

Webinar: Multi-lateral and local civil society perspectives on 'peace' in the triple nexus: Singing from the same song sheet?

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Speakers: Sheri Arnott (Director of Policy, Disaster Management | World Vision International); Mat Gai: National NGO focal Point -The Secretariat | South Sudan NGO forum; Martina Zapf: Senior IPAT Manager | Interpeace; Marzia Montemurro: Research Director | HERE Geneva

Moderator: Peter Heintze, KUNO Platform

Summary

This discussion brought together speakers and participants from the development, humanitarian and peace communities to reflect on the extent to which the articulation of the contributions of humanitarian and development actors to peace. The webinar aimed to collect input and feedback on the 'P in the nexus zero draft' of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Results Group 4 on humanitarian and development cooperation, reflecting specifically on linkages between current EU and UN articulations and concepts of peace action and the perspectives and realities of local and national organisations (see zero draft summary [here](#) and the full zero draft attached).

Sheri Arnott invited discussion on the concept of a spectrum of peace actions and modes of engagement for humanitarian and development actors: little 'p' vs big 'p' linking of community and local-level actions with top-down approaches; negative peace concerning the absence of violence and positive peace drivers of transformation of society toward sustainable peace; and the mutual reinforcement of short-term and longer-term structural programming.

Mat Gai applied these central concepts in the South Sudan context, giving examples of the various intersecting streams of peace actions along the peace spectrum and the importance of linking 'Big P' national processes and political will to local reconciliation and peace actions. Mat underlined the increasingly central role of national and local organisations in armed conflict contexts and the support necessary at national and international level to local actors.

Martina Zapf further detailed possible changes at policymaker and donor level to make more significant progress toward localisation beyond the current sub-contractual approaches – and thereby better delivery of the nexus goals. For Interpeace, approaching peace from the perspective of positive approaches demystifies the 'p' in the nexus for complex contexts.

Marzia Montemurro reflected on the webinar discussions by recalling the commitments made during the World Humanitarian Summit 2016 for an urgent shift to creating an eco-system of actors who should be on an equal footing in the decision-making and implementation of responses. Marzia reinforced also the opportunities of the peace spectrum concept and how better linkages between them can bring progress.

Full summaries by intervention

- 1) **Sheri Arnott:** Sheri Arnott of World Vision International (WVI) is on the core group of the IASC Results Group putting together the IASC Zero Draft paper and is in close consultation and collaboration with the ICVA network triple nexus working group. For WVI and ICVA, the zero draft has the following objectives:

- Distill Peace concepts for humanitarian and development actors: to be able to aid reflection on how and whether to engage with peace actors and programming;
- To bring in civil society and donor perspectives, particularly those of local and national organisations;
- To introduce the concept of the 'Peace Spectrum' and invite participants to consider and identify entry points along the peace spectrum where humanitarian and development actors may or may not be able to work with peace actors.

The paper looks to explore entry points such as joined-up analysis to better determine the context and ensure politically-informed decision making and does not seek to call for integration of the peace pillar into humanitarian and development programming. Such integration has caused significant reluctance and hesitation among humanitarian actors seeking to ensure that their mandates respect principled and independent action.

The IASC group has underpinned the paper with three conceptual ideas:

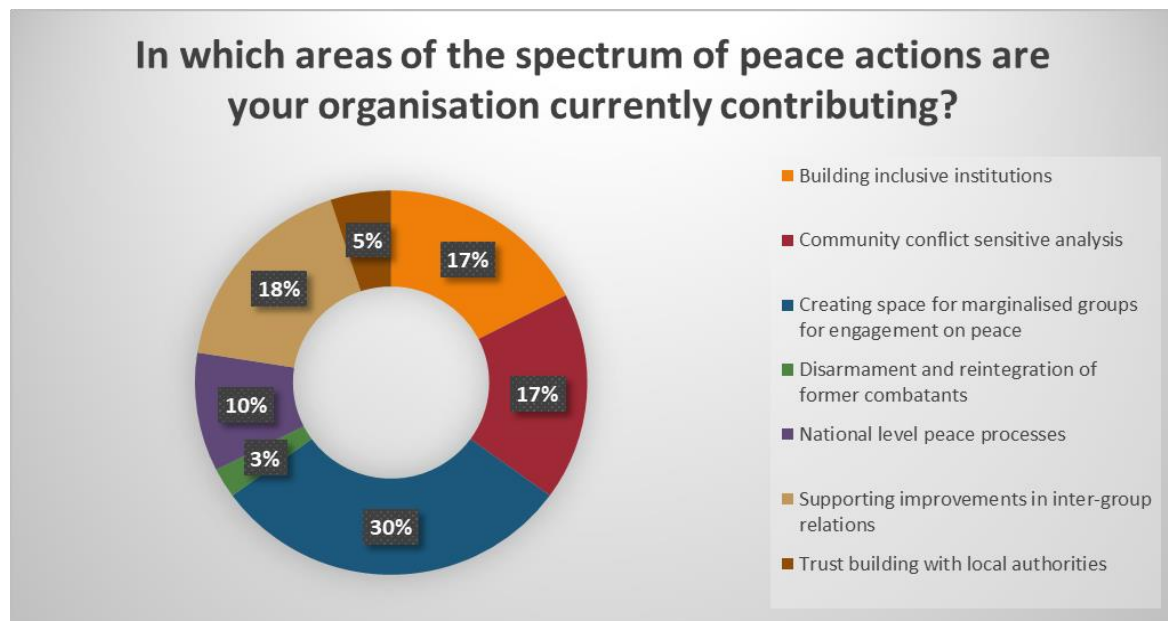
Negative and positive peace: To highlight the peace actions may involve the absence of direct violence and/or the transformation to a peaceful society.

