strictly the author’s, and do not in any way reflect any official positions of the United Nations or the United Nations Development Programme.

NOTES

1. This analysis, conducted by the author, draws on early warning information available through the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; the Economist Intelligence Unit; Oxford Analytica; and fragility indices developed by several bilateral and multilateral organizations.

2. See, for example, the report on the Expert Meeting on Natural Resources and Conflict in Africa organized by the Office of the UN Special Advisor on Africa, Cairo, Egypt, 2006, http://www.un.org/africa/osaa/reports/Natural%20Resources%20and%20Conflict%20in%20Africa_%20Cairo%20Conference%20ReportwAnnexes%20Nov%2017.pdf.

3. The Government of Guyana–UN initiative on “Enhancing Public Trust, Security, and Inclusion” is a good example of an effort to address issues of decentralized violence and insecurity through the application of the “infrastructures for peace” methodology.

4. The term *infrastructure for peace* is attributed to Tobi Dress, an independent peacebuilding practitioner. The related term *building national capacities for conflict prevention* is similarly attributed to Andries Odendaal, a South African practitioner of peacebuilding. Over the past 10 years, the following individuals have played critical roles in assisting the UN in further developing these concepts and applying them on the ground: Chris Spies, Ozonnia Ojielo, Clever Nyathi, Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, and Tapio Kanninen, peacebuilding practitioners from South Africa, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Finland, respectively; Howard Wolpe, former U.S. special envoy for the Great Lakes region; Kathleen Cravero and Jordan Ryan, the former and current directors of UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR); Ragnar Angeby of the Folke Bernadotte Academy of Sweden; Youssef Mahmoud, Olara Otunnu, and Victor Angelo, all former special representatives of the UN Secretary-General; Gay Rosenblum-Kumar, the senior secretary to the UN Interagency Framework Team for Coordination on Preventive Action; Emmanuel Bombande and Paul von Tongeren of the Global Partnership on Prevention of Armed Conflict; the late Rick Hooper, Jack Christofides, Axel Wennmann, Alexandra Pichler, and Joao Honwana of the UN Secretariat; and Celine Moyroud (now with UNDP-Lebanon), Anita Ernstorfer, Jos de la Haye, Jelena Raketec, Devanand Ramiah, Emmanuelle Bernard, Anne Kahl, and Tajia Kontinen-Sharp of BCPR.

5. Formal collaboration between UNDP and DPA in this regard had commenced with the launch, by then-UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown and head of DPA Kieran Prendergast, of the Joint UNDP-DPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention in 2004. During the same year, both organizations took joint steps, in partnership with UNICEF and UN OCHA, to strengthen the Interagency Framework Team on Coordination for Preventive Action, which supports joint action by UN Country Teams in situations of early conflict prevention. In 2010, UNDP Administrator Helen Clark and head of DPA B. Lynn Pascoe sent a joint note to all UN Resident Coordinators and UNDP Country Directors and heads of political missions, highlighting steps to enhance collaboration on conflict prevention and to support field presences to undertake preventive action in complex political situations.

6. The Berghoff Foundation for Peace Support provides the following definition of *insider mediation*: "Situated within a conflict, these are trusted individuals (NGO leaders, traditional or religious authorities, former politicians, respected academics and social activists) who play the role of third parties. In particular, they serve as intermediaries, helping to exchange information and messages or testing the ground for (in) formal talks. Insider mediators are characterized by their in-depth knowledge of the conflict situation, cultural sensitivity and close relationships to the parties and, in some cases, their normative authority. Typically unofficial, the quality of their mediation is crucial: not only may it open doors for formal mediation, but it also can complement official negotiation processes" (<http://www.berghof-foundation.de/en/glossary/insider-mediators>).

7. See Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, "Insider Mediation in Kenya" (Swisspeace/CSS/Berghoff Foundation, 2008), http://www.berghof-peacesupport.org/publications/MED_Insider_Mediators_Kenya.pdf.

8. The term *PDA* is a generic term. Depending on the circumstances of each country, these specialists are variously referred to as *peace and governance advisers*, *collaborative capacity advisers*, *social cohesion advisers*, and so on.

9. Over the past six years, peace and development advisers as well as similar specialists have been deployed in at least 25 countries to support national and local initiatives for conflict prevention. Biannual global retreats of these advisers are convened by the UN Interagency Framework Team for Coordination on Preventive Action, which also

hosts a “community of practice” for them, thus allowing for knowledge and experiences to be shared and practice to be strengthened. Technical and operational support for the deployment of these advisers is provided primarily by UNDP’s Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery.

10. For the current version of the methodology, see http://www.undp.org/cpr/whats_new/cda_combined.pdf.

11. The concept behind the National Peace Council and the attendant National Architecture for Peace is detailed by the Government of Ghana at http://www.mint.gov.gh/dmdocuments/A_PEACE_ARCHITECTURE_FOR_GHANA_.pdf. The council was established as a government body by a cabinet decision in 2007 and by the Parliament as an autonomous national statutory commission in February 2011.

12. See AllAfrica.com, “Communities Forge Their Own Peace in the Rift Valley,” October 26, 2010, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201010280929.html>.

13. See “The Ministry of Social Solidarity launches the Department of Peace-Building and Social Cohesion to celebrate World Human Rights Day,” <http://www.tl.undp.org/undp/The%20Ministry%20of%20Social%20Solidarity%20launches%20the%20Department%20of%20Peace-Building%20and%20Social%20Cohesion%20to%20celebrate%20World%20Human%20Rights%20Day.html>.

14. For an independent evaluation of the program, see “Can Fostering a Culture of Dialogue Change the Course of a Nation?” (UNDP, 2006), http://www.undp.org/gy/pdf/final_SCP_evaluation.pdf.

15. See an account of the role of the UNDP program, PAPEP, in this regard on “PAPEP Project Was Presented at NORAD/UNDP Workshops on Governance and Political Economy Analysis,” October 2010, http://www.governabilidaddemocratica-pnud.org/detalle_noticia.php?id_not=124. See, in particular, the comments from Jose Luis Exeni, the former head of Bolivia’s National Electoral Court.

16. For an account of the work of the Uwiano Platform, see “Kenya: SOS by SMS,” August 3, 2010, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=90050>.

17. According to an assessment of the elections conducted by UK’s Department for International Development (DFID), “One of the innovations that the UN Development Programme has introduced into the electoral process is a Political Party Registration Commission (PPRC) . . . PPRC has played a useful role in promoting a Code of Conduct for Political Parties among activists and mediating the conflicts that have arisen—both during the elections and after them” (<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/elections/elections-sl-2007-2008.pdf>).

18. For more on support for the church-led mediation and wider UN efforts to enhance “collaborative capacity” in Lesotho, see http://www.undp.org/ls/democratic/Collaborative_Capacities.php.

19. More information on these initiatives can be found at the website of the UNDP Action on Cooperation and Trust Programme, Cyprus: <http://www.undp-act.org/>.

20. A more detailed description of COBERM can be found at http://www.undp.org/ge/files/78_914_211987_201012.pdf.