

**Aids, Security & Conflict Advisory Committee Meeting
Century Association, New York City
30 November 2006**

Summary Meeting Note

Introduction (George Frerks, Co-Chair)

The AIDS, Security and Conflict Initiative (ASCI) is a global research initiative convened by the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael' and the Social Science Research Council. ASCI is supported by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Australian Agency for International Development, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNAIDS.

Starting in September 2006, ASCI began a process of research and mobilization bringing together an international network of researchers, policy makers and practitioners across geographic regions and specialist fields. ASCI aims to inform policy and programming by strengthening the evidence base and addressing critical gaps in knowledge across several areas: HIV/AIDS in military and peacekeeping operations; HIV/AIDS, humanitarian crises and post-conflict transitions; HIV/AIDS and crisis and fragile states.

On 30 November 2006, ASCI co-chairs, Georg Frerks and Souleymane M'Boup, convened the first meeting of ASCI's high-level Advisory Committee. ASCI Advisory Committee members represent senior scholars, experts, policy makers, practitioners and affected communities across government, non-governmental, bi-and multilateral arenas. Members are responsible for providing substantive guidance and policy direction, and for representing ASCI in relevant fora. Together with several ASCI principal investigators and ASCI's research and project management team, the Co-Chairs led a half-day discussion about ASCI's agenda, research priorities, mobilization strategies and intended outputs.

Session 1: The New Research Agenda

Alex de Waal, ASCI Research Director

ASCI's new research agenda reflects an emergent phase of thinking about the links across HIV/AIDS, security and conflict. The early and pioneering work undertaken by a small group of researchers concerned with HIV in military populations began more than ten years ago and led to a much broader recognition of security implications of the pandemic. This, in turn, prompted alarming predictions of a "second wave" pandemic affecting India, China and Russia, and warnings that weak states in sub-Saharan Africa would tip into irreversible decline. A third phase is upon us now, one in which the worst fears about threats posed by HIV/AIDS to peace and security have not been realized, but neither have the myriad challenges posed by the pandemic been resolved. ASCI is responding to an emergent fourth phase which aims to sharpen the analysis of these very real problems and recommend policy and programme oriented responses. While ASCI's research agenda is organized around three main clusters, namely the military, humanitarian crisis and post-conflict transition, and crisis and fragile states, the bedrock of its approach is to identify the underlying and intermediate drivers of the epidemic -- such as concurrency, population mobility, sexual violence and exploitation, and male circumcision, among others -- and understand how they

operate in different situations. ASCI will focus on the drivers that exacerbate HIV rates in some situations while keeping it down in others, and it will assess how they may increase HIV risks in post-conflict situations. ASCI is also concerned with the particular situations in which HIV/AIDS exacerbates state fragility and crisis and how, in these situations, HIV/AIDS policies and programmes are established and implemented. Research findings will be assessed with respect to major policy debates in areas relating to security sector reform, policing and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities, among others.

Peter Piot, Executive Director UNAIDS

Drawing from UNAIDS's 2006 Epidemic update, Peter Piot reaffirmed the critical importance and timeliness of ASCI's research agenda as well as the need for a much more robust and empirically grounded evidence base, more sophisticated research approaches, and a more holistic approach to understanding the links across AIDS, security and conflict. Noting the dearth of research in this field, Dr. Piot reaffirmed the necessity of having both an ambitious and focused agenda. In support of this, Dr. Piot pledged the practical and operational support of UNAIDS and its newly reorganized Security Team in helping identify existing relevant data and research; to identify and forge collaborations with southern research and operational partners; to mobilize support within multilateral, regional and national fora; and to stimulate public debate on key issues. Emphasizing the importance of both research and mobilization, Peter Piot called for ASCI to channel its findings in various fora and forms, including policy oriented reports, briefings, working papers and advocacy.

Session 2: Research Priorities

HIV/AIDS in Military, Peacekeeping and Uniformed Services (Roxanne Bazergan)

While militaries are a high risk group and function as vectors to populations near troops, they are also a resource and agent for change. The principal aim of this cluster is to catalogue how both military and civilian personnel – peacekeeping, national militaries and police - are responding to the challenge of HIV/AIDS. While specific attention will be given to issues relating to sexual exploitation and abuse, training, treatment access, the broad research approach is to compile information on programs and policies with respect to HIV/AIDS across a large number of armies, principally in Africa and Asia, framed by the analysis of the drivers of prevalence and the determinants of effective policy. Supplementary to this are the programs and policies of peacekeeping forces, including the African Union as well as other regional organizations, including ECOWAS, NATO, ASEAN, the EU, etc. Specific focus will be given to countries in which access is possible; where opportunities exist; and which are likely to provide insight into some of the broader challenges. Countries being such consideration include Ethiopia, India, Malawi, Rwanda, Russia, Senegal, South Africa, Southern Sudan and Thailand. Emphasis was given in the discussion to the need for a broader conceptualization of uniformed services to include policing, prison guards, customs officers, as well as civilian and military components of peace operations. Research findings will also feed into policy discussions relating to security sector reform.

HIV/AIDS, Humanitarian Crises and Post-Conflict Transitions (Manuel Carballo)

It is too early to come to a definitive conclusion about the relationship between HIV, crises and state fragility. There are some very serious reasons why we must remain cautious about some of the more optimistic findings that have emerged recently. ASCI should explore the possible re-emergence of HIV in conflict and post-conflict situations which do not follow the patterns of post-WWII transitions in Europe and Japan. The aim of ASCI's research will be to extract clear and immediate policy and program recommendations for how HIV/AIDS initiatives should be designed for humanitarian crisis and post-conflict transitions. To date, post-conflict and reconstruction

programs have not taken HIV/AIDS sufficiently into account and the impact of HIV/AIDS interventions in camp settings, and among populations that disperse from camps, has yet to be determined. A careful specification of the drivers of the epidemic in specific situations will allow these interventions to be better designed, sequenced and implemented. Focus will also be given to population mobility, the immediate and longer term impacts of sexual violence on HIV transmission and on understanding the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS and security in terms of social cohesion and gender relations.

