

## **Presentation: Canada's support for Peace Processes in Africa**

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Notes for S. Wijeyaratne

### *1) Why Africa matters re. support to peace processes*

*Perhaps the first question we should ask ourselves is why bother looking at peace process in Africa in the first place?*

- According to Project Ploughshares, 40 % of the 30 armed conflicts with at least 1000 fatalities in the world today are in Africa. Other sources confirm similar numbers. The Uppsala University and PRIO database which tracks armed conflicts with at least 25 battle related deaths, list 34 conflicts with 15 of those being in Africa. While the approach to defining and measuring armed conflict differs between the Ploughshares and Uppsala databases, the important point is that of the 50 countries on the African continent, 17 are considered to be experiencing or involved in some form of armed conflict.
- These countries in 2007 included:  
Algeria, Angola, Burundi, CAR, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.
- Beyond the fact that these armed conflicts are happening it's also important to recognize the different nature of conflicts on the continent (that why I listed them all out). Uppsala, which has monitored conflicts since the late 1980s globally, identifies a key cause of African conflicts since the 1990's to be over governance-related issues. In contrast, for the same period in Asia, the conflicts have been over more territorial issues.
- Also, the African conflicts have had more "small wars" or minor armed conflicts which are characterized by fewer fatalities and lower intensity of violence, as well as massive conflicts with over 100,000+ fatalities such as those Algeria, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda, Burundi, and the DRC.
- We also need to keep in mind those countries affected by violent conflict over the past 10 – 15 yrs still in the process of post-conflict rebuilding such as Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Liberia who are still vulnerable to regressing back to armed violence.
- And, there are other countries like Zimbabwe, Guinea-Bissau and Madagascar which are not necessarily facing open armed conflicts, but face high levels of political unrest and violence – these countries may not to be included in armed conflict lists.

According to the 2007 figures, of the 17 countries experiencing open conflict on the continent 13 were also Least Developed Countries. Of the 33 African countries on the LDC list (globally there are 50 countries on the list), at least 18 have been conflict affected over the last 15 years.

- This is significant because the presence of armed conflict in LDC countries can divert funds from poverty alleviation and meeting the MDGs, undermine human and women's rights, and delay development. For these reasons supporting peace processes can not only hopefully reduce and end violent conflict, but can also help to contribute to long term development if reforms help strengthen rights, improve governance, and supports equitable development.
- In terms of Canadian policy, of the 20 CIDA Countries of Focus, only 7 are from Africa, with 5: Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal, and Sudan being both LDCs and conflict-affected.
- The Global Peace and Security Fund, aimed at supporting fragile states, at present includes Sudan and Uganda as the only African countries on the list (there has been the possibility of re-adding DRC to the list, but it is not confirmed).

Unfortunately the low priority given to Africa at both CIDA and DFAIT's GPSF, makes support for Africa in general more difficult, and support for peace processes and peace-building activities all the more difficult.

## 2) *What are Peace Processes?*

As a general description, peace processes (PP) are efforts to involve parties to conflict in a process of dialogue to jointly reach and implement an agreement to reduce violent conflict and set parameters for political, economic and social reforms. Such processes can be formal and informal and can operate at private, public, and political levels.<sup>1</sup> The central feature is often a negotiated settlement usually between elites, or, former fighters, and usually men who are the chief antagonists in a conflict.

But PP, if they are inclusive and more broad-based than just political negotiations, can also involve dialogue between a wider cross-section of affected communities, including women's groups and civil society organizations. And, PP can also include a broader set of peace-building activities as part of either a package of reforms, or as activities intended to help bring parties to the point being able to dialogue to discuss reforms.

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<sup>1</sup> For a simple overview of peace processes, see Hugo Slim, The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, *A guide to mediation: Enabling peace processes in violent conflicts*, 2007: <http://www.hdcentre.org/files/mediation%20guidelines.pdf>.

