

# Opportunities for development cooperation to create regional and subregional capacities in Africa in the area of "crisis prevention and conflict management"

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Recent years have seen an intensive international debate on ways in which development cooperation might prevent conflicts, or bring them to a conclusion, and contribute to lasting consolidation after hostilities have ended.

Germany – like other bi- and multilateral donors – has made a number of attempts in this sphere to seize the opportunities offered by development cooperation. Appropriately, these discussions always take place with an eye to a division of labour with other policy areas, which is described in Germany in the Federal Government's overall concept "Civil Conflict Management, Conflict Resolution and Consolidation of Peace"<sup>1</sup> (2000) and its "Programme of Action 2015" to halve poverty throughout the world (2001).<sup>2</sup>

On the links between peace operations and development cooperation the latest report of the OECD's *Development Assistance Committee* (DAC) states:

*"In 2000, the Brahimi Report provided the opportunity to reconsider and discuss the implications of UN peace operations (conflict prevention and peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace building) in light of the experience of the last decade. Many of its recommendations, which call for a radical rethinking of the whole UN system, are highly relevant for development cooperation. They propose the adoption of a holistic and integrated approach that goes well beyond the traditional wisdom."*<sup>3</sup>

In this context the development cooperation community has also considered (1) what contribution regional and subregional institutions can make to crisis prevention and conflict management in Africa and (2) whether development cooperation can support appropriate capacities. Not a great deal of experience has yet been gained with development cooperation in this sphere. One example of such experience is Germany's support for the *Intergovernmental Authority on Development* (IGAD).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The concept can be found on the website of the German Foreign Office: [www.auswaertiges-amt.de](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de).

<sup>2</sup> BMZ, Poverty Reduction – a Global Responsibility, Program of Action 2015, The German Government's Contribution Towards Halving Extreme Poverty Worldwide, Bonn 2001, Chapter 3.10.

<sup>3</sup> DAC/OECD, Development Co-operation, 2001 Report, Paris 2002, p. 137.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, FEWER, Towards a Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), no place given, 2002, and Friedhelm Mensing, War-Weariness in the Horn of Africa, in: *Development and Cooperation*, No 3/2001.

The following briefly considers the issues mentioned above, primarily against the background of the German debate.

### **Contribution of regional and subregional mechanisms to crisis prevention and conflict management in Africa**

The international debate<sup>5</sup> shows that, in principle, regional and subregional mechanisms have considerable potential for crisis prevention and conflict management. This potential has sometimes been tapped in the past (most importantly, in the form of ECOMOG operations). However, there are often major obstacles – some for political reasons (one country's dominance, etc.) or because appropriate resources are not available – that do not permit or limit involvement. The report of the *Carnegie Commission* states on this aspect:

*"Regional organizations have important limitations. They may not be strong enough on their own to counter the intentions or actions of a dominant state. Even if they are strong enough, regional organizations may not always be the most appropriate forum through which states should engage in or mediate an incipient conflict because of the competing goals of their member states or suspicions of those in conflict. Nonetheless, if these organizations are inert or powerless in the face of imminent conflict, their functions as regional forums for dialogue, confidence building, and economic coordination will also be eroded."*<sup>6</sup>

These limitations are not least true of the development of capabilities to prepare and undertake peace support operations.<sup>7</sup> "Regional solutions for regional problems" is a good principle in this connection. It will often be impossible, however, for regional and subregional mechanisms to have an impact. In such cases the need for the international community to be ready to act will remain.<sup>8</sup>

It is important that the opportunities for regional and subregional institutions to undertake peace support operations should be seen in a broader context. Most regional and subregional institutions (e.g. the SADC) have hitherto shown little willingness or ability to cooperate in this sphere.<sup>9</sup> These

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<sup>5</sup> For the state of the international debate see, for example: Connie Peck, *The Role of Regional Organizations in Preventing and Resolving Conflict*, in: Chester A. Crocker/Fen Osler Hampson/Pamela Aall (eds), *Turbulent Peace, The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, Washington D.C. 2001, pp. 561-583.

<sup>6</sup> Carnegie Commission, *Preventing Deadly Conflict, Final Report*, New York 1997, p. 147.

