

The Role of Development Cooperation in the Prevention of Mass Atrocities and Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

Workshop Report

I. Introduction

On 23-25 August 2017, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (MFA Denmark), assisted by the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (AP R2P), the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) and the Documentation Centre – Cambodia (DC-CAM), convened a workshop on *The Role of Development Cooperation in the Prevention of Mass Atrocities and Responsibility to Protect*, in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The workshop brought together government and civil society representatives across the Indo-Pacific region with development partners (USAID, Australian DFAT and MFA Denmark), to explore how the prevention of atrocity crimes¹ can be strengthened through development cooperation.²

The workshop included the following objectives:

- a. provide development practitioners with concrete ideas on how to use knowledge of atrocity prevention and R2P to strengthen their work in the Asia-Pacific region;
- b. enable participants to learn how development cooperation and atrocity prevention are

¹ The term ‘atrocity crimes’ does not constitute a technical term or a legal determination, but is in this report used to denote mass atrocities that are covered by the “responsibility to protect”, i.e. genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing.

² In addition to the organising governments of Australia, Denmark and US, represented and participating countries included: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Canada, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Timor Leste, Thailand and Vietnam. Note, as the meeting was held under the *Chatham House rules*, this report shall not attribute comments to individual participants.

interlinked and how to embed an atrocity prevention 'lens' into existing and future development programming;

- c. enable participants to explore the role of economic-based stressors in communities in the region and their links to violence against vulnerable groups and risk of atrocities; and
- d. understand how atrocity prevention can strengthen the effectiveness of development outcomes (short- and long-term), as well as how development programs, informed by risk recognition, can support atrocity prevention.³

Throughout the workshop, participants had the opportunity to share their expertise and experience, and discuss the main challenges encountered in the field and suggestions for strengthening the contribution of development cooperation to atrocity prevention. This report summarises the proceedings of the workshop and recommendations for strengthening atrocity prevention through the adoption of practical measures in development cooperation.

II. R2P in the Asia-Pacific region: Identifying risks and preventive measures

The workshop began by introducing participants to the R2P principle and, more specifically, to the basic elements of atrocity prevention and how it can be contextualized within the region. The relevance of these issues to the region was reflected in the rapid economic growth in the region, the prevalence of complex multi-ethnic societies, ongoing governance and development challenges in a number of states, and protracted internal conflicts that could result into atrocities and spill over to neighbouring countries. It was noted that while R2P was not formally adopted in ASEAN documents, the principle that sovereignty entails responsibility was reflected.

Two different sets of guidelines - the *UN's Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes - A Tool for Prevention* and *USAID's Field Guide: Helping Prevent Mass Atrocities* - were used to shape participants' understanding of the factors relating to heightened risk of atrocity crimes, enabling them to identify policy options to reduce atrocity risks and enhance resilience.⁴ As part of the

³ For the purpose of this report, the terms 'atrocities' or 'atrocity crimes' will account for the four crimes covered by the principle of R2P, namely: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing.

⁴ See *UN Framework of Analysis for the Prevention of Atrocity Crimes – A Tool for Prevention* (http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/framework%20of%20analysis%20for%20atrocity%20crimes_en.pdf) and *USAID Field Guide Helping Prevent Mass Atrocities*

discussion about risk assessment, attendees were asked to reflect upon the underlying conditions that can enhance the risk of atrocity crimes, as well as the different actors involved (i.e. victims, perpetrators, enablers and inhibitors) and the different types of context that can enable or dissuade atrocity crimes. Emphasis was placed on the long-term nature of underlying conditions and risk indicators and, thus, on the need for early warning and structural prevention measures, such as those that can be marshalled through development cooperation.

Amongst the common risk factors identified were: lack of education, resulting in weak advocacy and low awareness about atrocity prevention; poor governance, resulting in a lack of accountability and transparency within local police and military forces; the emergence of violent extremism, hatred and discrimination; and persistent patterns of human rights violations and discrimination. During the final session of the workshop, participants were asked to formulate practical solutions for identified risks in different country contexts in the region that could inform an atrocity prevention approach to development cooperation.

Rebuilding after Genocide: The Cambodian experience

Few countries have a recent history as tragic as Cambodia's. After a protracted civil war, the Khmer Rouge seized power in 1975 and implemented a radical ideology backed by extreme violence. Over the next three and a half years, one quarter of the country's population died as a result of violence, disease and mismanagement. A decade of insurgency warfare followed the Khmer Rouge's ousting in 1979. As a result, peacebuilding did not begin in earnest until after UN administered elections held in 1993.

