

Conflict, Stability and Security Fund

A performance review
Approach paper

August 2017

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1. Purpose, scope and rationale

This is a performance review of the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF or the Fund). The purpose of this review is to assess the extent to which the CSSF designs and delivers portfolios of official development assistance (ODA) funded projects that reduce or are likely to reduce conflict, instability and insecurity.

The review only covers CSSF funding that is categorised as ODA and is not part of the UK's assessed contributions to multilateral peacekeeping operations. This amounted to £353 million (or 36%) of a total CSSF expenditure of £991 million in the financial year of 2015-16, and to £458 million (or 41%) of £1,104 million in 2016-17.¹

In this review, we take country and regional portfolios as our unit of analysis. Within each portfolio, we will assess the processes by which the CSSF allocates funding to activities, how the CSSF oversees projects and programmes, and how it measures and reports on results and value for money. We will explore the relevance and coherence of the CSSF portfolios in these countries and regions, their emerging results, the way they are embedded, and the extent to which they are likely to contribute to the objectives of the relevant National Security Council (NSC) strategies. Where relevant, we will consider CSSF work in the context of longer-term UK government engagement in the country or region.

The governance and management of the CSSF has recently been assessed by Parliament's Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy.² We will not repeat this analysis, except in so far as governance and management arrangements emerge as explanatory factors regarding the performance of our sample portfolios.

Where sample portfolios combine ODA and non-ODA funding, we will only examine the latter as part of our assessment of the relevance and coherence of the portfolio as a whole. We will not assess the effectiveness of non-ODA-funded activities.

Work on this review began a little over two years after the Fund was created in April 2015 and is the first review of its performance. Although the Fund is young, a performance review is feasible because it builds on experience gained in its smaller predecessor fund, the Conflict Pool, which ICAI reviewed over five years ago.³ Since that Conflict Pool review, the UK government's focus on conflict and instability around the world has intensified, as is underlined by commitments in the UK Aid Strategy⁴ and the Strategic Defence and Security Review.⁵ The UK government justifies this stronger focus by pointing to the human suffering caused by conflict and instability, their disruptive effects on development processes and their detrimental impact on the UK national interest.

2. Background

The CSSF is a cross-government fund that succeeded the Conflict Pool. The CSSF reports to and is led by the National Security Council (NSC) and supports the implementation of NSC country, regional and thematic strategies. The Fund is managed by an inter-departmental Joint Programme Hub. Any UK government department or agency engaged in addressing conflict, instability and insecurity abroad can submit proposals for funding to the CSSF.

The CSSF is guided by:

- The Strategic Defence and Security Review.⁶
- Three strands of the UK Aid Strategy: (1) strengthening global peace, security and governance; (2) strengthening resilience and response to crises; and (3) tackling extreme poverty and helping the world's most vulnerable (and prioritising the rights of girls and women).⁷

1. Figures are subject to departmental audit. Sources are *Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, Annual Report 2016/17*, UK government, July 2017, p. 10, [link](#) and communications between ICAI and the Joint Programme Hub.

2. *Conflict, Stability and Security Fund: Second Report of Session 2016-17*, Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, paragraphs 76-81, February 2017, [link](#).

3. *Evaluation of the Inter-Departmental Conflict Pool*, ICAI, July 2012, [link](#).

4. *UK Aid: tackling global challenges in the national interest*, HM Treasury and DFID, November 2015, [link](#).

5. *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015; a secure and prosperous United Kingdom*, UK government, November 2015, [link](#).

6. See footnote 5.

7. *Leave No One Behind, Our promise*, DFID, January 2017, [link](#).