Little P and Big P: the aim of articulate the linkages and differences between top-down and bottom-up actions. The concept is employed to help development and humanitarian actors to identify entry points along a range and to challenge the conflation of peace with security in all instances.

Mutually reinforcing national and local, short-term and long-term action: This is articulated in the paper as positive short-term local drivers and long-term transformation of structures from local to national levels. It concerns how actions at different levels may be better linked.

The paper envisions a peace spectrum which is non-linear and may be cyclical and aims to enable actors to identify opportunities for engagement. The visualisation represents where types of peace programming – such as local dispute resolution mechanisms, reconciliation and political dialogue – which move along the spectrum of humanitarian, development or multi-mandated programming.

We asked webinar participants how many were contributing in some of the actions covered by the peace spectrum:



2) Mat Gai: perspectives from South Sudan & armed conflict settings

In relation to the 'negative' and 'positive peace' framing:

The South Sudan context is one of negative peace, where guns have fallen silent. The challenge now is a political leadership vacuum in the ten states leading to inconsistent enforcement of law and order, obstacles to dispute resolutions and resolution of inter-communal tensions. For positive peace, actors need to focus on several intersecting streams:

1. Rebuilding law and order to ensure free movement and public accountability;
2. Reconstruction or construction of education, health and WASH facilities;
3. Revitalising local markets and livelihood opportunities;
4. Sound systems and procedures for revenue mobilisation from both oil and non-oil;
5. Peace building and reconciliation initiatives such as peace education and committees, including in high-density areas and informal settlements.

For this to happen, peace actions at political, INGO and national NGO levels need to be linked:

Alongside NGO efforts, there is a need for political will from duty bearers to enforce rule of law and to put in place policies that provide resources for the provision of social services and incentivise local entrepreneurs. Political will and NGO action need to be aligned on support to citizen engagement with local governments and the state to enhance public accountability.

The central role of local and national actors in armed conflict contexts

In South Sudan, as many armed conflict contexts, the number and role of local and national NGOs in humanitarian response has increased substantially since the outbreak of widespread armed conflict in 2013. Religious leaders have also played a crucial role during the conflict as champions of peace, due to the respect invested in them by communities and warring parties, as manifested in the brokering of the Revitalise Peace Agreement in 2018.

It remains a challenging space for engagement for local and national NGOs: community and family members are often still tied into the political partisan processes. To address this, the South Sudan NGO Forum promotes non-partisanship by encouraging implementation of internationally-recognised standards among members, conducting regular training and sponsoring public awareness raising on humanitarian principles via radio and television.

Complementarity for peace action in South Sudan

Peace requires local leadership and international leaders working in concert. This requires an increased share of multi-year and flexible funding to go directly to NNGOs. There are opportunities for meaningful and complementary partnership and capacity sharing beyond sub-contracting, where local actors are equitable partners able to bring their specific expertise.

3) Martina Zapf

Localisation for delivery of the nexus

Delivering on the Nexus requires greater localisation and this needs to be strengthened in the paper. Beyond joined up conflict analysis, the emphasis should be on participatory and inclusive approaches which emphasise local leadership in the shaping of programmes. Often local actors are working in interconnected ways but are treated as executing agencies only.

