

CONFLICT PREVENTION AND CRISIS RESPONSE: RESPONDING TO EMERGING INSTABILITY OVERSEAS



“We will make conflict prevention and response a core mission of the State Department and USAID.”

– Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

Armed conflict, weak states and transitional societies are a central security challenge for the United States. In an increasingly interdependent world, instability can ripple outward with destabilizing and devastating effects. When states in crisis are unable to control their territories and protect their citizens, instability fosters permissive environments for violent extremists, weapons proliferation, and organized crime. For these reasons, Secretary Clinton has led an ambitious agenda to enhance the Department’s capacity to anticipate and address emerging conflict dynamics.

REORGANIZED FOR IMPACT

To deliver on this agenda, the Secretary launched an effort in 2011 to transform the way the Department operates in crisis and conflict zones – transitioning from post-war reconstruction to a new era in conflict prevention and stabilization.

- First, she merged related capabilities under a new Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights. The Department’s work on conflict, counterterrorism, democracy, human rights, law enforcement, narcotics, refugees, trafficking and youth is now focused around a core aim – civilian security.
- Second, she created the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) to serve

as an institutional locus for the Department’s conflict and crisis-response capabilities. This new bureau advances U.S. national security by working with partners in priority countries to break cycles of violent conflict, mitigate crises, and strengthen civilian security.

CAPABILITIES TO PREVENT AND RESPOND

CSO supports the Department’s conflict and crisis response efforts through locally grounded analysis, strategic planning, and operational support for local partners.

- **Conflict Analysis.** CSO offers rapid, locally-grounded conflict analysis in countries where mass violence or instability looms and access can be difficult. Its data-driven products draw on diverse sources, including diplomatic and media reports, polling, local interviews and international expertise, to identify the most important dynamics fueling instability.
- **Strategic Planning.** Building on this analysis, CSO helps develop prioritized strategies and plans that target the causes of instability and address high-risk periods such as elections or political transitions.
- **Locally Driven Initiatives.** To help operationalize U.S. government and host-nation plans, CSO provides experienced leaders and technical experts. They amplify local

initiatives that connect civil society partners, media, community leaders, technical experts, and under-represented groups like women and youth in coalitions that bridge social divides.

RESOURCES TO PREVENT AND RESPOND

In its first year, CSO moved swiftly to mobilize resources and civilian response mechanisms for the next generation of conflict prevention and response.

- **Civilian Responders:** CSO has expanded the Department's model of civilian response from U.S. government experts to include networks of experts from sources such as nonprofits, third-country nationals, international partners, think tanks, and state and local officials.
- **Start-up Funding:** CSO has shifted its own Civilian Stabilization Initiative funds to jumpstart projects with local partners.
- **Onsite Training:** CSO's civilian responders can conduct on-site training in bureaus and embassies to increase conflict analysis, planning and evaluation capabilities.

EXAMPLES

In its first year, CSO supported Department efforts in over 15 countries while concentrating its work in four priority countries:

- On Syria, CSO trained and equipped the nonviolent opposition. Working from Turkey, CSO channeled \$15 million to 1) enable the opposition to strengthen their networks and communicate internally and externally, 2) integrate international partners into the

strategy, and 3) build capacity for the transition in government. The CSO-funded, Syrian-run Office of Syrian Opposition Support in Istanbul is the hub for an expanding network of about 350 Syrian activists, administrators, and journalists.

- In Kenya, where more than 1,000 people died and 350,000 were displaced after the 2007 elections, CSO is part of a dynamic, Embassy-wide effort to help Kenyans prevent similar violence around the March 2013 election. CSO surged staff to help sharpen the U.S. government's focus and build partnerships at national, regional and local levels. CSO is helping civil society and Kenyan officials to create a vast quick-response network for early warning.
- In Honduras, where homicide levels are the highest in the world outside of war zones, CSO is bringing urgency to Honduran governmental and civil society efforts to reduce criminal violence. CSO is contributing to efforts to reform the police and the prosecutor's office, and is providing technical advisers to guide a process for selecting high-impact projects funded by a new security tax. A CSO grant is supporting a non-governmental coalition to enable citizens to help stem violence in their communities and advocate for public security reform.
- In Burma, CSO is working with the government and other partners to use landmine action, including mine risk education, victim assistance and demining, to bring long-warring parties together. Ethnic minorities have expressed optimism about the ability of the mine-action initiative to build trust and create a foundation for converting numerous ceasefires to a sustainable peace.

Visit Us Online:



[Facebook.com/stateCSO](https://www.facebook.com/stateCSO) • www.state.gov/j/cso •  [Twitter.com/stateCSO](https://twitter.com/stateCSO)