Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development
Office of International Justice and Peace

Background on Fragile States
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"...I pray for an end to wars, conflicts and the great suffering caused by human agency, by epidemics past and present, and by the devastation wrought by natural disasters. I pray especially that, on the basis of our common calling to co-operate with God and all people of good will for the advancement of harmony and peace in the world, we may resist the temptation to act in a manner unworthy of our humanity." --Pope Francis, January 1, 2015

BACKGROUND

Since the end of the Cold War and especially since the attacks of 9/11, the nature of conflict in the world has changed radically from wars between states to internal civil wars and unrest. Every year, the Council on Foreign Relations identifies the most threatening conflicts in the world. Of the 27 conflicts on the Council's 2014 list, twenty are internal civil wars, civil unrest, predatory, repressive governments, or dysfunctional governments. They range from Syria and Afghanistan to the Central African Republic. The organization Fund For Peace has designed a Fragile State Index (http://library.fundforpeace.org/fsi14-overview) that identifies 12 indicators (3 social, 3 economic and 6 political) common to fragile states and ranks states from the most fragile to the most stable. Of the 34 most fragile states, 25 are least developed countries and 21 are in Africa. The World Bank estimates that these fragile and violence prone countries threaten the dreams and lives of around 2 billion people.

The absence of the rule of law and socio-economic collapse also create a state of lawlessness and despair in which extremist groups can find support, train recruits and ultimately flourish. These extremist groups often threaten the stability of neighboring countries and in some high profile cases have staged attacks in Europe and North America. As a result of these attacks, the serious issues confronted by fragile states have often been lost in the so-called war on terror. In too many cases the West intervenes militarily to end short-term terrorist threats and defeat insurgent groups, but is unable to help these fragile countries build long term peace with stable governments and build vibrant economies and societies. What remains is a mix of dysfunctional governments unable to institute the rule of law, human rights, peace and good governance (e.g. Central African Republic, Libya), and/or countries where the government elite intentionally foster chaos and repression in order to establish absolute control over the country's wealth and power (e.g. Syria, South Sudan).

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

In 1994, USAID reacted to the fall of the Berlin Wall and a worldwide transition to democracy and a concurrent rise in internal state fragility by creating the Office of Transitional Initiatives (OTI). The office was charged with assisting countries in building democratic institutions and resolving and mitigating conflict. After the attacks of 9/11, USAID opened the Office for Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) to address the root causes of conflict and instability and tends to work more at the community and grassroots level. In 2004, the State Department created the Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization Operations, now called the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO), to assist countries attempting to end conflict and rebuild responsive governments and to repair societal rifts created by violent conflict. This office also works in collaboration with the Department of Defense to increase civilian capacity to respond to conflict situations. In 2009, the State Department conducted the first 2010-2013 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review process that mirrored the same exercise that the Defense Department had been con-

ducting for years. In addition to updating diplomatic and development objectives, another goal was to build more robust diplomatic and assistance efforts and integrate and coordinate them with the Defense Department to address the long term problems of governance and peacebuilding in fragile states. Congress appropriated funds in 2010 to USAID for the Complex Crisis Fund (CCF) to provide rapid reaction monies to respond to fast breaking instability and conflict that would complement similar funds allocated to the Defense Department. Another way the United States addresses conflict is to train Peacekeeping troops from other countries and to pay for Peacekeeping Operations in countries in conflict. These contributions total about $2-2.5 billion yearly.

Although the United States has increased its institutional and funding capacity to respond to the new forms of conflict in the world, problems still remain. First, the amount of funding allocated to the above agencies is still minimal (The total amount in President's FY 2015 Budget Request was $238 million.) in comparison to the level of internal conflict in the world and to military funding for the same purposes. For example, in 2015 the Complex Crises Fund had a budget of $25 million, but received a transfer of almost $218 million from Defense while the Office of Transition Initiatives received only $67 million. The capacity of the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations and the Office of Transition Initiatives remains inadequate to deal effectively with the level of instability in the world. (Michael O'Hanlon, The Washington Quarterly 2012).

The 2010 QDDR articulated a second problem. State and USAID efforts often miss opportunities to stop conflict from breaking out, are rushed, poorly coordinated, understaffed, underfunded and lack a new and flexible strategy. They also do not plan for unintended consequences. One 2014 review of the 2010 QDDR found little impact or change in State Department and USAID. Many of these same problems exist today even though these institutions have learned from four years of experience. An Inspector General's Assessment of the Bureau for Conflict and Stabilization Operations found a need for comprehensive changes at all levels of its structure and operations.

A third problem is that the U.S. Government places too little priority on partnering with and strengthening civil society, including faith-based institutions, in states where the government has intentionally repressed its growth. As a result, community groups, human rights organizations, civil rights institutions and faith-based groups are not able to defend people's rights, hold their governments accountable, address the long term efforts to restart development, and rebuild social cohesion. Often donors allocate large amounts of funding to government institutions and the private sector, but neglect the third leg of society, independent civil society and faith-based groups.

USCCB RESPONSE AND POSITION

The Bishops' Conference works with the local Church and Catholic Relief Services to promote peace and prosperity in the most fragile countries in the world such as the Central African Republic, the Occupied Palestinian Territories (West Bank, Gaza), Haiti, Syria, South Sudan, Colombia and others. The Conference and CRS consistently promote increased U.S. Government funding for peacebuilding activities, reconciliation programs, peacekeeping missions, support for good governance and democracy, and for increased assistance to faith-based and other civil society organizations that build prosperity and promote peace. We also work to keep international disaster and migration assistance high to respond to the immediate humanitarian needs created by civil war/unrest and repressive governments.

The Conference and CRS have promoted reform to international assistance programs such as increasing funding for diplomacy and development assistance and decreasing defense spending to rebalance U.S. international efforts to end conflict, build sustainable peace and promote human security worldwide.

RESOURCES: Visit http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/global-issues/africa/central-african-republic/ Contact: *Steve Hilbert*, USCCB Office of International Justice and Peace, 202-541-3149, *shilbert@usccb.org* .

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