Summary by ACT Alliance EU for participants of the webinar *10 June 2020*: Multi-lateral and local civil society perspectives on 'peace' in the triple nexus: Singing from the same song sheet?

Key points: P in Nexus Zero Draft*[1]

Background Note

The objective of this paper is to contribute an interagency reflection on what the Peace component of the HDPN might and can look like, as well make more visible possible engagement pathways along a 'peace spectrum' for humanitarian and development actors. It aims to contribute to efforts to improve the complementarity, coordination and collaboration between humanitarian, development and peace actors with the ultimate common goal of restoring the safety, dignity and integrity, and protecting the rights of people affected by crisis, in the short, medium and the long-term.

Conceptualising peace

The meaning of the 'Peace' component in the HDPN: the different elements sustaining peace

Recent UN policy frameworks recognise that peace actions have an important contribution to make to promote and protect human rights, can contribute to strengthening peaceful societies in a humanitarian context and as good development practice, contribute to recovery, durable solutions and resilience over the longer term.

This paper takes as its starting point that 'Peace' actions refer to deliberate contributions to peace where sustaining peace is a principle objective i.e. preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, and addressing root causes and drivers[2]. As such, the following section puts forward an understanding of 'Peace in the Nexus' as a comprehensive range of actions over the short-, intermediate-and long-term that contribute to preventing conflict and building, making, and sustaining peace.

Element 1: Peace is not only the absence of conflict and violence: the concepts of negative peace and positive peace

The absence of overt, large-scale violence is often referred to as 'negative peace'

It is most often achieved through the use or threat of military force, ceasefires or other enforcement measures. The imperative to end violence and create the space for longer-term political and societal solutions by necessity involves the engagement of security actors. This includes military and police forces, along with a wide range of other functions including, but not limited to, election observers, correctional officers, intelligence officers, and others.

'Positive peace'

While 'negative peace' reduces the immediate occurrence and impacts of violence, it also can make a vital contribution to enabling actions that support longer-term sustainable peace efforts, often referred to as 'positive peace'. For example, negative peace can create space for humanitarian access and aid delivery and support societal and political processes such as longer-term peace and mediation efforts; societal reconciliation and more inclusive and equitable social, political and economic outcomes.

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Greater complementarity and a 'nexus approach' that incorporates the full spectrum of peace actions and actors:

Those involved in contributing to both 'negative peace' and 'positive peace' outcomes can promote understanding of the roles of different actors, ensure that the full range of actions are mutually reinforcing, and thereby mitigate the risks to sustainable peace and principled humanitarian action.

This requires all actors operating on the basis of their comparative advantage and within the limits of their respective mandates - and with respect for the mandates of others. More 'joined-up' analysis can ensure that there is a common understanding of the contextual dynamics, promote decision-making that is politically informed, and take better account of the need to build trust and cohesion.

Element 2: Local peace and diplomacy/political peace actors: the concept of 'little-p' and 'big-P'

Situating where and how development and humanitarian actors can contribute to peace outcomes and collaborate with actors across the broad spectrum of peace interventions:

"Little p" actions are focused on agency and the transformation of relationships, and interventions that are responsive to local needs:

"Little p" interventions are typically carried-out at local or community level, involving actors such as local authorities, community leaders, civil society organisations, faith groups, community groups, etc. They have an influence in shaping individual or collective behavior when it comes to reducing violence, increasing trust in local authorities and improving inter-group relations. These types of interventions can create enabling conditions for quick wins and lead to larger changes that can influence broader dynamics along the peace spectrum at the country level.

"Big P" interventions are at much larger scale than "little p" interventions.

They typically are at the national level and could involve a peace agreement. These interventions are generally more visible as they might employ considerable means, including a larger presence of foreign personnel (both military and civilian) on the ground. "Big P" interventions are typically higher profile, particularly in the earlier stages.

It is important to note that whether a peace activity is "little p" or "big P" is sometimes a matter of interpretation or implementation.

These activities often overlap and should reinforce one another to be effective. "Big P" activities have declined in relative importance to "little p" because of the changing nature of violent conflict – with increased complexity and protracted timelines, many more non-state armed actors and transnational connections among them and multiple factors driving them. Today's peacekeeping operations are increasingly multidimensional. They are called upon not only to maintain peace and security, but also for activities from protection of civilians to reconciliation and unity, and promotion and protection of human rights.

At the same time, local peace initiatives can be used to support peace agreements, negotiations and political dialogues at the national level. Indeed, contributing to peace at the local level often implies working with state institutions at sub-national and national levels - in particular in relation to

policies, legislation and capacities. Fostering local peace through "little p" processes can thus potentially have a positive ripple effect on broader conflict dynamics.

Element 3: Integrating peace perspectives in humanitarian and development programming: Positive short/intermediate versus long-term peace

Understanding conflict dynamics requires robust and regular context and conflict analysis to identify the interlinkages between systemic structural causes and the more visible conflict and peace drivers.

Conflict is inherent to all societies at the interpersonal, community and national levels, and originates from disagreements and disputes occurring over incompatible interests and needs.