- Two national security objectives:
 1. Protecting UK nationals. This covers work related to (1) protecting the UK, Overseas Territories and British nationals overseas; (2) combating extremism and terrorism; (3) serious and organised crime; and (4) crisis response and resilience.
 2. Protecting the UK’s global influence. This covers work related to (1) allies, partners and global engagement; (2) strengthening the rules-based international order and its institutions, including women, peace and security; and (3) tackling conflict and building stability overseas.⁸

More broadly, the CSSF is of relevance to Sustainable Development Goal 16 to “promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies”⁹ and to the 2030 Agenda that states, in its preamble, that “there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development”.¹⁰

To date, the largest user of CSSF funding that is of relevance to this review has been the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), with much smaller allocations spent by the Department for International Development (DFID), the Ministry of Defence, the Home Office, the National Crime Agency and the Crown Prosecution Service (see Table 1). Allocations are made on the understanding that CSSF funding should not replace core departmental work.

Table 1: The CSSF’s total ODA spending by department

Department	Calendar year of 2015 spending (includes spending by the Conflict Pool, million £)	Calendar year of 2016 spending (provisional, million £)	Percentage of total CSSF ODA spend (average 2015-16 calendar years)
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	240.2	417.1	73.3%
Department for International Development	68.7	108.2	20%
National Crime Agency	9.3	17.7	3%
Ministry of Defence	4.4	14.9	2%
Home Office	0.7	13.7	1.3%
Crown Prosecution Service	1	2.9	0.4%
Other departments ¹¹	N/A	0.6	<0.1%
Total CSSF/Conflict Pool	324.3	575.1	100%

Source: DFID, Statistics on International Development, 2017, table 4, [link](#).

8. *Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, Annual Report 2016/17*, UK government, July 2017, p. 4, [link](#).

9. *Sustainable Development Goals*, United Nations, September 2015, [link](#).

10. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, United Nations, 21 October 2015, p. 2, [link](#).

11. Includes the Association of Chief Police Officers Criminal Records Office, HM Revenue and Customs, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Department for Transport.

In 2016-17, CSSF funding covered 97 programmes in more than 40 countries. To date, the five CSSF thematic areas with the highest ODA spend have been (1) security and justice, (2) political and stabilisation processes, (3) governance and human rights, (4) counter-terrorism, countering violent extremism, irregular migration and serious organised crime, and (5) community security and peacebuilding.

3. Review questions

The review is built around the evaluation criteria of *relevance*, *effectiveness* and *learning*.¹² It will address the following questions and sub-questions:

Table 2: Our review questions

Review criteria and questions	Sub-questions
<p>1. Relevance: How relevant and strategic is the CSSF's response to particular conflicts and crises?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well does the CSSF identify underlying drivers of conflict, instability and insecurity, and opportunities to promote sustainable peace, stability and security? • Are CSSF programmes aligned with ODA requirements, the UK Aid Strategy and relevant NSC strategies? • Does the CSSF promote coherence with other UK government activity in the same countries or regions, and with interventions by other actors, as appropriate?
<p>2. Effectiveness: How effective is the CSSF at addressing conflict, instability and insecurity and at promoting sustainable peace, stability and security?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the CSSF allocate funds and manage and monitor its portfolios so as to maximise long-term effectiveness and value for money? • To what extent are CSSF portfolios and projects delivering, or likely to deliver, their intended results and value for money? • To what extent are CSSF portfolios and projects ensuring they 'do no harm' and paying due attention to issues of gender and marginalisation?
<p>3. Learning: How well is the CSSF learning what works in tackling conflict, instability and insecurity?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well does the CSSF apply research and analysis to its programming? • How effectively does the CSSF identify lessons, apply them in its portfolio, and share them with relevant government departments, implementing partners, and other stakeholders, as appropriate?

¹² Based on the OECD DAC evaluation criteria. See *Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance*, OECD DAC, 1991, [link](#).