3) *In terms of Canada's role in supporting peace processes in Africa, it is hard to paint a comprehensive picture, so I thought I would draw on 2 examples, the DRC and Uganda, to illustrate how Canada has been involved in supporting PP in Africa and to see what can be learned from these experiences for future efforts.*

- In 2003, Canada actively supported the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, which brought together the various political factions involved in the conflict in a process of dialogue to set the parameters for the political transition towards democracy, which culminated in presidential elections in 2006. The ICD was carried out over the course of 2 + years and included over 300 participants including women delegates, women's groups, and civil society organizations.
- The Canadian government played a role as a member of the International Committee in Support of the Transition (CIAT) and co-Chair of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region which was set up to support the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). The ICGLR brought together 11 countries in the region to agree on a set of protocols.
- Canada was also involved in providing substantial funding for the elections in 2006 which were a part of Global and Inclusive Peace Agreement which came out of the ICD.
- More recently, Canada financially supported the Goma Peace Process and the Amani Program but not with nearly the same kind of political or substantive involvement as in the past.
- For example, when I was interviewing people during the summer about Canada's involvement in the DRC, Canadian diplomats were seen as playing an active and committed role in the International Committee in Support of the Transition (CIAT) and as co-Chairs of the Groups of Friends of the ICGLR. The picture wasn't always rosy, but up until the time of the elections, Canadian efforts in support of the elections and the ICGLR were viewed quite positively.
- Now, however, when speaking with representatives of local civil society organizations in the DRC there was a strong sense that both financial and political support for the DRC and the Great Lakes region (GLR) in general, is decreasing. The feeling that there has been a policy shift in Canada away from Africa and the GLR, drew a good deal of disappointment from people that had been involved with Canadian organizations for a long time.

- In DRC Canada has also tended to fund through the UN, for examples through the UNDP for the elections, and through UNIFEM and UNFPA for the UN Joint Initiative Against Sexual Violence. This latter program especially drew hot fire from many local groups as to its ineffectiveness and displacement of local organizations and capacity.
- In general a lot of international actors have been involved in supporting peace efforts in DRC, but outside of the behind-the-scenes talks with commanders and politicians, there's been minimal longer-term strategic planning on supporting civil society or women's groups to be able to support peace processes. For example, DRC is one of the strongest case studies of women's participation in peace talks going back to the time of the ICD. Although there were limitations to that process, there was a history of women participation in peace talks established at that time which was not capitalized on during the Goma process.

### *Uganda*

- In Uganda, former Liberal Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy and Ben Hoffman a Canadian mediator at the Carter Centre, were instrumental in northern Uganda finding its way onto the Canadian foreign policy agenda. In 2000, the Canadian government hosted The Winnipeg Conference on War- Affected Children, which was the first international conference on the rights of children affected by violent conflict and included former abductees from the Lords Resistance Army. During the conference, Canada played a role in bringing together representatives of the Sudanese and Ugandan delegations, whose respective governments had been involved in supporting rebel groups in each others countries, to work together to release and reintegrate abducted children.
- Under the government of Stephen Harper, Canada funded the Juba Peace Process between the LRA and government and mediated by GOSS. Canada also sent an official observer to the talks to which it contributed \$8 million and sent a team of diplomatic and military experts to assist the UN in developing a comprehensive framework for the disarmament and demobilization of combatants and Canada supported the Cessation of Hostilities Monitoring Team.
- In terms of lessons for CDN involvement in Uganda, changing or unclear directions following changes in CDN governments has been criticized by people close to the talks for missing opportunities (*explain*).

4) *What can we learn from the experiences in DRC, Uganda, for how Canada has supported PP in Africa:*

- First, at present, Canada's dwindling prioritization on Africa may affect the sustainability and implementation of peace efforts in places like DRC and Uganda not to mention the number of smaller countries. It also sends a message to governments, and local CSOs that the International Community including Canada is not interested in long-term support once the high visibility peace talks are over. This can take away from confidence in the process but also confidence in Canadian support.
- Second, given, that 33 out of 50 African countries are LDCs, and 16 of those are conflict-affected LDC's, and that 5 out of 7 of CIDA African countries of focus are also conflict –affected, Canada needs to develop a strategic approach that support peace processes in a long-term and sustained way in Africa.
- Third, in order for Canada's support to be more effective, it will need to go beyond sending observers to peace-talks. Canada needs to strengthen its peace-making and peace-building capacities to ensure its diplomatic and financial resources are invested in ways that will help build the sustainability of peace processes. This needs to be multi-year and consistent in policy when there are changes in government and it needs to include support for CSOs. To do this, Canada needs to have a policy framework and accessible funds to support peace processes that allows for different approaches to respond to the range of conflicts in Africa.