Demystifying the 'p' in the nexus

An important step is to address some of the sensitivities and concerns of humanitarian actors about the potentially too political and securitised nature of working on the 'p'. The paper responds to that need by outlining different ways of understanding and conceptualising peace:

1. The importance of the points on positive peace, resilience, and prevention. Strengthening peace is not only about 'fixing what is broken', but by identifying what is binding societies together and strengthening that.
2. Building peace is not only about 'what' – the distinct set of activities – but also the 'how' – the lens and way of engaging. That is, consideration for how short-term actions contribute to longer-term resilience and sustainable peace and for how projects affect relationships and inclusion between groups and with authorities.
3. To progress, we need to look at ways of working and scale up good examples, we need to look at organisational changes, integration in project design and M&E and systematised collection of evidence to see what works and what doesn't.

The Role of multilateral organizations like the EU and member state governments

Donors influence the incentive structures: they can require 'minimalist' approaches (being conflict sensitive) and even go further to encourage and incentivise more 'maximalist' ones (contributing to peace/addressing drivers of conflict) to use the terminology of the paper.

Donors and policymakers can also incentivise stronger orientation towards collective outcomes. And flexibility of funding mechanisms are currently a major hindrance which should be revised both in terms of funding mechanisms and integration of adaptive programming.

4) Marzia Montemurro: Webinar Rapporteur

Equitable partnership for actors:

One of the main themes of the webinar has been the focus on local actors. We need to return to the thinking of the World Humanitarian Summit 2016: we are part of an eco-system where all actors contribute differently but on an equal footing, rather than in a top-down hierarchy.

Secondly, each of the speakers has raised the need for nuancing of each set of actors. For the nexus to be truly operationalised, we need to recognise that within humanitarian, development and peace there are further nuances in differing interventions and approaches.

Reframing opportunities and risk:

There is often a focus on risks to principled humanitarian action. The idea of the spectrum is helpful for identifying in-roads to principled action around peace, through framing internal analysis and the programmatic perspective around the short-, medium- and long-term implications of an organisation's engagement in specific context.

Finally, the paper and webinar emphasise the need for better linkages between actors to create opportunities for peace action. For example, by doing so development and peace actors can help humanitarian actors remain neutral and independent and protecting humanitarian space. It is important to be clear about who each actor is, why they are engaging in that context and how to understand each actor's specific gaps and leverages in achieving common goals.

Question and answer discussions

- **Bringing in the perspectives of local actors and communities:**

Ensuring that interventions become less project-orientated and more focused towards continuing or longer-term engagement with an array of state and non-state stakeholders at local level is key. Peacebuilding is required before and alongside big P efforts to ensure 'Big P' efforts are complementary rather than enforced: 'little p' peace actions including engagement with local communities are required during a conflict to give them the language and tools of peace building. Those tools can involve resolving minor conflicts at individual level or negotiation within and between villages, families and communities.

- **Participants raised ideas for concrete programming and funding approaches to do so:**

The paper and sector should explore the use of more tools for measuring outcomes such as Outcome Mapping, feedback mechanisms and at inception stage the ownership of communities and local actors. Secondly, more flexible funding models and intermediating funding which include changeable local contexts and changing dynamics are necessary.

- **Participants called for clear use of terms to ensure measurable, concrete language with clear implications for development, humanitarian and peace:**

- 1) The use of the term 'social cohesion' often directly equalled to peace programming. We should be careful that in expanding our understanding of peace across a peace spectrum we don't make it difficult to judge if and where the P in the Nexus should be operationalised: that is, re-labelling existing programmes and practices.
- 2) Under the conceptualisation of negative and positive peace and the spectrum, we should address the move to refer to the peace pillar as 'security'. This has been a significant barrier to engagement with peace actors.

- **Fragile contexts**

Fragile contexts cannot be 'packaged' into categories of humanitarian and development situations or phases. Common elements of fragile contexts are that change is constant, often non-linear and at times random, or at least difficult to anticipate. In addition, many changes are irreversible, in other words, the situations are changing and there is no status quo to return to.

- **Structural challenges: where does peace belong?**

One challenge is that the cluster system doesn't enable peace building: therefore, there is no dedicated funding or governance structure neither in the Humanitarian Country Team nor Humanitarian Response Plan structures. The question, therefore, at UN, EU and national donor levels is: which agency and sector or thematic area owns and champions peace?

Similarly, where does 'little p' local and community peacebuilding action fit in donor's thinking and programming? This should be in both humanitarian and development funding: in humanitarian contexts.