4. Methodology

Our methodology is designed to assess how well the CSSF responds to conflict, instability and insecurity. The core of our methodology is a set of six case studies of CSSF country and regional portfolios. For each of these portfolios, we will assess whether the work represents a relevant and effective response to particular issues, taking into account both project- and portfolio-level objectives and results. In addition to these six case studies, we will take into account findings on the CSSF from other ICAI reviews, including on Somalia and on migration in the central Mediterranean.¹³

Component 1: Assessment of relevance and effectiveness

For each of the case studies and to the extent possible, we will assess the relevance and effectiveness of projects, programmes and portfolios at the output, outcome and impact levels. We will do so by (1) reviewing relevant documentation, (2) conducting interviews with UK government and external stakeholders, and (3) considering the portfolio's design and implementation against non-government data, literature and feedback from external experts. Three of the case studies will involve country visits (Colombia, Jordan and Mali) and we will conduct three other case studies remotely (Iraq, Pakistan and the Caucasus regional portfolios).

- 1. Documentation reviews.** For each case study, we will review the overarching strategies, results framework and progress reporting for each portfolio. We will conduct desk reviews of a sample of individual projects and programmes, to assess their designs and reported results.
- 2. Key stakeholder interviews.** Our case studies will involve face-to-face and remote interviews with UK government staff responsible for portfolio development and oversight, management and technical advice (such as representatives on programme boards, responsible officers, technical advisors). We will consult with the departments responsible for implementing projects and, in appropriate cases, with implementing partners and other key stakeholders. Wherever political sensitivities and security requirements allow (and we will work closely with the inter-departmental Joint Programme Hub on this) we will interview country counterparts, whether in government or civil society. For each country portfolio, we will identify and interview independent observers who can provide additional contextual analysis. Collectively, these interviews will deepen the insights gained through the documentation reviews and help us assess the CSSF's likely effectiveness at addressing conflict, instability and insecurity. Where we conduct visits, we may also identify opportunities to gain additional insights through other means, such as additional documentation, observation or sample-based verification of project results.
- 3. Contextual analysis.** We will conduct one general literature review that outlines the evidence in relation to the CSSF's five main thematic areas (listed in the background section). This will inform the case studies and the assessment of CSSF learning (component 2, see below). We will also conduct three short, country-specific literature reviews, covering the countries we visit. These will summarise the available research and analysis on the nature and drivers of the conflict, the history of external interventions and the current roles and approaches of key international stakeholders. This contextual analysis will be supplemented by interviews with experts on each of the countries or regions covered in our sample.

Component 2 - Learning assessment

For our third review question, on CSSF learning, our methodology will include two elements.

- 1. Learning processes.** Through interviews with UK government staff, reviews of CSSF documents and our desk reviews of individual programmes, we will assess the quality of the CSSF's learning processes. This will include assessments of:
 - the effectiveness with which the CSSF draws on external evidence, learning and analysis to inform its programming

¹³ UK aid in a conflict-affected country: Reducing conflict and fragility in Somalia, ICAI, June 2017, [link](#). UK's aid response to the migration crisis in the central Mediterranean, ICAI, March 2017, [link](#).

- the way in which the CSSF translates learning and global research findings into guidance material
- the role of the Stabilisation Unit in providing technical support for programme design and monitoring
- the quality of CSSF monitoring and evaluation systems and processes,
- the way lessons are captured from CSSF programmes and shared between countries, across UK government departments and with implementing partners and other stakeholders as appropriate.

2. Learning on particular themes and issues. Based on initial interviews with key stakeholders, we will select a small number of themes and issues that emerge as important to the CSSF portfolios in our case study countries (such as CSSF approaches to capacity building). We will assess to what extent the CSSF makes use of the available evidence and learning from its own programmes, its predecessor fund (the Conflict Pool, with specific reference to the programme-related recommendations made in ICAI's Conflict Pool review), participating departments and the wider development field.¹⁴ We will also assess to what extent the design of programmes in our case study countries reflects this evidence and learning.

5. Sampling approach

We have decided to conduct case studies of four country portfolios and of two regional portfolios. This represents approximately 12% of the CSSF's total ODA expenditure in the two financial years 2015-16 and 2016-17. Three of the case studies will involve country visits (Colombia, Jordan and Mali, as the centre of the Sahel regional portfolio) and three case studies will be conducted remotely (Iraq, Pakistan and the Caucasus regional portfolio). These case studies:

1. cover both national and regional programming
2. include programmes in countries where the UK government has implemented CSSF-type work over a long period
3. cover each of the CSSF's five most important focus areas
4. cover 'simmering' conflicts, 'hot' conflicts, conflicts that are 'cooling down', and countries that require resilience to remain stable
5. cover the various types of delivery channels: departmental delivery, non-government organisations, multilaterals, private consulting firms, the Stabilisation Unit and the National School of Government International
6. cover all departments that use CSSF funding.

In addition to the six case studies, we will review the CSSF-related evidence gathered in the course of ICAI's Somalia and Migration reviews, as a potentially useful addition to this review's evidence pool.

6. Limitations of the methodology

Assessing whether CSSF programmes have contributed to building peace, stability and security poses methodological challenges. Progress on peace, stability and security is typically slow, uneven and difficult to measure. Progress may also not be linked to CSSF programming, and even regression or stagnation does not necessarily mean that the UK government's efforts have made no meaningful difference. Identifying the CSSF's contribution is harder where programmes aim to prevent something from happening (such as no derailing of peace processes, no terrorist attacks, no large-scale irregular migration). In addition, security restrictions on access to documentation and locations have placed some limits on our sampling options and our engagement with beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

¹⁴. These are recommendations 4-6 of *Evaluation of the Inter-Departmental Conflict Pool*, ICAI, July 2012, [link](#).

In this context, we will maximise the robustness of our overall conclusions in two ways.

First, we will triangulate relevance and effectiveness claims by comparing programmes’ design and implementation with country-specific research about conflict and instability; checking source data coherence; and comparing documented claims of effectiveness with the feedback provided in open interviews with respondents from the UK government, implementing agents and national counterparts and people affected by conflict. This will enable us to reach some conclusions about the accuracy of these claims.

Second, we will cast our net wide. By reviewing six country and regional portfolios in diverse contexts and considering the CSSF-specific evidence of other ICAI reviews, we will come to overall portfolio conclusions that are more robust than our individual country-specific conclusions.

7. Risk management

Risk	Mitigation and management actions
The relevant UK departments’ unfamiliarity with ICAI’s way of working delays progress.	The ICAI Secretariat and the inter-departmental Joint Programme Hub will agree on protocols for engaging with the various departments and ensure communication channels are open at both senior and working levels.
Some data needed for this review is sensitive and classified. There are risks that the review team will not be able to access restricted information, or that it will not be shared in a timely manner.	All team members are security-cleared and the ICAI Secretariat will liaise with the Joint Programme Hub to agree protocols on access to and use of restricted information. The ICAI Secretariat and the service provider will respect UK government information handling guidance.
Findings cannot be shared for security reasons.	In case of doubt, the ICAI Secretariat will consult with the Joint Programme Hub on what can and cannot be shared publicly. The review’s fact check stage provides an opportunity for the UK government to request rewording or deletion of text that covers particularly sensitive fields of work.

8. Quality assurance

The review will be carried out under the guidance of ICAI commissioner Richard Gledhill, with support from the ICAI Secretariat. The review will be subject to quality assurance by the service provider consortium.

Both the methodology and the final report will be peer reviewed by Dan Smith, director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and a University of Manchester professor of peace and conflict.

9. Timing and deliverables

The review will be executed within nine months starting from July 2017.

Phase	Timing and deliverables
Inception	Approach paper: August 2017
Data collection	Country visits: September to October 2017 Evidence pack: November 2017 Emerging findings presentation: November 2017
Reporting	Final report: Spring 2018



This document can be downloaded from www.icaei.independent.gov.uk/

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