

Foreword

The international community, including members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), has paid increasing attention to situations of conflict and fragility, acknowledging that these settings represent some of the great development challenges of our time. Rising levels of resources go into these contexts, but the fact that no fragile state has yet to reach any of the Millennium Development Goals is a stark reminder to us all that results are difficult to achieve and sustain in these situations. Finding answers to improve delivery is urgent, not least for the populations suffering from conflict and poverty.

To deliver better results in situations of conflict and fragility we need to improve our understanding of the impacts and effectiveness both of programmes and projects aimed at supporting peace and of development and humanitarian activities operating in conflict settings. While the use of evaluation has become widespread in development and methods continue to evolve, it has grown clear that a special approach is needed to support learning and accountability in the context of conflict and fragility. How can evaluations provide strong evidence and lessons about what works and why in complex conflict settings – where change processes are non-linear and engagement politicised, and, where data are often missing or unreliable? How can the findings of these evaluations be used to inform policy making, programme design and implementation?

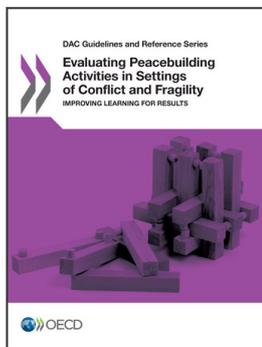
It is against this backdrop that I am pleased to present this OECD-DAC guidance on Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility and to highlight the timely and relevant contribution it makes to international policy debates. Whereas a few years ago it was thought that evaluation in situations of conflict and fragility was impossible – or even objectionable – the process of developing and testing this guidance has proven otherwise. Importantly, it has stimulated critical thinking and shown how an evaluative perspective can be useful to policy makers and practitioners – not just for commissioning evaluations, but throughout the programme cycle. It has also demonstrated that more rigorous assessment of the theories underlying donor action in settings of conflict and fragility can help debunk outdated myths about the role of aid in preventing violent conflict and supporting long-term development processes.

Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility was born out of a collaborative effort between evaluation and the conflict-and-fragile-state communities. By establishing a common understanding of key concepts and encouraging more and better evaluation, particularly of development co-operation activities in settings of conflict and fragility, it has created a community of practice bridging these diverse disciplines. I think it safe to say that the process itself has shown the value-added of cross-DAC work.

I encourage all those concerned with supporting positive change and sustainable development in today's fragile and conflict-affected regions to utilise this guidance – not just for commissioning evaluations, but as an input to learning and accountability throughout government.



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From:
Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility
Improving Learning for Results

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264106802-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

Atwood, Brian (2012), "Foreword", in OECD, *Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility: Improving Learning for Results*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264106802-1-en>

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