



# Achieving durable solutions by including displacement-affected communities in peacebuilding

**Joint submission by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and HPG to the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement**

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## Key messages

- Internally displaced persons (IDPs) uprooted by conflict are peace and conflict actors, not merely victims in need of assistance. Their displacement may be highly political and is often intended by the conflict parties. Their displacement affects other communities, too. Peace processes that include displacement-affected communities, and take account of their interests and needs, are less likely to fail. Sustaining peace and finding durable solutions to displacement must therefore go hand in hand.
- Despite recent commitments to peacebuilding and UN reforms, displacement-affected communities are being left out of peacebuilding processes involving human security, peace agreements, reconciliation, transitional justice, dispute resolution, and building long-term resilience to conflict. This is partly due to contextual factors, but also to persisting institutional silos that prevent the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding 'triple nexus' from being realised.
- The High-Level Panel should make peacebuilding a priority in its deliberations. It should remind UN entities, affected Member States, donors and civil society of their responsibility to promote durable solutions for displacement that include peacebuilding, and it should recommend the development of practical guidelines for doing so.
- The Panel should also recommend strengthening current UN reforms, to facilitate the integration of IDPs and other affected communities in peacebuilding. This includes encouraging donors to adapt their funding instruments, to incentivise and hold agencies accountable for working together across the triple nexus.

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## Leaving displacement-affected communities out of peacebuilding undermines peace

### People affected by displacement can be conflict and peace actors

Displacement is often seen as an unfortunate by-product of armed conflict. But it is highly political, as mass displacement is frequently a deliberate strategy of conflict parties. Uprooted people have a relationship with the conflict that uprooted them. People may be targeted specifically due to their political positions; others can become politicised by the violence that drove their displacement or by being displaced on either side of a line of control. For example, displacement of people in the midst of Islamist extremist violence can serve a military and political purpose for the non-state armed groups or government forces who uproot them, and the experience colours displaced people's view of either or both (Crisis Group, 2019). Displacement arising from natural hazard shocks can also have conflict implications. This displacement can compound pre-existing conflict in the area, or the disaster can lead to competition for resources. As people affected by displacement are conflict actors, not just conflict victims, it

### Box 1: Four main areas of peacebuilding

Definitions of peacebuilding outline a range of interventions to reduce and prevent violence, enable societies to live together, resolve differences without violence, and make progress on development and the fulfilment of human rights. Four areas of intervention are of particular importance to situations of displacement:

1. Improve human security.
2. Mediate and implement peace agreements.
3. Promote reconciliation, justice and dispute resolution.
4. Build long-term resilience to conflict.

These are often done concurrently. They yield results in the short term, but sustaining peace depends on a long-term, often unpredictable and non-linear process.

Source: UN and World Bank (2018).

follows that they must be considered as actors in peacebuilding processes too.

### Peacebuilding requires a sustained, joined-up approach

A third of peace agreements fail within five years, and recent UN resolutions require more attention to building and sustaining peace. As outlined in Box 1, a sustained, joined-up approach that incorporates improving human security, progressing peace agreements, promoting transitional justice, reconciliation and dispute resolution, and building long-term resilience is required. The triple nexus concept – which combines humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts – is an opportunity for more comprehensive, coherent approaches. Without these it is unlikely that peace will hold (UNOCHA, 2017; UN and World Bank, 2018; OECD, 2020).

### Displaced people and other affected communities can threaten peace

With their needs and rights unmet and their interests unaddressed, people affected by displacement often remain on the margins, forgotten by, and therefore a potential risk to, peace processes. If they return to find their land or homes occupied by others, this fuels new conflicts; for those who choose not to return, a lack of support to displaced and host communities alike can also create tensions. Sometimes new tension and conflicts arise between those who fled and those who stayed behind. If support is provided only to IDPs, host communities can feel neglected, resulting in further friction. Forgotten people are easily mobilised by those with an interest in instability: as is shown by the example of young people who feel they have been failed by the state being recruited by armed groups who have attacked their communities (UNDP, 2017). Furthermore, IDPs have, in certain instances, used their relative prominence to block peacebuilding (Brookings Institution, 2007).