Addressing or managing conflict can incentivise innovation, develop social capital and demonstrate the effectiveness of cooperation over conflict. Conversely, societies fractured by exclusion, marginalisation and insecurity are unlikely to possess the social structures to effectively manage and address conflicts although they may have local capacities for peace such as traditional/indigenous or grassroots conflict resolution mechanisms.

Building on local capacities and peace mechanisms

As conflict drivers manifest at the local level it is important to identify and build on existing local capacities for peace and/or locally established peace mechanisms. Peace actors may also act as a 'bridge' between national and local level peace processes to ensure these big P and little p process are mutually reinforcing, as appropriate.

Long-term durable and transforming structural causes of conflict requires working *on conflict*. Organisations working along the HDPN may orientate their activities to respond to the impacts of conflict, while also increasing the prospects for peace by also focusing on conflict drivers:

- Gender and youth inclusion
- Strengthening local conflict prevention and management capacities
- Equitable service delivery and effective public infrastructure
- Functioning, inclusive and participatory local administration
- Increasing the opportunity cost of engaging in violence
- Improving the conditions for durable solutions for IDPs
- Accountability: for implementation of activities.

Addressing institutionalised inequalities and their manifestations at community, regional and national level for mutually reinforcing peace outcomes

Inequality may become institutionalised through a series of long-term policies at the national level prioritising access to public resources for some groups over others. The more visible effects of these policies may be at the community level, accompanied by perceptions of marginalisation.

In the short-to-intermediate term, peace responsive programming may include targeting high levels of vulnerability and inequality at the community level. These interventions can then support or reinforce efforts to change policies that have institutionalised inequality and fuelled perceptions of marginalisation.

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The transformation of systemic structural causes of conflict requires a longer-term approach for sustainable change to occur. Conflict transformation seeks to constructively and sustainably change attitudes, behaviours and interests by seeking improvements to structural causes of conflict concentrate on national and possibly regional policies and institutions and inclusive participatory processes. Interventions become less project-orientated and more focused towards continuing or longer-term engagement with an array of state and non-state stakeholders. For example, this includes joint programming on rule of law, social and sustainable development and reconciliation and unity.

Entry points and considerations for peace actions and engaging with peace actors

A. Conflict prevention and cost effectiveness

In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, proactive and systematic engagement with peace actors and preventing violent conflict significantly reduces costs, with the average net annual savings for nations and the international community estimated at almost US$70 billion in the best-case scenario and US$5 billion in the most pessimistic scenario[3].

Despite this, investments in preventing conflict remain low, estimated at 2% of total ODA spend. This may be partly due to a lack of political will to invest in and concentrate joint efforts on pre-emptive measures, a lack of incentives to do so, and challenges in demonstrating 'counter-factual' outcomes.

B. Context and conflict analysis

The need for regular participatory and inclusive local and community-based context and conflict analysis that is represents all relevant segments of the population is important for addressing the multi-layered and multidimensions of conflict. This analysis should inform all interventions across the peace spectrum - *before*, *during* and *after* crises, regardless of agency mandate. Conflict dynamics should be considered when designing, planning and implementing (and closing) programs and projects aim of have a positive impact on existing or potential conflict dynamics.

There may also be opportunities and incentives to undertake joint, or 'joined-up', context and conflict analyses where similar objectives can be identified, especially if issues around data confidentiality can be overcome.

C. Humanitarian principles - differences in emphasis

Due to humanitarian principles, humanitarian actors might be hesitant to *formally* engage with peace actors, or identify opportunities to contribute to peace, along the full peace spectrum. Yet upholding the principle of humanity, i.e. protecting and saving lives and ensuring respect for the rights and wellbeing of human beings, is a core commitment for humanitarian, development and "positive Peace" actors, even if the modalities and outcomes of the interventions differ between the pillars.

For instance, for "little p" actors in particular, 'those most in need' (i.e. the principle of impartiality) may include a wider community and agents of positive change for peace (such as youth or women) and peace actors. This paper expands this discussion by looking at what the full peace spectrum entails and what the different nexus approaches could look like, a gap that this paper aims to fill: an HDPN approach imply complementarity and coherence of actions.

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[3] Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict, 2018, pp. 3-4.

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Entry points for humanitarian actors

See full paper for the schematic representation of entry points & full description and recommendations

Longer-term time frames

In complex protracted crisis scenarios, it is crucial to note that across the HDPN, a project - or even a portfolio of programmes - may not have an impact in solving the protracted crisis over a short time frame. This is why it is essential to look at the longer-term implications of interventions.

Humanitarian actors can also contribute to 'nexus approaches' by supporting the recovery and resilience of basic services and of communities affected by conflict, violence, and disasters, including in areas beyond the control of the state.

For the development side, their contribution could mean not giving up on essential public services even where governance structures are fragile or fragmented, and implementing development policies and investments that reach the most vulnerable.

For peace actors, this entails being conscious not to undermine humanitarian access and helping to strengthen capacities for conflict prevention and management at all levels. This requires more risk-tolerant development actions and a commitment from humanitarian actors not to 'crowd out' longer-term actions that can reduce humanitarian need over time or facilitate more sustainable peace.

Concluding comment

Whilst all actors can contribute to conditions that are more conducive to resolve a conflict, and support sustaining peace, it is important to recognise that the responsibility for this ultimately remains in the hands of political actors, noting states' legal obligations and responsibilities toward their citizens.