During that time, significant progress has been made in healing the wounds of the past and minimising the possibility that such extreme violence would recur. Genocide commemoration and education have played a significant role in that process. Exhaustive documentation of the crimes committed during the Khmer Rouge period has helped to shine light on what happened and why, laying the foundations for healing. A particular feature of the Cambodian case was that the people killed by the Khmer Rouge were not a minority, but their own people. As such, Cambodians have struggled to come to terms with the question of how and why some amongst them would kill so many of their compatriots. Research and documentation has helped identify how the regime de-humanized its victims, why the regime behaved as it did, and most importantly for reconciliation, why individual perpetrators acted as they did.

In Cambodia, rebuilding after genocide has taken five principal forms. First, organizations such as DC-CAM have documented the crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge, collecting testimony from victims, survivors and perpetrators. These efforts are supported by commemorative actions and museums

<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/Field%20Guide%20Mass%20Atrocities.pdf>

such as the Tuol Sleng genocide museum. Second, civil society groups have facilitated dialogue between survivors and perpetrators to foster reconciliation. Third, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia were instituted to investigate and prosecute senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge regime and those most responsible for atrocities between 1975 and 1979. Fourth, the government – in partnership with civil society – has instituted a national curriculum for genocide prevention, teaching the future generations about what happened and giving them the resources they need to prevent recurrence. Fifth, the Cambodian government has championed atrocity prevention in Southeast Asia by appointing a national R2P focal point and committing to develop an action plan for prevention.

III. Core idea: Utilising development cooperation to support atrocity prevention and atrocity prevention to support development cooperation

The workshop aimed to strengthen the connection between atrocity prevention and R2P, and development cooperation, as well as providing practical suggestions for implementing atrocity prevention programming and action. Noting the region’s rapid economic growth, and the social fragmentation that this has caused in some contexts, participants agreed that development policy and atrocity prevention were connected in important ways. One session specifically addressed the nexus between atrocity crimes and development, focusing on the economic stressors that can give rise to atrocity crimes – both the underlying economic structures that can cause heightened risk and the economic factors, such as sharp downturns or high unemployment, which can act as triggers for atrocity crimes. Participants also discussed how rapid growth could contribute to heightened risk in some cases as a result of disputes over land or increased horizontal inequalities. Importantly, it was noted that economic stressors *alone* do not produce atrocity risks, but that they could be a contributing factor.

In this sense, the workshop helped development practitioners recognise the early signs of atrocity crime risk and incorporate the measures into their assessments and programming. Participants identified three key ways in which development programming could support atrocity prevention:

- 1) help states and societies to reduce their underlying vulnerabilities by identifying and mitigating structural sources of risk (‘upstream’ prevention);

- 2) identify and strengthen national and local sources of resilience to external shocks (such as economic crises), and recognise patterns of escalation towards atrocity crimes; and
- 3) support early warning and early action.

Precisely how these objectives would be met would be determined on a case-by-case basis since, participants agreed, every situation was different. Effective strategies must be context-sensitive. Specific suggestions included channelling investment directly to communities rather than through governments, and adopting a deeper understanding of stakeholders (to include local communities and the private sector). It was also important to ensure actors were empowered to support atrocity prevention (the connection with human rights was recognised by participants). It was the responsibility of the state to take steps to build inclusive and diverse societies. Also, there was an important role for civil society in holding the state to account for progress down that path. Prioritising the reduction of inequalities by creating more widely shared access to opportunity, and supporting reform processes in the justice and security sectors, particularly on transparency and accountability, were also noted as critical to atrocity risk reduction.

IV. Main challenges: Implementation of an atrocity prevention approach within development cooperation

Relevant experiences from the field demonstrated the difficulties of working where atrocity risks are ongoing and, in particular, where the space for civil society engagement is limited. Practitioners identified two main sets of challenges: coordination within and between government agencies, and communication with governments. The workshop provided an opportunity for both government and civil society representatives to reflect on these challenges and share perspectives.

Coordination challenges included the need to carefully choose the kind of policies that would be advocated for (i.e. allocation of resources to education, rehabilitation and prevention programs) within the development agenda. Careful consultation was important in instances where donors, local authorities and civil society disagreed about which sectors ought to be prioritised and the appropriate focus of new partnerships.

Communication challenges relate to the language donors use with both local and home governments. Communication should avoid using politically sensitive language when building a

dialogue with local governments, but practitioners also need to ensure that their internal messages are delivered effectively. In this regard, participants noted that issues relevant to atrocity prevention could be explored without necessarily referring to R2P language, which in some contexts could raise sensitivities. At the same time, it is necessary to understand the specific character of atrocity risks to ensure an appropriate response. The limitations on the use of social media, press and radio, especially during elections, also present challenges. In addition, participants highlighted the need to actively involve and educate local stakeholders, not only at the government but also at the community level. Community empowerment and capacity-building could promote local activism, which was a key driver of resilience.

