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Crisis Group's Strategic Framework

2011–2014

International **Crisis Group**
WORKING TO PREVENT
CONFLICT WORLDWIDE

CONTENTS

A. Overview	3
B. Vision	3
C. Mission	4
D. Method	4
E. Principles	5
F. External environment	5
G. Future strategy	6
Appendix 1 – Strategic filter	9

A. Overview

This document sets out Crisis Group’s strategic framework for financial years 2011–2014.

Our objective during these three years is to build on our existing core strengths, and thereby increase our external influence and impact. Specifically we will focus on the following priorities:

1. Becoming “**more local**” in each core area (reports, advocacy, media). We will strengthen our existing field-based approach by: engaging more effectively with key local and regional actors; increasing our staffing in the field in places where we currently operate with minimal staff; recruiting a greater proportion of staff from the regions we work in, and professionally training and mentoring them.
2. Becoming “**more global**” in each core area. We will increase our already international scope of operations by expanding our coverage to a number of deadly conflicts we don’t currently work on; extending our advocacy reach to important new actors and institutions; and increasing the global accessibility and communication of our products to reflect the rapidly changing media environment.
3. Ensuring we have the **necessary funding and internal infrastructure** to support our programmatic growth. We will continue our efforts to become a career organisation, committed to staff development, with the necessary corporate and administrative staffing, and communications technology, to effectively fulfil our mission.

In implementing these priorities we will:

- Ensure **continuity** in our current approach. We do not intend to make any significant changes to our mission or the way we do our work.
- Pursue **incremental and disciplined growth** over the next three years. We will move forward in a way that is financially sustainable and driven by strategic prioritisation within and across programs. We will not pursue growth for growth’s sake.

B. Vision

A world in which deadly conflict is better understood, prevented and resolved by policymakers at the global, regional and local levels so that civilian populations in affected countries experience greater peace, security and development.

C. Mission

We work to prevent and resolve deadly conflict around the world by influencing the decisions of policymakers and other key conflict actors. We do this by providing expert, independent, field-based analysis of conflicts and potential conflicts and by advocating effective policy solutions.

D. Method

The way Crisis Group works is as follows:

1. Expert field research and analysis

Crisis Group's credibility is founded on its field-based research. Our analysts are based in or near many of the world's trouble spots, where there is concern about the possible outbreak of conflict, its escalation or recurrence. Their main task is to find out what is happening and why. They identify the underlying political, social and economic factors creating the conditions for conflict, as well as the more immediate causes of tension. They find the people that matter and discover what or who influences them. And they consider the actual and potential role for other countries and intergovernmental bodies like the United Nations, European Union and African Union.

2. Effective policy prescriptions

Crisis Group's task is not merely to understand conflict but to prevent, contain and resolve it. That means identifying the leverage that can be applied, whether political, legal, financial or ultimately, military. Some of these tools require action by the national government or local actors; others require the commitment of other governments or international organisations. Some will be within the current marketplace of received ideas; others will be over the horizon but nonetheless the right way forward. These policy prescriptions, along with our field-based research and analysis, are presented in succinct, timely and readable reports.

3. High-level advocacy

Identifying the problem and the appropriate response is only part of the story. All too often the missing ingredient is the "political will" to take the necessary action. Crisis Group's task is to work out how to mobilise it. That means persuading policymakers directly or through others who influence them, not least the media. That in turn means having the right arguments: moral, political, legal and financial. And it means having the ability to effectively deploy those arguments, with people of the right credibility and capacity. It also means having an effective communications strategy.

E. Principles

Crisis Group aims to be:

- Objective and timely in its reporting
- Expert in its analysis
- Bold and practical in its policy prescriptions
- Persuasive in its advocacy
- Rigorous in everything it does

F. External environment

We define conflict prevention broadly, encompassing activities along the spectrum of conflict – from early warning to peacemaking to post-war peacebuilding.

Today's conflict prevention landscape has changed significantly since Crisis Group was founded 15 years ago, and the organisation needs to ensure that it is effectively positioned to have maximum impact in this changed environment.

1. Shifts in the global power structure

The last decade has seen the rise of new centres of industrial and financial power, particularly in Asia and Latin America, and an increase in the geopolitical and socio-economic interdependence of countries. In the absence of the Cold War's organising principles and in the midst of reduced US influence, some of these regional powers are increasingly asserting their power, not only in their own spheres, but globally.

2. New challenges in peace and security

Threats such as climate change, economic crises, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, organised crime and population shifts have emerged as transnational issues for which there is a lack of adequate institutional and legal tools. Extremist religious ideologies have emerged or re-emerged and led to fundamental conflicts over norms and values – the dynamics of which have shaped policies and interactions around the globe.

3. Weaknesses of global governance mechanisms

Existing institutions are struggling in the current environment of shifting power dynamics and alliances. Instead of filling the vacuum or negotiating a new global order through a single architecture, such as the Bretton Woods institutions, states are aligning in a range of multilateral institutions and ad hoc mechanisms that at times uncomfortably co-exist and present a challenge to effective global leadership.

4. Shifts in communications and information technology

Developments in global media and information technology have been moving at a rapid pace, with serious implications for an information-based organisation such as Crisis Group. There has been a significant decline in the number of international media covering our issues from the ground, which results in additional demands on our field staff, who are receiving ever more requests from important media outlets. We have also seen the rise of new technologies, such as social media, and the proliferation of media outlets (international, regional and national), that require increased attention by advocacy organisations like ours.