<sup>7</sup> For some basic considerations see, for example, Winrich Kühne, *Afrika auf dem Wege zu eigenen Kapazitäten für Konfliktprävention und Peacekeeping? Geschichte, Organisation und Perspektiven des OAE-Mechanismus von 1993*, SWP, Ebenhausen 1998; Hélène Grandvoinet/Hartmut Schneider (eds), *Conflict Management in Africa, A Permanent Challenge*, OECD, Paris 1998.

<sup>8</sup> See DAC/OECD, *Helping Prevent Violent Conflict*, Paris 2001, p. 46.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Stefan Mair/Christian Peters-Berries, *Regionale Integration und Kooperation in Afrika südlich der Sahara, EAC, ECOWAS und SADC im Vergleich*, Forschungsberichte des BMZ, Vol. 127, Bonn 2001, pp. 21 ff.

institutions should therefore be considered with all their potential for economic and political cooperation. Shared capabilities to undertake peace support operations should be accompanied by the reinforcement of other crisis-preventing and conflict-resolving structures and a general ability to engage in regional integration. Against this background, the African Development Bank (AfDB) is also an important actor.

It is also important for the institutions to achieve broad legitimation. This means, for example, that the national parliaments of the various member states should be adequately involved. The development of network structures of, say, non-governmental actors and activities to increase the awareness of the media and to inform them are also relevant.

### **Opportunities for development cooperation**

Against this background development cooperation has useful contributions to make in two areas:

Firstly, it is generally important and right that approaches to regional and subregional cooperation and integration should be promoted. Closer cooperation eventually creates the conditions for confidence-building even in the case of sensitive political issues. It is equally vital for accelerated economic and social development.<sup>10</sup> A development process of this kind is important to enable socio-economic structures that are appropriate in the long term to be established and so to preclude causes of instability. Although successful regional and subregional integration is not by any means a guarantee of improved political cooperation, it can lay foundations for it.

Since 1990 Germany has committed a total of over 90m euros to the strengthening of appropriate African institutions,<sup>11</sup> one of the main recipients hitherto being the SADC.

Secondly, there are issues of direct relevance to crises and conflicts where development cooperation has a contribution to make to regional and subregional institutions. The goal here is less to assist and develop peace support operations in the narrower sense than to integrate them into a comprehensive political strategy. Examples of this are:<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See DAC/OECD, *Helping Prevent Violent Conflict*, Paris 2001, pp. 46 ff. and for the SADC, for example: Regine Qualmann, *Promoting Regional Integration in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) – Current Approaches and Future Prospects*, GDI, Briefing Paper 6/2000, Bonn 2000.

<sup>11</sup> AU/OAU, EAC, ECA, IGAD and SADC.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, DAC/OECD, *Helping Prevent Violent Conflict*, Paris 2001, p. 47; DAC/OECD, *Development Co-operation, 2001 Report*, Paris 2002, pp. 135 ff.; GTZ (ed.), *Reform des Sicherheitssektors in Entwicklungsländern*, Eschborn 2000; Stephan Klingebiel, *Approaches to Crisis-Preventing and Conflict-Sensitive Development Cooperation*, GDI, Briefing Paper 4/2001, Bonn 2001.

- Long-term involvement through general capacity-building aimed at developing viable regional and subregional institutions.
- Promotion of the anchoring of regional and subregional institutions in society and of their political legitimation. This can be achieved, for example, by establishing joint discussion forums for the member states' parliamentarians, increasing the opportunities for the media to inform themselves and promoting a regional exchange of representatives of civil society.
- Support for regional networks in the areas of human rights, refugees and peace initiatives.
- Development of regional early warning systems.
- Support for demobilization and reintegration efforts in a regional context.
- Promotion of suitable security sector reforms at regional level.
- Support for regional efforts to control small arms.

## **Conclusions**

On the whole, regional and subregional institutions have, on the one hand, considerable potential for efforts in the area of "crisis prevention and conflict management"; on the other hand, there are limits to such efforts. Regional and subregional cooperation mechanisms as a whole need to be strengthened.

There are a number of areas in which development cooperation has a useful role to play. The specific experience so far gained is not, however, very extensive. A deliberate effort should be made to identify more accurately the approaches which individual institutions might adopt. A debate on this aspect should also serve to achieve an appropriate division of labour among the donors.