



EVALUATION BY THE FORMER OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS ON DFAT'S ENGAGEMENT IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING THROUGH DIPLOMACY, AID, TRADE AND SECURITY: A SUMMARY

This document is a summary of lessons and findings of the draft evaluation by the former Office of Development Effectiveness. The evaluation was paused in March 2020 so that resources could be dedicated to DFAT's COVID-19 response and will not be finalised. There has been considerable evolution in the Australian Government's approach to conflict prevention and peacebuilding since the draft evaluation was undertaken. This includes the Australian Peace Operations Strategy, which was adopted by the Government in February 2020, and has now been implemented. This summary was informed by analysis prepared by Alastair McKechnie, Greg Ellis, Susan Harris Rimmer and Erika Schwarze.

Disclaimer: The views contained in this report do not necessarily represent those of the Australian Government.

This Evaluation asked the question: How effectively does DFAT bring together diplomatic, trade, aid and security engagement tools, including those of other Australian government agencies, to help reduce and prevent conflict and support peace?

DFAT's engagement was assessed against four good practice characteristics: 1- conflict analysis; 2- conflict prevention and do-no-harm; 3- acting as a peace catalyst; and 4- promoting Women, Peace and Security principles. The evaluation was informed by a review of international practice, DFAT country case studies, a review of DFAT policies, practice and systems, and their alignment with those of other Australian government and international agencies.

The evaluation made the following over-arching observations:

There is **evidence of sound conflict prevention and peacebuilding actions** in Australia's aid program, which provide a good foundation for embedding good practice systematically across the breadth of engagement.

DFAT international advocacy, leadership and commitments recognize the large net-benefits of conflict prevention and peacebuilding and expresses a broad mandate for engagement. An explicit mandate that supports policies and strategies guiding country-level engagement across DFAT would strengthen DFAT's efforts. New stresses created by the Covid-19 pandemic are likely to intensify the risks of conflict and increase the need for such a mandate.

When DFAT's support is well-targeted, long-term but flexible, and based on in-country partnerships for peace, **the influence and impact** achieved is well beyond funding volume.

Analysis of conflict risks and peacebuilding opportunities that is built into integrated country-level planning across all portfolio responsibilities provides the foundation for applying the full range of DFAT's capabilities for conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Potential exists for deepening DFAT's engagement and leadership on conflict prevention and peacebuilding internally and across government by: i. building on existing inter-agency cooperation mechanisms for integrated approaches; ii. modelling integrated approaches within DFAT; iii. reinforcing expertise through greater use of specialists; and iv. strengthening learning and knowledge management for generalist staff.

DFAT good practice examples

Conflict prevention and Do-no-Harm:

In the Philippines, aid program design and review processes offered staff the time and space to commission and review conflict analysis with trusted local and international partners. This analysis helped ensure that peacebuilding engagement was in step with changing conflict dynamics.

In Afghanistan, Australia helped to expand data for conflict analysis by investing in the annual 'Survey of the Afghan People' (The Asia Foundation). As this survey fills critical information gaps it is used by inter-agency partners, the Afghan Government, other governments and donors.

Conflict prevention and Do-no-Harm:

Australia's support for the establishment and maintenance of a conflict monitoring system and locally based early response network (International Alert) in the Philippines is well recognised by local and international partners for its contribution to conflict prevention. The information generated and response network help government, community groups and the international community ensure emergent disputes are mediated before they escalate into serious conflict. Well targeted assistance has helped Australia to have broad influence beyond investments.

Summary of key lessons

1. Elevating conflict prevention and peacebuilding as a central element in Australian foreign policy requires a high-level mandate – ideally across agencies.
2. Regular and ongoing inter-agency cooperation and funding arrangements support coherent approaches and enable shared prevention-focussed analysis and planning.
3. Investment in advocacy and funding support for multilateral peacebuilding agendas provides opportunities for leadership and influence beyond the immediate peacebuilding agenda.
4. Evidence-based analytical processes, as piloted in the Covid-19 response, and integrated country-level planning can be used to prioritise at-risk countries and facilitate coherent approaches within DFAT and across agencies.
5. DFAT leadership on conflict prevention and peace-building approaches relies on the ability to apply global knowledge and good practice, requiring strong in-house capacity and access to specialist advice which could be facilitated by joint inter-agency funding arrangements.
6. A centrally located entry point for staff to ease access to information and advice can signal broader relevance of conflict-prevention and peace-building across portfolios. A deliberate network approach, that links expertise from across the department, can bring thought leadership to development and sharing of integrated peace-building approaches.
7. Building on the Women, Peace and Security inter-agency policy architecture, broad use of gender-sensitive conflict analysis and planning relies on investment in tools, sharing information between agencies, and strong networks for joint learning.
8. Public diplomacy and communications strategies that are aligned to peacebuilding objectives can strengthen DFAT's ability to advocate peacebuilding approaches in-country.

DFAT good practice examples

A catalyst for peace:

In the Philippines, DFAT partnered with a respected local think tank in conflict-affected Mindanao in the Philippines that was supporting research and advocacy on the proposed Organic Law. Through this partnership Australia has helped to build support for a legislative framework for peace among key constituencies.

Internationally, DFAT co-facilitated the 2016 UN Sustaining Peace resolution and played a central role in developing subsequent resolutions designed to strengthen the UN's peacebuilding architecture.

Women Peace and Security:

In the Philippines, DFAT support enabled women's organisations to play a prominent role in the peace processes through a program which helped local partners successfully advocate for the inclusion of women's voices in the final version of the Bangsamoro Basic law.

Internationally, during its term on the Security Council (2012-13), Australia played an active role in drafting and adoption of two new Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, and advocated for a priority focus on women and girls in a resolution on Afghanistan.