### Protracted displacement erodes pathways to peaceful coexistence

Another challenge is that protracted displacement frequently erodes the very qualities of resilience needed for peaceful coexistence and sustaining peace. This is even more the case for people who

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are displaced multiple times, or for those displaced in urban settings. People's resilience to conflict is a factor in access to livelihoods, health and education services, decent living conditions, justice, human security and good governance (UN and World Bank, 2018). Yet, as a recent review of multiple displacement contexts has shown, IDPs are typically underserved in all these respects, including a lack of trust in government institutions, making them less equipped to contribute to sustaining peace (Kälin and Entwisle Chapuisat, 2017).

### **Sustaining peace and durable solutions to displacement must go hand in hand**

Post-conflict peace is fragile by nature. A peace that does not take account of the interests, needs and rights of people affected by displacement is likely to fail, meaning further violence and displacement. For peacebuilding to work, it must address the issue of displacement, just as durable solutions to displacement inevitably involve sustaining the wider peace (Brookings Institution, 2010). This submission explains how this can be done, after an analysis of why this is not yet routinely the case.

### **Why displacement-affected communities are left out of peacebuilding**

#### **Peace efforts are often seen primarily as elite bargains**

Parts of peace processes are exclusive, elite affairs, particularly the negotiation of formal peace agreements (Cheng et al., 2018). When these turn to questions of power sharing, it can be hard for mediators to introduce other issues. The interests of people affected by displacement may not be seen as essential to 'winning peace', so negotiators may not include them. Even if these issues are included, the main protagonists may agree and then later ignore them (Weiss Fagen, 2009). Affected governments often lack the capacity to follow up on such commitments, even if they wish to.

#### **People affected by displacement are often deliberately excluded**

Further, governments and armed groups often have political reasons for excluding IDPs and other affected communities from peace processes. Human

rights violations against displaced and other groups are often left unaddressed, with peace processes frequently involving amnesties for conflict parties. The reasons for them being deliberately targeted during conflict may be the same as the reasons why they are excluded from peace processes. They may be from groups or communities seen as siding with the opposition. Turning exclusion into inclusion requires more than just ensuring their presence in peacebuilding processes.

### **Including people affected by displacement can be complex**

It can be hard to engage people affected by displacement in some aspects of peacebuilding. They are often widely dispersed, and travel and communication may be difficult. Many were marginalised from power even before the displacement occurred. Some face security threats. Knowing who should represent them is not always obvious, as they are not a homogenous population. They include diverse groups and individuals: displaced and non-displaced, men, women and children of different ages, with differing levels of knowledge, power, vulnerability, wealth and other assets, different religions and ethnicities, as well as other characteristics. Even when representatives are identified, this often marginalises some and favours others.

### **Despite a commitment to reform, agencies and donors remain trapped by institutional silos**

Concepts and approaches like the 'New Way of Working', 'Collective Outcomes' and the triple nexus draw together the missions and mandates of development, humanitarian and peacebuilding actors, showing how they complement one another, with a shared interest in increasing resilience (Center on International Cooperation, 2019). But the habits and incentive structures in all three sectors have proven resistant to one another and they still work largely in silos. The UN's Common Country Analysis and Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework sometimes serve more to highlight the differences between humanitarian and other agencies, rather than bringing them together (Interview with an ex-UN Resident Coordinator, April 2020). Collective Outcomes are being used, but at such a generic level that they make little difference on the

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ground (Center on International Cooperation, 2019). Incentives are misaligned with policy, and operationalising the triple nexus remains a matter of choice rather than a requirement. Some donors still insist on separating their humanitarian, development and peacebuilding funds, often working only with privileged partners rather than funding programmes that include all relevant agencies. The World Bank's IDA-19 funding is not systematically available for supporting displacement-affected communities, let alone their involvement in peacebuilding (World Bank, 2019). The UN's seminal documents on displacement and peacebuilding – the *Guiding principles on internal displacement* and *Pathways for peace* – do not emphasise the need to integrate peacebuilding and displacement efforts (UNOCHA, 1998; UN and World Bank, 2018).

### **People affected by displacement lack institutional representation**

Communities affected by displacement are frequently neglected by their own national institutions. Another obstacle is that IDPs lack representation in peace processes by a normative body with a general or exclusive mandate to do so, as UNHCR does for refugees (UNHCR, 2020). This kind of support must be continuous, as even when IDPs' interests are considered in peace agreements, they are often crowded out or deliberately left to one side in later implementation (Weiss Fagen, 2009).