V. Looking ahead: Recommendations

Participants identified tangible steps that could be taken to strengthen atrocity prevention through development cooperation. Five core priorities for action emerged:

- 1) *Include an emphasis on atrocity prevention, or adopt an “atrocity prevention lens” in development programming and partnerships:* Participants agreed that, given the commitment all member states have made to R2P, support for atrocity prevention is a necessity not an optional extra in development policy. Development agencies should actively consider ways to address and prioritise atrocity prevention in their work, including through the utilisation of the UN and USAID frameworks (or similar such frameworks) discussed during the workshop. Where structural risks are identified, development programming should be tailored carefully to mitigate them and support local sources of resilience. Integrating flexibility into development programming in conflict-risk/fragile contexts is critical to ensure programs are able to adapt to evolving scenarios. Agencies could also play an important role in supporting early warning. Development cooperation could help reduce economic stressors and risk factors, promote economic growth to close wealth gaps and horizontal inequalities, enhance living conditions, and reduce community exposure to exogenous shocks.
- 2) *Approaches need to be ‘joined-up’ and multi-level.* Atrocity prevention is inherently about partnership and communication. No single actor, or group of actors, can prevent atrocity crimes in a given setting. As such, preventive policies cannot be implemented in isolation from other policies and initiatives. Nor can agencies limit themselves to operating at a

single level. National governments matter, but so too do district-level governments and local communities. All of these levels need to be engaged. Moreover, programs to support prevention need to recognise the role that different types of actors play – including government officials, police and military, non-state actors, the private sector, religious leaders, judicial actors etc – and how these can be harnessed and strengthened. Opening spaces for dialogue between these actors (especially inter-faith dialogue) was identified as a particular priority.

- 3) *Ensure that communication is sensitive to local and regional considerations.* It is important that atrocity prevention considerations are framed in a way which is context-sensitive. This may sometimes involve decisions to not use phrases such as ‘R2P’ and ‘atrocity prevention’. Communication should be framed to empower partners and secure maximum ‘buy-in’ while addressing the respective atrocity prevention issues.
- 4) *Recognise the importance of education and of supporting the local human capital necessary to prevent atrocity crimes.* R2P and atrocity prevention are still not well understood concepts, outside of the diplomatic elite, in the Asia-Pacific region. Efforts should be made to widen and deepen public understanding of R2P and ways of strengthening atrocity prevention. This includes efforts to support local capacities for conflict resolution and knowledge of, and access to, justice. It also should include building partnerships to empower civil society and community development to undertake practical activities such as defending human and minority rights, monitoring elections and countering hate speech.
- 5) *Support partnerships to improve transparency and accountability in governance, especially in the rule of law and justice sector.* The rule of law, including security sector governance, transparency and accountability, were identified as key sources of resilience against atrocity crimes across multiple case studies. Development cooperation can be harnessed to support initiatives in these areas. Specific priorities relating to atrocity prevention included supporting governments to reduce ungoverned spaces, providing training in international humanitarian and human rights law to police and military personnel; strengthening the control of small arms and light weapons; and supporting measures to improve the likelihood of safe and democratic elections.

VI. Evaluation and future developments

60% of the workshop participants provided detailed feedback via an anonymous survey following the workshop. Prior to the workshop, 60% of responders indicated that R2P/atrocities prevention was relevant to their work. Following the workshop this increased to over 88%, who believed their work to be relevant or highly relevant to R2P/mass atrocities prevention. Responders indicated some of the ways in which they intended to implement what they had learnt during the workshop - for example, in the preparation of national action plans for R2P, situational monitoring and briefings on emerging crises, programs focused on atrocities prevention, community consultation to better understand the drivers of risk and resilience, and development practice research. Following the workshop, 75% of responders felt better prepared to recognise warning signs of atrocities and both the US State/USAID *Helping Prevent Mass Atrocities* and the *UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes - A Tool for Prevention* were well received by responders. 78% of responders said they left the workshop with concrete ideas on how to integrate atrocities prevention into their development programming work. Over 83% of responders indicated they would recommend similar workshops to colleagues.

DFAT, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and USAID, with the assistance of the AP R2P, will continue to engage with the workshop participants on outcomes of the workshop. They will make this report available to relevant stakeholders, in order to support additional atrocities prevention initiatives and deepen understanding in the region. The supporting governments will explore options to incorporate the main recommendations and lessons learnt in their development cooperation and atrocities prevention agendas.

