



international
alert



PRACTICE NOTE

From crisis to peace

Practical approaches to integrating peace and conflict prevention within the humanitarian system

Contents

Glossary	3
Introduction	4
Background	4
Why peace integration matters	6
Navigating complex landscapes	7
How an integrated approach can help	8
Delivering visible results	9
Supporting targeted designs	9
Building resilience	10
Minimising and managing risks	10
Enhancing efficiency	10
Improving sustainable outcomes	11
Recommendations	12
Endnotes	13

Glossary

Conflict drivers	Underlying factors that give rise to conflict and fragility. This could include, socio-economic inequality or exclusion, weak governance (including state legitimacy and accountability), gender inequality, political grievances (lack of access and power in decision-making), environmental destruction and lack of access to resources.
Conflict sensitivity	An approach that considers local conflict contexts and dynamics to help anticipate risks and ensure interventions and efforts avoid unintended harm and maximise positive impacts.
Conflict transformation	A holistic approach to resolving conflicts that goes beyond an immediate crisis or escalating situation by addressing the root causes. It focuses on changing systems, relationships, attitudes and behaviours.
Do no harm	A fundamental, ethical principle that underpins humanitarian and development interventions to ensure efforts do not inadvertently worsen existing conflicts or cause other negative impacts for communities.
Gender sensitivity	Incorporating an awareness of context-specific issues affecting or engaging men, women, and sexual and gender minorities into humanitarian, development and peacebuilding programme plans. This approach seeks to minimise exclusion and promote gender equality.
Humanitarian, development and peacebuilding (HDP) nexus	An approach that promotes stronger collaboration, coordination and coherence between HDP efforts in fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS).
Peacebuilding	Supporting people in or at risk of conflict to prevent or end direct violence and creating the conditions for sustainable peaceful coexistence and peaceful social change by addressing structural violence.
Peace integration	The proactive adoption of peacebuilding practices into broader humanitarian and development interventions and efforts. This includes embedding peace measures into programme plans and designs, and monitoring processes and results frameworks from the outset.
Peace-positive approach	Actions that reduce the risk of violent conflict, strengthen social cohesion and build conditions for lasting peace and stability. This can occur at the individual, community and institutional level.
Positive peace	The attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies, and help to develop thriving communities. Societies that are rich in positive peace are less likely to experience conflict.
Positive-peace outcomes	Measures intentionally embedded within humanitarian, development and peacebuilding interventions that contribute to long-term peace and stability. In practice, this might look like a food distribution programme that is intentionally designed to ensure fair access for all groups, reducing disputes and building trust within communities.
Structural violence	Harmful political, institutional, social and economic structures that prevent people from meeting their basic needs and reaching their full potential, while causing suffering. These structures include discriminatory laws, exclusion of certain groups in decision-making or adequate service provision, and hindering access to resources for development. This form of violence differs from direct physical violence.

Introduction

Humanitarian needs are rising around the world. Conflict is one of the biggest drivers, causing unprecedented levels of displacement, food insecurity, livelihoods shock, health crises and violence.¹ It also creates barriers to delivering safe and effective aid including putting humanitarian workers at risk, breaking down vital infrastructure and restricting access, making it harder to reach those most in need.

In response to this context, this paper brings together key insights into how a conflict-sensitive approach can create synergies between humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding – without compromising humanitarian principles. Drawing on years of experience, the note highlights practical entry points for integrating conflict prevention into humanitarian programming to achieve shared, positive-peace outcomes.

This paper is aimed at policy-makers, practitioners and funders working in the humanitarian space. It builds on progress around the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding (HDP) nexus and explores ways to go beyond 'do no harm' through integrating peace-positive approaches that contribute to the conditions for sustainable peace. Humanitarian actors do not need to become peacebuilding experts. Instead, this paper shows how applying established peacebuilding tools and approaches can enhance the impact, efficiency and delivery of humanitarian assistance in conflict-affected settings.

