

## Political Settlements in Africa Workshop

Birmingham, Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2016

Despite a number of concerted efforts by the international community to support statebuilding and peacebuilding across Africa, many of these efforts have failed to prevent state fragility and – in many cases – the outbreak of violent conflict. While reasons for the failure to prevent violence are numerous, emerging research has shown that often interventions tend to focus on narrow technical goals, without appreciating the wider political context within which interventions take place, and the unintended consequences that these interventions themselves can have on conflict dynamics. Consequently, there is a need for those who are planning successful interventions to observe, understand and appreciate the leaders, elites and coalitions that shape political change in these contexts, and examine what interests and incentives may encourage them to work for positive peace and development outcomes.

The political settlements approach – focussing on the formal and informal negotiations, bargains, pacts and agreements made between elite actors – has gained increasing traction in developmental thinking in recent years. Indeed, many policymakers now subscribe to the idea that inclusive political settlements are required for positive developmental change. While political settlements should be viewed as continuing processes, that are subject to change and negotiation, often the focus on certain types of ‘elites’ mean that some political settlements are not as inclusive as they should be.

This workshop will explore how inclusive political settlements can be reached, how they might change, and the actors who drive this change. Drawing on case studies from across Africa, the workshop will engage with the manner in which political settlements help to legitimate structures of power and how donors can constructively shape political settlements without reducing their local legitimacy.

The workshop will bring together research that examines political settlements in African countries, with policy makers planning development interventions. In bringing together researchers and practitioners, the workshop will explore what new insights analyses using the political settlements approach can provide, and how these insights can have a practical application. Anticipated participants for this workshop therefore include both UK and international academics conducting political settlements-related research, but also policy-makers from the OECD, UN, and UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

- Session One: Political Settlements and the Politics of Inclusion
- Session Two: International Actors in Political Settlements
- Session Three: Roundtable – “Can political settlements help us better understand change in Africa?”