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## STABILISATION UNIT

### What is the Stabilisation Unit?

The Stabilisation Unit, previously named the Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit (PCRU), is jointly owned by the Department for International Development (DFID), Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Ministry of Defence (MOD) (the three "parent Departments"). It provides specialist, targeted assistance in countries emerging from violent conflict where the UK is helping to achieve a stable environment that will enable longer term development to take place.

### What is meant by 'stabilisation'?

Stabilisation is support to countries emerging from violent conflict in:

- Preventing or reducing violence;
- Protecting people and key institutions;
- Promoting political processes which lead to greater stability; and
- Preparing for longer term non-violent politics and development.

Stabilisation usually requires external, joint military and civilian support, a focus on the legitimacy and capability of the state, and tangible benefits to the population to underpin confidence in the state and the political process.

### How does stabilisation relate to humanitarian and development aid?

The distinction between humanitarian, development and stabilisation activities is sometimes not clear cut. Stabilisation can be seen as filling the gap between emergency humanitarian assistance and longer term development assistance, though, as the definition above shows, it is more than that. The most fundamental distinctions are between the explicitly *political* aims of stabilisation (aiming to promote peaceful political processes); the strictly *neutral* role of humanitarian assistance; and the *apolitical* poverty-focussed rationale for development activity. Sometimes these may be in tension, when, for example the UK is simultaneously aiming to deliver both humanitarian and stabilisation assistance; this needs active management. In other situations, such as where poverty is not a major issue, stabilisation may be needed when there would be little justification for development activity.

### What is the Stabilisation Unit's role?

The Unit's role is to support countries emerging from violent conflict, at the request of its parent Departments or Cabinet Office. It provides specialist, targeted, rapid assistance where the UK is helping to achieve a stable environment that will enable longer term development to take place. The Unit's key tasks are:

- assessment and planning: helping UK Government Departments and the military develop a common understanding of the issues in a country emerging from

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violent conflict and then to plan together so that there is a single UK aim and strategic framework;

- deployments: providing experienced civilian personnel to work in insecure countries, including to design and implement projects such as developing an effective police force, creating jobs, and starting to build the ability of the government to plan for development;
- lesson learning: identifying and sharing best practice both in the UK and internationally on how to best support countries emerging from conflict.

Other parts of UK Government are responsible for humanitarian work, developing policy on conflict and relations with multinational organisations on conflict issues.

## **What can the Stabilisation Unit offer?**

The Unit provides a unique mix of skills. Its staff and consultant experts:

- have stabilisation expertise, developed by their work in a wide range of difficult and dangerous environments;
- understand the approaches of all three main international Departments (Ministry of Defence, Department for International Development and Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and the UK Armed Forces. The Unit is well placed to bridge cross-Governmental issues and understand the challenges that exist in collaboration between civilians and the military;
- have capabilities in a large number of disciplines, from designing programmes to deliver basic services such as roads, water supply and education; to advising on the development of local government and improving the effectiveness of communications setting out the purpose of support by the international community;
- include people with training and experience in facilitation.

In addition to these skills, the Stabilisation Unit is able to deploy suitable individuals at short notice to countries emerging from violent conflict. This has particular benefits in giving the UK Government a rapidly deployable civilian cadre that can work alongside military.

## **Where does the Unit work?**

The Unit focuses on countries (or parts of countries) that are emerging from violent conflict, that are UK foreign policy priorities and where close cooperation between an international military presence and civilian agencies is essential to achieving greater stability. Its primary focus is where the UK military is significantly involved (i.e. Afghanistan and Iraq), but it can also support UK efforts elsewhere that meet the criteria specified above if it has the capacity to do so. It is therefore also actively engaged on a number of countries in Africa, focusing on Sudan and Somalia, and supported the UK response to the Lebanon crisis of summer 2006.

## **Why was the Unit's name changed?**

The name was changed in late 2007 from PCRU to Stabilisation Unit to better reflect the core work of the Unit in stabilisation and also the Unit's role in management of the MOD's £269 million Stabilisation Aid fund announced as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review in September 2007.

Stabilisation Unit, December 2007

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