5. More organisations working on conflict prevention

There has been a massive increase in the number of organisations - intergovernmental, governments and non-governmental - involved in the conflict prevention field, broadly defined. While no-one else does exactly what Crisis Group does, there is little we do today that no-one else does. The big human rights groups exceed our global reach and employ a similar blend of research and advocacy. The humanitarians now produce and promote conflict analysis. The democracy promoters press for reform. The private sector outfits sell political- and conflict-risk assessment. The big think tanks put out opinion and reports often now based on field research. Non-official mediators provide the thinking behind peace deals. Others have replicated the Crisis Group model on a regional scale. Many claim to early warn.

Crisis Group's advantage in this environment is its international scope, and its well-established reputation for objective, expert analysis and influential advocacy across the spectrum of conflict issues.

G. Future strategy

There continues to be strong demand for Crisis Group's work. We believe that we can increase and meet this demand by improving on what we do best – providing expert, independent, field-based analysis and advice to policymakers on the prevention and resolution of deadly conflict.

Accordingly we do not intend to make any significant changes to our mission or the way we do our work, though we will make a concerted effort to put greater value on responding flexibly and rapidly to unanticipated crises in which our expertise can be particularly influential in assisting policymakers to cope with fast-moving situations. We will also work to improve both the presentation and formulation of our policy recommendations to maximise their impact and utility.

To improve on what we currently do, we plan to reinforce two of our key strengths: our field-based methodology and our international scope of operations. We will do this by becoming simultaneously “more local” and “more global” in the way we work. We will also strengthen our internal infrastructure to support these changes.

Many of the proposals set out in this section require additional expenditure, and are therefore dependent on our success in raising additional income or reallocating existing resources. Such decisions will be made by the senior management team, guided by the strategic filter in appendix 1.

1. More local

In becoming more local we intend to:

- a) Strengthen our presence in the field in places where we currently operate with minimal staffing.

This means adding analysts to projects that lack the capacity to effectively cover all the countries within their existing mandate; and adding staff to offices that currently have insufficient capacity (for example adding an office manager/researcher to offices currently operating with a sole analyst).

- b) Increase the field content of our advocacy efforts.

This will be achieved by increased travel by project directors and analysts from the field to New York, Washington, Brussels and Beijing to ensure greater field content in our advocacy. In addition, staff from New York, Washington DC, Brussels and Beijing will travel regularly to regional capitals to strengthen their understanding of and advocacy on the conflicts we cover.

- c) Hold regular program retreats (every 12 or 18 months) in the field with the participation of relevant non-program staff.
- d) Establish an organisation-wide fellowship program to be built up over three years, with fellows originating from the regions in which we work.
- e) Make our reports and briefings more accessible to local audiences by increasing the proportion that are translated into local languages.
- f) Increase our capacity to target local media outlets in the countries we cover.

2. More global

In becoming more global we intend to:

- a) Expand our coverage to deadly conflicts and crises not currently covered by Crisis Group, such as North Africa, the North Caucasus and Mexico.
- b) Expand our advocacy presence to actors and institutions not effectively targeted currently, such as important regional actors (eg. the Africa Union) and increasingly important regional capitals (eg. Pretoria, Abuja, Delhi and Brasilia). This will be achieved by opening offices in key capitals, or by increased travel, or both.
- c) Raise our media profile, particularly in major non-Western regional media, and increase the distribution of our products through new media channels, such as social media networks.

3. Internal infrastructure

Crisis Group will strengthen its internal infrastructure by:

- a) Ensuring better communication between, and integration of inputs from, the different programs and offices. The senior policy adviser will be responsible for coordinating communication and integration efforts and ensuring we have the necessary capacity and processes in place.
- b) Using more advanced information technology to improve internal communications, productivity and efficiency.
- c) Adding staff to our development/finance team in order to diversify, secure and effectively manage new streams of funding.
- d) Establishing a professional development and training program, including to strengthen the writing and analytical capacities of local analysts.
- e) Strengthening our monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices to ensure we more effectively capture and learn from our external successes and failures.
- f) Continuing to strengthen our investment in staff security.

Appendix 1 – Strategic filter

A strategic filter is a tool to promote consistent, transparent, and well-supported decision-making on significant new activities and expenditures. It cannot answer every question or solve every dilemma. But it will help the senior management team identify and weigh competing priorities more effectively.

Filter for Decisions on Significant New Activities and Expenditures

- a) Does the proposed new activity or expenditure directly advance our mission?
.....
- b) Does it fit within our strategic framework and priorities?
If so, which ones? How? Where does it lie amongst organisational priorities?
.....
- c) How does the proposed new activity or expenditure rank in importance vis-a-vis the particular unit/program's existing substantive priorities and engagements?
.....
- d) Is there a realistic potential for Crisis Group to influence policymakers as a result of the new activity or expenditure?
Who are our primary targets? How can we assess impact?
.....
- e) Will we add unique value or can others reasonably supply what is needed?
Who's arguing that we should be involved? Can others provide what's needed or do it better than we can?
.....
- f) Can we do this well?
Does it use our unique advantages? Does it add too much complexity? Can we really maintain the staff time required to do this well, including preparation and follow-up? Have the information technology aspects and potentials been thoroughly considered?
.....
- g) Is it financially achievable and sustainable?
Can it be covered from existing resources? If not, how can we seek funds to cover it, and how long would that take? Can they cover indirect and direct costs?
.....
- h) What are the risks, if any?
Reputational risks? Risks to other Crisis Group commitments, programming, and units? Risks to staff or partners, including security risks?
.....
- i) Will approving the proposed new activity or expenditure have an undesirable opportunity cost?
What do we stand to lose if we go ahead with this, compared to what we stand to gain?
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