international alert

Integrating peace outcomes into development programming
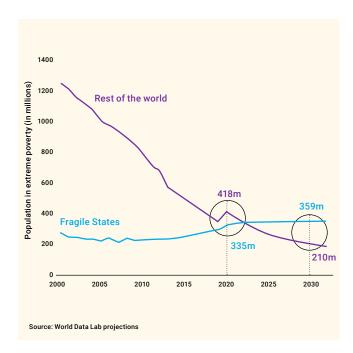
Briefing for institutional leaders

Peace
is within
our power

Introduction

This briefing was informed by findings from research conducted by International Alert under the FCDO's Global Security Rapid Analysis (GSRA) on how development programming can address underlying drivers of conflict and contribute to peace. Through case study programme reviews,[1] International Alert presents the five recommendations for what development programming (in both conflict and non-conflict affected situations) can do to more effectively achieve peace outcomes in their programming. It is targeted at decision-makers and leaders at the portfolio/strategic level in donor institutions such as FCDO, USAID, AFD, EU, and World Bank.

Why should development programming integrate peace outcomes?

Figure 1: Extreme poverty in decline except in fragile states

Source: World Data Lab projections

Conflict and fragility are the biggest blockers to development. Extreme poverty and ecological fragility are concentrated in the world's most fragile places, and conflict can quickly undo years of development progress. Fragility prevents nations and communities from responding to climate change and protecting resources such as water and land on which people rely. Conflict deters all but the hardiest investors, and stifles private sector growth. Yet growth and development alone do not prevent conflict: Ethiopia, until recently, made impressive progress on poverty reduction and

economic growth. Responses to humanitarian emergencies and disasters are often driven or exacerbated by conflict but can fuel further instability around issues such as who gets aid, and how it is delivered.

Integrated programming has been promoted for years. However, competing priorities, decreased funding for programming in complex conflicts, and a lack of evidence for how to successfully integrate peace outcomes into humanitarian and development programming, has resulted in continued failure to systematically integrate peace outcomes into development programming. Yet, building peace outcomes into all development programming is a critical tool for institutional leaders in a world where fragility holds back progress and traps communities in poverty. When this is prioritised, its impact can be significant.

What are peace outcomes and how do they occur?

Peace outcomes are enabled by conflict sensitive approaches to development programming. By definition, any initiative in a conflict-affected area will interact with that conflict, with consequent positive or negative effects. However, there is a broad range of conflict sensitive programming approaches, from a minimalist "do no harm" (DNH) to a maximalist one that integrates conflict prevention and stability objectives into development work. There is strong positive correlation between depth of conflict sensitivity and peace outcomes achieved. Donors and implementing partners need to make a conscious and explicit decision as to their conflict sensitivity ambition, including which elements of the portfolio to prioritise (e.g. for the use of FCDO Conflict Adviser time and insight). If a minimalist approach is decided upon, lessons can be learned to support the transition to a more pro-peace maximalist approach.

Five ways to integrate peace outcomes into development programming

▶ **Maximise the effectiveness and scale of adaptive management approaches**

Donors have taken steps to roll out adaptive management approaches[2] to programming.[3] [4] Doing development differently in countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence is imperative to realising peace outcomes. Adaptive management approaches allow programmes to successfully adjust in dynamic environments, and to use evidence to inform action in uncertain conditions.

Learning through practice should be prioritised. It is important not to rely only on performance matrices and logframes, but to enable a shift from reporting only against matrices to more reporting on adaptations and learning. Donors should be more proactive about how processes and accountability requirements such as logframes, results frameworks, appraisal documents, annual review templates, etc are tailored towards adaptive management structures.[5]

▶ **Create participatory environments for sharing learning and decision-making**

Across programmes' institutional arrangements, geographies, donors, or implementing partners, the evidence shows that the openness of donors and implementing partners to ongoing collaboration is crucial to the achievement of peace outcomes. Trust is built between sector / portfolio leads and implementing agencies through co-creation and co-management of programmes. Open and reflective engagement and co-creation of programming from design to implementation to closure allows peace outcomes to be integrated across the programme cycle and measured by both donors and implementing partners.

Programmes can adopt communities of practice (COPs) with representatives of the donor and implementing partner to gather evidence about linkages between development and peace outcomes. Learning needs to happen across the programme cycle and have designated space and commitment from all (i.e. donors and implementing partners). It should critically reflect on implementation and use those opportunities to review strategies, inform programme implementation and create institutional feed-back loops to share learning across portfolios.

▶ **Adopt flexible funding mechanisms that facilitate peace**

As the OECD notes in its States in Fragility 2020 report, peace comes with a price tag.[6] Peace is a long-term process that requires maximum donor flexibility on technical and financial terms. Donors have been moving towards more flexible funding approaches, including to allow for responsive programmatic decisions in complex crises. This includes making changes to grants and shifts in programming goals due to new conflict dynamics to maximise their effectiveness.[7] Flexible funding underpins programmatic agility and adaptability that is inherent to effective peace support and, wherever possible, tailoring funding modalities

to peace outcomes should be promoted. Joint or collective planning to define a process's financial needs is essential and should happen collaboratively. Conversely, short-term project-cycle spending and/or inflexible budget lines and conditions that cause implementation delays risk the delivery of peace outcomes.

▶ **Incentivise the integration of peace outcomes**

Development programming that generates peace outcomes can have primary and secondary impacts and can deliver better value for money. To link development and peace more closely, donors can incorporate peace outcomes into business cases, making it a requirement for bidding agencies in programme design, implementation, and monitoring, evaluation and learning. Implementing partners will then be supported by the donor and held accountable to these outcomes throughout the programming cycle. Without such incentives, implementing partners (and donors) may be pushed towards operating in easier, less fragile contexts where results on development goals are more easily achieved and demonstrated. They may also worsen conflict dynamics and miss creating peace outcomes completely if they operate in fragile contexts without due attention to conflict drivers. Such incentives can be institutionalised, for example in annual review templates, request for proposal templates, risk matrices, logframes, results frameworks, quarterly review templates, evaluation templates and summative/evaluative review templates. Peace outcomes should be integrated into theory of change frameworks to trigger greater awareness, delivery in support, and measurement of peace outcomes.

▶ **Commit to mechanisms for integrating peace outcomes across development sectors**

There are various mechanisms (technical and operational) that programmes use while designing, implementing and monitoring activities. Mechanisms for integrating peace outcomes that should be more widely adopted include: undertaking and updating conflict and gender and social inclusion analysis; embedding peacebuilding technical expertise at inception and for the first 12–18 months of the programme; and building on the learning and work of peacebuilding actors. They also include ensuring more established mechanisms of adaptive programming, iterative learning approaches, budget flexibility, and integration into the theory of change, indicators, and monitoring, evaluation and learning framework.

Acknowledgements

Endnotes

1   These case study programmes promoted peace outcomes by: creating political spaces for women and young people in governance processes; ensuring economic opportunities for marginalised and vulnerable groups; facilitating citizen access to service delivery; contributing to inter-and intra-communal conflict reduction; and fostering strong ties between communities in conflict (wellbeing).

2   Adaptive Management has historically also been referred to as doing development differently (DDD), thinking and working politically (TWP), problem-driven iterative adaption (PDIA), and collaboration, learning and adaption (CLA).

3   USAID has used a very broad definition that focuses on the use of evidence to inform decisions: "an intentional approach to making decisions and adjustments in response to new information and changes in context". USAID, 2020.

4   The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) has been implementing Adaptive Management and Innovation (LearnAdapt) since 2017 to support the FCDO to share and disseminate examples of adaptive approaches to improve DFID systems and guidance to enable programme teams to manage adaptive programmes more effectively; improve the quality of implementation of adaptive approaches in DFID and other development partners; and influence the actions of others in the development community.

5   Please see this comprehensive guidance note on integrating peace outcomes across the FCDO programme cycle for more information: Guidance Note: Integrating Peace Outcomes into Development Programming (International Alert, 2022)

6   Yet, ensuring the right financing for peace has often been an afterthought. To get things right, there must be the right amount of finance, using the right financial tools, for the right length of time, in a way that delivers the right incentives for sustained peace securing the right resources to respond to the root causes – of the next conflict, not the last one – and to respond at scale: https://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/conflict-fragility/.

7   COVID-19 encouraged more flexible funding approaches, including no-cost extensions and delays in travel and implementation. While these flexible approaches were appreciated by implementing partners, challenges remained: https://www.devex.com/news/despite-flexible-usaid-funding-guidance-aid-groups-face-long-term-challenges-96864.

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