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Linking Development and Security Research

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Conflicts within states have emerged dramatically as the global security threat of the post Cold War era: the challenge of understanding these conflicts has prompted a necessary cross-fertilization of development research in fields such as strategic affairs, international relations, and conflict studies.

This multidisciplinary is increasingly evident in recent activities supported by IDRC. For example, the Centre's four regional offices in Africa have all identified conflict as an underlying development problem in their respective regions. They are supporting initiatives that will shed greater light on the impact of conflict on African societies and identify strategies for dealing with the massive dislocations it causes. Similarly, the Social Policy Program has identified social reconstruction of war-torn societies as an area deserving closer investigation in the changing context of international, regional and national politics. Simultaneously, the Environment and Natural Resources Division is supporting several projects exploring relationships between conflict and environmental degradation.

For some 50 years, most development thinking and practice has assumed that countries of the South could pursue their development within a world order maintained, albeit precariously, by the superpowers. A functional divide evolved between students of development, who focused primarily on the socio-economic or technical dimensions of development within states, and students of strategic affairs or international relations, who worked from a state-centred systemic perspective.

The breakdown of the old world order has stimulated an inevitable rethinking of the interplay between international peace, security and development. Poverty, food insecurity, competition over scarce resources, environmental degradation, transnational movements of populations, drugs and arms, and ethnic conflict now pose serious questions to both research domains. What are the causes of nation-state disintegration in various regions? What implications do they hold for the international system? When do ethnic differences turn into armed conflict? How should external actors contribute to conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping and emergency assistance in intra-state conflicts? Can their interventions also promote developmental goals?

Over the years, IDRC has supported many projects relevant to the renewed interest in relationships between development, intra-state conflict and global security. A selective review of such projects since the late 1970s reveals the following areas of Centre interest:

- The resettlement of nomads in Somalia, exploring the transition from nomadic pastoralism to settled agriculture.
- Methodologies for famine prediction in the Sudan, including closer examination of market and household behaviour alongside other socioeconomic indicators.
- The capacity of countries such as Botswana, Lesotho, Somalia, Swaziland, Tanzania, and Zambia to respond to the refugee crises of the mid-1980s as well as to control effects on their own populations.

The needs of Indochinese refugees in Thailand.

- Health and nutritional requirements of refugees.
- The dislocations generated by famine and drought in Africa and the resultant population resettlement programs.
- Forced internal migration in Lebanon owing to protracted civil war.
- The interplay in Sri Lanka between resource allocation, education and ethnicity.
- The role of the media in ethnic conflict resolution in Sri Lanka.

The studies noted above demonstrate the importance of development research in examining systematically the complex links between international security and development. Recognizing this need, a recent IDRC grant to the United Nations Research Institute in Social Development aims at developing a framework for identifying key policy questions for countries emerging from protracted conflicts and for examining the role of domestic and international actors in rebuilding war-torn societies. The resultant framework will be tested through a series of country case studies and will then be developed further as a policy and planning tool at the local, national and international levels.

PEACE, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND RECONSTRUCTION

A partial survey of current IDRC activities in support of peace, better governance and reconstruction touches most regions of the world.

Middle East Peace: IDRC supports initiatives to link the parties in conflict and improve people's lives. A fund shared with CIDA and Foreign Affairs provides analytical support to four Working Groups in the multilateral track of the peace process, which attempts to forge agreement on the more technical dimensions of arms control, regional economic development, water, environment and refugees. IDRC manages the fund and coordinates technical contributions from its own staff.

South Africa: Assisting in the transition to majority rule, IDRC sponsors research and policy making in the areas of: democratic governance, economic restructuring, the environment, gender equality, science and technology, land reform and rural development, and in collaboration with CIDA in education, and capacity-building for the civil service.

South Asia: Historical animosities and religious and socio-political differences have blocked regional cooperation among Southern and Central Asian countries. A regional arms race, involving not only conventional weapons but nuclear arms as well, imposes severe costs for poor societies and obstacles to economic growth and social justice. The project will present new options for regional security to policy makers and politicians.

Indochina: Since 1990, IDRC has been helping Vietnam shift from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented system. The focus is agricultural and resource management, economic and scientific policy, information system support, and legal reform. The Centre is also strengthening research and policy institutions in Cambodia and Laos, and supports the Mekong Development Research Network, which encourages cooperation among the six Mekong riverine countries: Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

Nicaragua: Although civil war has ended, the return of thousands of refugees, displaced people, and demobilized soldiers imposes heavy environmental impacts on lands, forests and water bodies. This project examines the socioeconomic and environmental status of Matagalpa and Jinotega Departments. The researchers will disseminate sustainable development alternatives to the population, other researchers and policymakers.

RWANDA

Restoring Agricultural Biodiversity

The conflict in Rwanda has left in its wake a critical agricultural and food security situation. The need for large-scale reproduction and distribution of seeds and planting material is urgent. Most crops have been eaten by birds and animals or harvested by the military. Some 50% of the population has been displaced. There are fears that people will eat what little has been left in the fields, including the seeds meant for planting next year.

Agricultural biodiversity is among the most important economic resources in Rwanda, one of Africa's most densely populated countries, where the large majority live in rural areas. Rwanda has many different agro-ecological zones in which generations of farmers have adapted a wide range of varieties to local conditions. Both this agricultural biodiversity and the knowledge of farmers (women and men) related to crop production and reproduction have important economic, social and cultural values.

Seeds of Hope is a joint initiative of six International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs) in collaboration with research and relief organizations in countries neighbouring Rwanda. The main goal is to reintroduce seeds and planting material for the most important crop varieties and landraces cultivated in Rwanda. These include beans, sweet potatoes, potatoes, maize, sorghum and cassava. Rebuilding agriculture and social and economic structures is vitally important not only for Rwanda, but also for the neighbouring countries of Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zaire, which are trying to cope with the massive influx of Rwandan refugees into their territories. The project also aims to contribute to rebuilding Rwanda's technical and research capacity.

Seeds are being reproduced already in neighbouring countries, and by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) in Colombia. In co-funding this initiative, IDRC is supporting its network of research partners and their utilization of knowledge generated from previous research in the region. The Centre contribution is directed to socio-economic studies and surveys to assess the current situation, and to monitor and evaluate the restoration of biodiversity after the reintroduction of materials.

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