### **Affected communities are depicted as aid recipients without agency**

Despite their importance to future peace and stability, displacement-affected communities are still typically seen through a short-term lens. To garner interest and resources, humanitarians depict them as passive recipients of protection, succour and services. This may help to explain why some development actors ignore them. This can also suit governments with a political reason to down-play the levels of insecurity in their country, how civilians are being targeted, or the scale of displacement. These factors lead to short-term programming, rather than efforts that recognise affected people as citizens with agency who have a role in building their own, and their country's, future.

## **Putting the triple nexus into practice in situations of internal displacement**

The Panel has been appointed at an opportune moment to forge the link between displacement and peacebuilding. The importance of peacebuilding has been boosted by Sustainable Development Goal 16, *Pathways for peace* and Security Council Resolution 2413 on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, whose operationalisation is currently under consideration by the Peacebuilding Architecture Review. The UN Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of IDPs has identified peacebuilding as a priority (OHCHR, 2018a), and it is also included in the recent *Plan of action for advancing prevention, protection and solutions for internally displaced people* (OHCHR, 2018b). The 'localisation agenda' calls for aid programmes to be locally led, and the UN is promoting its New Way of Working, requiring better collaboration between agencies, and with Member States.

These initiatives come together nicely in the triple nexus, which shows that humanitarian, development and peacebuilding are conceptually linked, are complementary on the ground, and must be operationally joined-up. But ambitious policy language does not of itself overcome institutional inertia. It is important for the Panel to add much-needed momentum to these changes, improving the prospects for communities affected by displacement and ensuring they are not left behind. To do so, it needs to show how peacebuilding and displacement are linked in each of the four main areas of peacebuilding focus: improving human security, mediating peace agreements, promoting reconciliation, justice and dispute resolution, and strengthening long-term resilience to conflict. These are considered in turn below, with some examples provided from which learning can be drawn.

### **Improving human security**

Providing security to IDPs, and other communities affected by their displacement, must be tailored to their evolving needs. To this end, humanitarian, peace and security actors need to collaborate in understanding their perceptions, both during the period of displacement and with respect to their integration, return or resettlement

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elsewhere. This requires engagement with state and non-state armed actors where feasible. It also means engaging with civil society and communities to understand how threats and their own security mechanisms are perceived differently by women, men, young people and members of different ethnic and other identity groups. Humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can facilitate access to affected communities, allowing peace and security actors to grasp their human security picture more accurately using a common human security framework. This knowledge allows agencies and affected governments to tailor their security provision to people's actual human security needs. It also informs the conflict-sensitive design of non-security interventions, so they avoid putting people at risk.

South Sudan provides a useful current example. Protection of civilians (PoC) is a live issue there, especially as IDPs begin to consider returning home to environments where their safety will be a major concern. Agencies have been undertaking protection analyses there from a humanitarian perspective (LSE Conflict Research Programme, 2019). Peacebuilding NGOs, meanwhile, have been conducting participatory surveys which allow a nuanced understanding of human security needs.<sup>1</sup> The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) can helpfully bring these both together to inform its PoC and recovery approach towards IDPs who wish to return. In another example, the Durable Solutions Initiative, which brings together UN agencies and the government in Somalia to provide a comprehensive approach to displacement, has helped protect IDPs from the threat of forced eviction, a common security concern for IDPs in urban settings there and elsewhere (UN Somalia, 2019).

### **Mediating and implementing peace agreements**

Mediators must factor affected communities' needs and aspirations, as well as solving the underlying causes of displacement, into peace negotiations. Through diplomacy, they can try to integrate this analysis into negotiation agendas from an early stage and ensure that affected communities have a chance to participate in

peace discussions, or, at the very least, are kept informed (McHugh, 2010). Mediators may need help from humanitarian agencies and civil society in reaching out to affected communities, eliciting their concerns and suggestions through dialogue and giving them an opportunity to monitor and comment on progress.

