

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Violent conflict is “the large-scale outbreak of violence that occurs when groups in a society struggle for power and resources in the absence of structures to support peaceful conflict management.” Conflict is complex, multicausal, and multilayered, and changes over time. Conflict is often the result of fragility – “the failure to forge a minimally inclusive, legitimate, and accountable compact between the state and its society.” The symptoms of fragility can take many forms: civil wars between a government and an armed group, interstate conflict between two governments, one-sided violence that targets a specific ethnic or religious group, or killings at the hands of transnational criminal networks.⁷²

Why the United States Invests in Addressing Violent Conflict:

- **Violent conflict costs the global economy \$14.76 trillion per year.** Conflict generates significant losses for domestic businesses and discourages foreign investment.⁷³
- **Breeds threats such as terrorism, violent extremism, and mass atrocities (genocide).** These tragedies happen almost exclusively in the context of ongoing violent conflict.
- **Kills an estimated 600,000 people per year worldwide.** The vast majority of deaths from violence are innocent civilians in low- to middle-income countries; this leads to migration and displacement.⁷⁴
- **It is currently the leading cause behind the forced displacement of 68.5 million people and the world’s humanitarian needs.** Without investing in ending the violence that generates these needs, costs may continue to rise.⁷⁵
- **The U.S. government invests to protect decades of development gains and U.S. taxpayer dollars.** The majority of countries where USAID implements programs are fragile or vulnerable to conflict. Conflict both causes and is caused by poverty. It negatively impacts food security, access to clean water, education, gender equality, and overall economic growth; on average, GDP growth decreases between 2.5% and 5.2% during conflict.⁷⁶
- **Hurts future generations.** Violent conflict makes children and youth more vulnerable to recruitment into armed forces, child marriage, trafficking, and exploitation. In conflicts around the world, children have become frontline targets, are used as human shields, killed, maimed, and recruited to fight.

Examples of Current U.S. Programs to Address Violent Conflict:

U.S. INSTITUTE OF PEACE (USIP)

USIP promotes national security and global stability by reducing violent conflicts in dozens of countries. It builds the capacity of the U.S. military, diplomatic, and development communities to combat extremism and stabilize war-torn countries.⁷⁷

COMPLEX CRISES FUND (CCF)

Implemented by USAID, CCF funding enables short-term, timely investments to rapidly catalyze peace and mitigate conflict in advance or in the face of unforeseen crises or violence. CCF funding has averted or responded to costly humanitarian crises arising from violent conflict or mass atrocities in 19 countries.⁷⁸

CONFLICT AND STABILIZATION OPERATIONS

Run by DoS, these programs and diplomatic initiatives prevent, mitigate, and respond to violent conflict. They include encouraging fighters leave from armed groups, empowering youth preventing mass atrocities and violence often associated with elections, and supporting peace processes. InterAction participates in the Stabilization Advisory Council, to advise on shared efforts around conflict prevention and stabilization.⁷⁹

ATROCITIES PREVENTION

The Atrocities Prevention Board (APB) is an interagency, undersecretary-level body that reviews country cases where genocide or mass atrocities might be imminent, seeking to better prioritize and effectively coordinate U.S. assistance and diplomatic weight to prevent and respond.⁸⁰



Key Legislation and U.S. Government Policies

Global Fragility and Violence Reduction Act

Passed the House in 115th Congress and at printing was hotlined in the Senate

A bill to reduce global fragility and violence by improving the capacity of the United States to reduce and address the causes of violence, instability, and fragility.

Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act

Passed the House in 115th Congress

A bill to help prevent acts of genocide and other atrocity crimes, which threaten national and international security, by enhancing U.S. government capacities to prevent, mitigate, and respond to such crises.

2018 Stabilization Assistance Review

An interagency review developed by the DoD, DoS, and USAID that outlines the ways in which the U.S. can more effectively leverage diplomatic engagements, defense, and foreign assistance to support stabilization in conflict-affected areas.⁸¹



Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik