



Proposed USAID Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS)

Violent conflict is currently the leading driver of the world’s humanitarian needs and the largest displacement of people in human history. Without investing in ending the violence that generates this need, these costs may continue to rise and will continue to be a threat to American interests at home and abroad. To address this challenge, InterAction’s members work to prevent, mitigate, and respond to violent conflict worldwide. **Through creation of the proposed Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS) of USAID is taking much-needed steps to promote peace, resilience, and stability.** In taking these steps, USAID consulted with InterAction and its members for support, advice, and critiques of its transformation process.

Proposed Bureau Overview:

Lead by an Assistant to the Administrator (AtA), the proposed Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS) aims to solve three key problems: First, U.S. missions abroad are often faced with the daunting challenge of addressing violent conflict, yet lack the flexible funding, political cover, and skilled personnel to do so in the most effective, tested ways. Second, “hair-on-fire” crises currently dominate the attention of USAID’s top leadership and staff, leaving them little time, energy, and resources to focus on the one thing that can avert the need for humanitarian or military assistance altogether: prevention. Third, there is a need and demand to clarify the military’s role in supporting USAID’s development agenda. These changes are occurring within the context of the U.S. National Security Strategy, the Stabilization Assistance Review; the Women, Peace, and Security Act; the associated Defense Support to Stabilization proposal; and the proposed Global Fragility and Violence Reduction Act (H.R. 5273/S. 3368).

The proposed CPS Bureau would bring together four of the nine Offices that are currently part of the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA), as well as other DCHA staff, including personnel dedicated to countering violent extremism (CVE). The four offices are The Offices of Transition Initiatives (OTI), Conflict-Management and Mitigation (CMM), and Civilian-Military Cooperation (CMC), and The Office of Policy, Program and Management (PPM). The current conflict-focused offices that will be included under the CPS Bureau manage approximately \$750 million in appropriated funds.

Areas of Increased Effectiveness and Coordination:

- **Prevention as a priority.** Prioritization of prevention alongside crisis management.
- **Elevated roles.** The new Center for the Prevention of Conflict and Violence will hold more resources to focus on political issues surrounding responses and preventing crises. The office will also partner with many different implementers, including women’s rights organizations, to better ensure peace.
- **Coordination across agencies.** The agency will ensure the coordination – rather than duplication – of roles and activities with the Department of State (State), including the Bureaus of Conflict Stabilization Operations and Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.

- **Earlier engagement of CPS staff in country planning process.** Increased authority via a new R3 Associate Administrator and the CPS Assistant to the Administrator will help ensure CPS staff will be involved in Country Development Cooperation Strategies planning and review, which will help ensure conflict sensitivity in programming.
- **Flexibility in conflict-affected contexts.** CPS will better serve those in crisis-prone contexts by focusing on strengthening local capacities and peacebuilding systems.

Areas for Further Consultation or Continued Questions:

- **Ensure non-elite, in-country civil society organizations have a key role in procuring, designing, implementing, and evaluating conflict prevention and stabilization work from start to strategic transition.** NGOs strongly encourage USAID to reform its procurement mechanisms and IDIQ's in ways that open space for local and regional civil society that represents marginalized populations, particularly women-led NGOs. How will gender and meaningful participation of women be integrated into the analysis, program design, policy, and prioritization of CPS, given the Women, Peace and Security Act?
- **Increase flexible funding.** In addition to utilizing the Complex Crisis Fund for conflict prevention as planned, CPS should continue to explore the viability of Section 385 (Transfer Authority) of the FY17 NDAA to fund conflict prevention. Additional flexible funding is also necessary.
- **Continue to prioritize development and humanitarian goals within the implementation of the Stabilization Assistance Review (SAR).** While State Department oversight of stabilization appears on paper, NGOs urge CPS and CMC specifically to implement the DoD-USIP Guidelines for Relations Between U.S. Armed Forces and Non-Governmental Humanitarian Organizations in Hostile or Potentially Hostile Environments and to continue to ensure DoS as the coordinator of stabilization efforts. This is critical to ensure that USG policies and programs do not inadvertently undermine humanitarian work in complicated conflict-affected areas.
- **Employ evidence-based approaches.** Some approaches, such as countering violent extremism, have mixed evidence supporting their effectiveness, yet have permeated the development, peacebuilding, and humanitarian arenas. To address root causes of conflict, CPS should continue to pursue programs that have supporting evidence and apply monitoring and evaluation tools to newer approaches.
- **Prevent new silos and ensure conflict and gender mainstreaming.** The CPS Bureau must, in practice, maintain ties to the new Bureau for Democracy, Development, and Innovation, as it addresses key factors in conflict prevention such as poor governance and inequalities between groups. As planned, conflict sensitivity and gender analysis should be further mainstreamed across USAID. How will the CPS Bureau create connectivity with all other relevant USAID departments and the interagency, especially when in-country USAID contacts have ties to one bureau over another?
- **Clarify the humanitarian-peace-development-diplomacy nexus.** How will CPS work to ensure these fields are not working at cross-purposes, and bridge them more effectively where appropriate?
- **Seek on-going feedback from U.S.-based civil society.** Civil society coalitions are ready and willing to provide USAID with ideas and best practices to implement conflict prevention and stabilization reform.