There have been promising examples of this in Guatemala, where displaced communities took part in peace talks in the 1990s (Weiss Fagen, 2009), and in the Havana peace talks, in which affected communities in Colombia have had a role more recently (Kälin and Entwisle Chapisat, 2017). IDPs' legal status as 'victims' of armed violence is recognised in Colombian law, giving them a constitutional right to remedy and a voice in the peace process. The law also acknowledges the gendered rights of female and male victims (Ferris, 2014; IDMC, 2019a). It is important for the involvement of affected communities to continue beyond negotiations into the implementation phase, as experience shows that their interests may be later ignored.

### **Reconciliation, justice and dispute resolution**

Affected governments and international agencies must try to anticipate and help resolve the many smaller disputes associated with the agreement and implementation of peace agreements. These often involve displaced and returning communities. For example, displaced, returning or resettled communities often experience conflict over access to housing, land, livelihood opportunities and services. The responsible government, along with international agencies, also need to help resolve the related and often very difficult questions of reconciliation and transitional justice. IDPs – for whom the very act of being forcibly displaced by violence suggests an interest in justice and a need for reconciliation – must be consulted over the nature and mechanisms of reconciliation and justice and their participation must be facilitated. NGOs typically play a critical role in reconciliation programmes, and they need financial and political support to play this role.

As an example, in Ethiopia, where almost 1.5 million people were displaced by conflict

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/human-security-survey-south-sudan>.

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and violence at the start of 2020, the government has supported NGOs to initiate reconciliation between returning communities and those who were responsible for their displacement from their homes, and between those who remain displaced and their host communities. These measures are designed not only to improve relations between communities, but also to resolve practical questions about access to housing and land (Gardner, 2019; IDMC, 2019b). As another example, the women's peacebuilding organisation, Dushirehamwe, played a significant role in resolving disputes over property between returning IDPs and refugees in Burundi following long-term displacement (Vernon, 2009).

### **Strengthening resilience to conflict**

In the longer term, sustaining peace depends on the strength of resilience in post-conflict society. This is the ability of individuals, households and societies to manage and minimise the effects of conflict or other shocks without compromising longer-term prospects (see DFID, 2011). Protracted, and especially repeated, displacement erodes resilience. So, strengthening resilience is a core aim of peacebuilders and humanitarians alike. Meanwhile, resilience is also valued by development agencies, as it implies the adaptability that is crucial to the development process and prevents external shocks from disrupting development progress. As described in a recent report on Somalia, humanitarian, development and peacebuilding agencies there all support programmes designed to build the resilience of displacement-affected communities within wider society, under such headings as livelihoods, health and education, decent living conditions, justice, security and good governance (Medinilla et al., 2019).

Thus, resilience is a useful shared lens through which the three parts of the triple nexus – including government as well as international and civil society actors – can design and implement programmes. In practice this either means joint programmes, or programmes run by one strand of the triple nexus that are modified to take account of the others (for example, when humanitarian programmes for displacement-affected communities are adapted to include development and peacebuilding priorities).

These need to be led by, or at least engage with, local and national governments. Livelihoods, education, water and sanitation, health and other areas of programming can thus become vehicles for building social cohesion, inter- and intra-community tolerance, conflict and problem resolution, good governance, future planning, critical thinking and gender awareness.

International agencies play an important role, but governments owe a duty of care to their people, to improving social cohesion and building relationships of trust with, and between, their citizens. Programming that includes IDPs and other affected communities can act as a bridge between them, aiding reconciliation through dialogue and shared activities. The Ethiopian and Ukrainian governments both allow IDPs access to services and welfare benefits in their place of displacement, to prevent the erosion of their resilience and reduce conflict (NRC, 2016; IDMC, 2019b). In Colombia, UNHCR has piloted a series of 'Transitional Solution' projects in urban and rural communities. These take a comprehensive approach, based on the need to reintegrate displaced people and refugees and build resilience *as part of* the peace process. They combine interventions that improve quality of life and livelihoods, strengthen organisations and institutions, and protect victims and their rights, with displaced and other local populations meaningfully involved in decision making (Gottwald, 2016).

### **Core principles for integrating peacebuilding within durable solutions to displacement**

Evidence and best practice from approaches to both displacement and peacebuilding suggest a set of principles that the Panel can promote, to guide more effective programming towards durable solutions (e.g. UNOCHA, 1998; Brookings Institution, 2010; UN and World Bank, 2018):

- Design programmes around comprehensive solutions and shared goals, and hold humanitarian, development and peacebuilding agencies accountable for making progress towards these.
- Use donor funding instruments to incentivise truly collective outcomes and ensure that resilience is promoted.

- Apply a conflict sensitivity/‘do no harm’ lens, so that all programmes aim to make an explicit contribution to peace, and mitigate the risk of their interventions undermining peace.
  - Emphasise the responsibility of national governments towards citizens that are affected by displacement.
  - Respect and acknowledge the agency of displaced and other affected people as active citizens with a role and stake in a peaceful future.
  - Acknowledge that affected communities are not a homogenous group and, when developing solutions, consider their widely varying needs and opportunities, so that particular groups are not marginalised.
  - Use communication, participation and consultation to ensure displacement-affected communities have a voice in defining the peace that affects them.
  - Include peacebuilding, development and humanitarian practitioners in each other’s teams, and involve civil society, cross-fertilising not only expertise but also different institutional cultures and interests.
  - Strategies to reduce and manage conflict should be balanced with long-term efforts to tackle the root causes of displacement, strengthen social cohesion and build institutional trust.
2. **Remind UN agencies, affected Member States, donors and civil society of their responsibility to support durable solutions for displacement that include sustaining peace, and urge them to:**
    - Provide international guidance on how to ensure that displacement-affected communities are involved more systematically in peacebuilding, in ways that respect their agency and rights as citizens and as conflict and peace actors.
    - Develop national policies and laws, supported by specialist units to enable application, that facilitate the integration of affected communities in peacebuilding, and include them in national and local plans to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and address the underlying causes of conflict.
    - Draw on common analyses to define shared, accountable goals at an operational level, requiring humanitarian, peacebuilding and development agencies to work together using conflict-sensitive approaches.
    - Tailor interventions to the gender and diversity of displaced and other affected communities.

## Recommendations

The High-Level Panel is recommended to:

1. **Make peacebuilding a priority in its own analysis and deliberations.**
  - Seek evidence of integration of displacement-affected communities in peacebuilding processes, identify institutional and contextual factors that have enabled or blocked this and, drawing on consultations with peacebuilding experts, recommend replication and improvements.
  - Urge the Review of Peacebuilding Architecture to recommend integrating communities affected by displacement in peacebuilding and to identify specific measures to achieve this.
3. **Recommend approaches that integrate displacement in key areas of peacebuilding, and build the capacity of the UN and affected governments to implement these.**
  - **Human security:** Tailor the provision of security to a more thorough and accurate understanding of displaced and other affected communities’ perspectives and needs. For example, ensure that IDPs are involved in determining how they remain protected when they return home.
  - **Peace agreements:** Link displacement-affected communities more effectively to the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements. For example, facilitate the inclusion of displaced and other affected groups, marginalised due to their ethnicity or geography, in new political arrangements in post-conflict situations.
  - **Reconciliation, justice and dispute resolution:** Support the resolution of local conflicts and the participation of displacement-affected communities in

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reconciliation and justice mechanisms. For example, facilitate the resolution of conflicts over land and housing between IDPs and others.

- **Build long-term resilience to conflict** into strategies implemented with displaced and other affected communities. For example, promoting tolerance, conflict resolution and good governance through livelihoods, education, water, sanitation and health programming with displaced and other affected communities, and through institution building.

**4. Recommend ways for ongoing UN reforms to be strengthened, to facilitate the integration of displaced and other affected communities in peacebuilding.**

- Endorse the OECD-DAC’s 2019 recommendations on implementing the triple nexus (OECD, 2020). Encourage all donors to do likewise, and to incentivise and hold agencies accountable for joined-up working across the triple nexus (and fund the costs of this).
- Encourage donors, including development banks, to fund short- and long-term solutions that cross the traditional boundaries between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding, and encourage application of instruments like IDA-19 for joined-up working in internal displacement situations.
- Encourage donors to empower and support national governments and UN Resident Coordinators to provide joint leadership to develop a common analysis that incorporates displacement into wider development plans, and promote solutions and implementation mechanisms that integrate displacement and peacebuilding.
- Encourage donors to provide more support to civil society actors promoting peacebuilding solutions that include displacement-affected communities.
- Recommend a mechanism or process to promote and monitor implementation of the Panel’s recommendations.



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