HIV/AIDS and Fragile States (Pam Delargy)

ASCI will debunk common myths about HIV, militaries and conflict, and examine how HIV can be addressed in fragile states and countries in crisis, where governments can not or will not provide social services. 15% of the world's population lives in the 34 states categorized as "fragile," yet these states have one-third of deaths from HIV and maternal death, one-half of deaths of children under 5, and 10 times the deaths from malaria. Twenty-two of them are active in or emergent from conflict. These areas are chronically under-funded because we don't know how to provide this support. This research will focus on two areas: First, the hypothesis that HIV/AIDS contributes to state fragility needs to be tested empirically using a large-n cross-country comparison. Further, a series of specific cases -- small states (such as small Pacific island states and the southern African micro-states), very poor, under-resourced states (such as Malawi and Zambia), as well as South African local government -- warrant special detailed attention. The second main exercise of cluster three is to examine how best to design and implement HIV/AIDS policies and programs in fragile states.

Cross-Cutting Issues: (Jennifer Klot)

Research on four cross-cutting issues will also be supported. The first will assess data collection and measurement challenges with respect to gender and generational issues. Although gender issues will be addressed within each of the thematic clusters, specific research will also be carried out on the role of sexual violence as a bio-social risk factor of HIV/AIDS transmission. Research will help identify socio-cultural traits of masculinity associated with drivers of HIV prevalence, and assess national (civilian) and military policies on key gender issues. Research will also assess the growing securitization of HIV/AIDS in international policy, and the effect of this on HIV/AIDS funding, policy and programme approaches. Finally, ASCI will support a project on the political effects of visual culture and representation of HIV/AIDS and security on HIV responses and public perceptions. It will assess how these images are produced and consumed and, in turn, this project will also inform ASCI's media strategy, advocacy and outreach.

Summary of Discussion

Advisory Committee members emphasized the importance of ASCI's work for informing contemporary policy debates at international, regional and national levels and within and across thematic areas of concern. Among these, priorities include security sector reform, work on fragile states, children affected by armed conflict and HIV/AIDS, conflict prevention, and gender issues. The need was also expressed for ASCI's work to inform operational, training and normative debates, conflict prevention strategies, and to forge connections across biomedical, security, and public health agendas. To the greatest extent possible, it was recommended that ASCI help contribute to research capacity strengthening throughout its work and especially in HIV/AIDS and conflict affected countries.

Advocacy and dissemination strategies were discussed, including ways to engage policy makers from affected countries, southern NGOs and research organizations, the private sector and regional organizations. To this end, members pledged to represent ASCI's concerns and provide

opportunities for engaging with key constituencies working in political affairs at the multilateral level, in regional organizations (including NATO, the EU, ECOWAS, ASEAN, the HLWC, SCPKO) and on geographic areas of concern. Australia has a special interest in the impacts of HIV/AIDS in the Pacific region, including East Timor, Papua New Guinea and Pacific island states, and emphasized the importance of clear reference to fragile states, not least in order to engage with the OECD-DAC agenda on this issue. Specific pledges were also made, including UNDP's offer to support ASCI's work on gender issues in Africa; Canada's interest in gender issues, on children's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS in conflict settings, and on the relevance and adequacy of international norms and standards. AllAfrica.com offered its information and communications expertise to increase the visibility and distribution of ASCI findings through interviews, news features, online dialogues, and through social networking technology.

Session 3: ASCI Next Steps

ASCI Events and Calendar (Luc van de Goor)

Key activities over the next 15 months will include carrying out inventories of existing research (*September 2006 – January 2008*); commissioning new research (February 2007 – January 2008); convening expert and peer review meetings (*September 2006 – February 2008*); preparing working paper series, mobilizing relevant constituencies and presenting key research findings (*May 2007 – March 2008*); preparing a policy report and recommendations (*December 2007 – February 2008 with a launch of the report in April 2008*).

Immediate next steps are to refine and sharpen the research agenda, identifying questions that require empirical work and policy analysis; select countries best suited for study, and opportunities and existing studies there are to build on. A Reference Group is being formed to assist in this process, to identify partners and mobilization opportunities and to act as a peer review mechanism. Following a targeted call for Expressions of Interest (EOIs), a first selection of research projects will be made in January 2007; others will be considered on an ongoing basis and as needs and opportunities are identified. The Advisory Committee will review preliminary findings in June 2007, and the draft report and recommendations in January 2008. Final outputs will include a final report, a working paper series, briefings, web-launches and regular e-newsletters.

Lunchtime Address (Souleymane M'Boup)

Professor M'Boup discussed the linkages between HIV and the military in Senegal and presented a case study of his country's effective use of the military for HIV prevention. Dr. M'Boup noted the tight link between the military and the nation of Senegal, especially around issues of health, and the importance of bringing together the biomedical, security and health communities. In Senegal, the military have been principal providers of public health and clinical medicine to the general population in rural areas, and have pioneered programs on HIV and STI prevention and response. The army inherited a strong tradition of strict control of STIs, under which it was an offence under the military code for a soldier to contract an STI. The military has also never been associated with an abuse of power in the eyes of the nation, which is not the case in many other countries where efforts at prevention have been less successful. This has translated into a situation in which the Senegalese military has a very low HIV prevalence, even lower than in the general population, and has been able to serve as a model for HIV prevention and control.