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Workshop Program
**The Role of Development Cooperation in the
 Prevention of Mass Atrocities and Responsibility to Protect (R2P)**
 Phnom Penh, 23-25 August 2017

Wednesday, 23 August	
13:00- 14:15	<p>Introduction to the workshop participants, facilitators and goals</p> <p>This session will set the scene for the workshop and outline how development and atrocity prevention are linked. Participants will share how R2P and atrocity prevention are relevant to their work.</p>
14:15- 15:00	Transfer to the Tuol Sleng Museum
15:00- 16:30	<p>Visit to the Tuol Sleng Museum</p> <p>The workshop participants will visit the former detention and torture centre to learn about the genocidal crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge in this former school in Phnom Penh.</p>
16:30 -17:30	Transfer back to the hotel
17:30 - 18:45	<p>Genocide commemoration and education as means of atrocity prevention</p> <p>This session will start with a debriefing where participants will have time to ask questions about Tuol Sleng and share reflections. Speakers will then introduce Cambodia's experience with genocide commemoration and education and the role development cooperation has played in this regard. All will be invited to discuss their respective experience with these matters.</p>
19:15	Informal dinner at Romdeng restaurant

Thursday, 24 August	
8:30- 9:00	<p>Official welcome and opening of the workshop</p> <p>His Royal Highness, Samdech Norodom Sirivudh</p> <p>Her Excellency Australian Ambassador to Cambodia, Ms Angela Corcoran</p> <p>Acting Director, USAID in Cambodia, Ms Veena Reddy</p> <p>His Excellency Sok Soken representing His Excellency, Prak Sokhonn, Minister of MOFAIC</p> <p>Proceedings led by His Excellency Pou Sothirak, Executive Director of CICP and Cambodian National R2P Focal Point</p>
9:00	<p>R2P, atrocity prevention and development in the SE Asian region</p> <p>This session will introduce the concepts of atrocity prevention and R2P as well as explore the links between atrocity crimes and development, i.e. prevention, response and recovery. The session will also situate atrocity prevention in the Asian context.</p>
10:15	Group photo and coffee break
10:45	<p>Assessing risks and preventing mass atrocities</p> <p>We will introduce the UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes - A tool for prevention and the USAID Field Guide: Helping Prevent Mass Atrocities to identify specific risk factors and show how these tools can be used by development workers. USAID will share its approach to the challenges of atrocity crimes, as set forth in a guide to its field officers. The focus will be on working with prevention on the ground.</p>
12:00	<p>Front-line experiences: Drawing lessons and comparing cases</p> <p>This session will start with a short video clip of USAID field officers talking of their experience in atrocity risk situations, followed by a panel of practitioners working in SE Asia and NGO staff.</p>

13:15	Lunch: Open time for participants to talk together
14:15	<p>Economic stressors as R2P risk factors in the SE Asian region</p> <p>The purpose of this session is to identify some of the specific challenges that could elevate the risk of atrocity crimes in the region. These include, among other things, issues relating to the management of natural resources, disputes over land ownership, the equitable management of rapid growth, practices of economic discrimination, horizontal inequalities between groups and questions about recovery from economic shocks and natural disasters.</p>
15:30	Coffee break
16:00	<p>Economic rights and responses to atrocity risks in the SE Asian region</p> <p>This session will discuss the specific economic challenges as well as some key measures relevant to preventive work by governments, NGOs and the private sector. Panellists will present their perspectives and experiences on the lack of economic opportunities and rights driving conflict, community tension and possibly atrocities - and explore ways to mitigate the risks of armed conflict/atrocities which flow from these.</p>
19:00	<p>Conference dinner</p> <p>Speaker: William Smith, Deputy Prosecutor, Extraordinary Chambers in the Cambodian Courts</p>
Friday, 25 August	
8:30	<p>Atrocity prevention in practice: Identifying relevant risk factors</p> <p>In small groups, participants apply the ideas discussed during the workshop to “their” country. In this session, we will work with the UN and US frameworks that were introduced on the previous day to identify risk factors that could lead to atrocity crimes.</p>
9:45	Coffee break
10:15	<p>Atrocity prevention in practice: Identifying relevant response measures</p>

	<p>In this session, participants will build on the previous discussion of country-specific risk factors. They will look for options that specifically can help to prevent these risks from turning into actual atrocity crimes. As appropriate, they will also identify responses to ongoing atrocity crimes and/or measures that can support recovery from such crimes. The groups will consider various programming options in development cooperation in thematic areas (including gender aspects) such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Community Stabilization and conflict mitigation strategies o Role of civil society and private sector o Economic measures to reduce atrocity risks o Supporting local and national resilience o Security sector governance (including justice sector) o Dealing with the past (accountability, reconciliation, reparation, education, commemoration etc.)
11:30	<p>Working lunch: Putting atrocity prevention into practice</p> <p>The groups share and discuss the results of the morning sessions in plenary.</p>
13:15	<p>Wrap-up and next steps</p> <p>Participants will have the opportunity to share concluding reflections. The facilitators will point to specific follow-up opportunities for the way ahead and conclude the workshop.</p>
14:00	<p>Close (coffee)</p>