Background

The global humanitarian sector is undergoing a profound crisis. In early 2025, 305 million people were in urgent need of humanitarian aid, while international contributions were in steep decline. The sector is facing unprecedented funding cuts, most notably the suspension of USAID, coupled with growing threats to global security. Global priorities are shifting with greater focus on defence and military investment and less on development and aid. In 2024, military spending around the world reached US\$2,388 billion, more than 12 times greater than the spending on official development assistance.² These changing dynamics are pushing the humanitarian and aid sector to breaking point, forcing the collapse of essential services amid soaring demand.

Conflict remains one of the most significant drivers of humanitarian need and the biggest single barrier to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2024, nearly 80% of civilian deaths occurred in countries already receiving humanitarian aid; in 2025, violence is expected to claim 20,000 lives every month.³ Yet, despite growing recognition of the need for integrated approaches, humanitarian programmes are still too often designed in isolation from development and peacebuilding initiatives. This creates gaps in coordination, impacting long-term results, missing opportunities to prevent or address conflict, and risking inadvertent harm to fragile conflict dynamics.

A recent report commissioned by the Grand Bargain highlighted the urgent need for a systemic reset and reconceptualisation of humanitarian assistance.⁴ This includes decentralising decision-making, empowering local actors and building trust through equitable partnerships. In addition, it is critical to explore how humanitarian assistance can help address the drivers of crises and not just the symptoms. Humanitarian organisations must consider how their efforts can contribute to longer-

term stability and address the root causes of conflict, while still delivering safe, efficient and principled assistance. In practice, this should involve:

- ensuring that humanitarian programmes are conflict sensitive and aware of how interventions may impact on conflict dynamics, and adapting programming to reduce negative impact and promote peace-positive change;
- considering how to employ specific peacebuilding approaches, such as dialogue, trust-building and inclusive decision-making, that can help humanitarian actors operate in a locally led, conflict-sensitive and more effective and efficient manner; and
- recognising the contributions that humanitarian programming can make to addressing the causes and drivers of conflict as a strategic imperative by designing policy, strategy and programming that contributes to more positive-peace outcomes.

Humanitarian actors often operate in fragile settings. Their presence affects conflict dynamics, and conflict, in turn, influences their work. Introducing locally led peacebuilding techniques, such as dialogue, trust-building and inclusive decision-making, can improve access, reduce harm and enhance the impact and sustainability of aid, while still maintaining the humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality. In addition, working to prevent violence through the delivery of aid can help reduce the number of people who require support.

Parts of the humanitarian sector are already moving in this direction, but progress remains inconsistent and constrained by systemic barriers. These include rigid interpretations of neutrality, centralised and inflexible mandates, and the dominance of large international agencies that complicate peacebuilding efforts adapted to local contexts. There are, however, promising examples to build on. The Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC) Action for Resilience (CARB) project in South Sudan integrated conflict sensitivity into all the humanitarian and development programmes, facilitating community dialogue and mediation and specifically linking livelihood support to peace outcomes.⁵ Humanity & Inclusion's approach to reducing armed violence centres around conflict transformation and community engagement. Activities such as participatory conflict analysis, dialogue spaces and training on inclusive governance are designed to address asymmetrical power dynamics and structural inequities. These activities build a sense of agency among marginalised groups and foster community-based safety and resilience. Humanity & Inclusion has built a practice of conflict sensitivity based on regular, iterative exercises with security, local staff and partners to build a common and up-to-date understanding of conflictual dynamics in the communities they serve. Additionally, networks such as Local to Global Protection champion community-led crisis response, empowering local actors to lead immediate relief and recovery efforts.⁶ These initiatives and approaches demonstrate that humanitarian assistance can be both principled and peace positive.

There is a clear opportunity for the humanitarian sector to consciously design programmes that protect humanitarian principles, while simultaneously supporting long-term peace through conflict sensitivity and addressing conflict drivers. Now is the time for humanitarian actors and donors to lead a bold shift towards a system that is not only reactive but transformative. The humanitarian sector must seize this moment to reposition itself as a proactive partner for peacebuilding, social cohesion and resilience.

Why peace integration matters

Humanitarian crises are often shaped by protracted conflicts, deep social divisions and fragile governance. Humanitarian interventions do not happen in isolation: they interact with local dynamics, power structures and tensions. By responding to immediate needs without considering the wider context, such as political, social and economic factors, humanitarian interventions can inadvertently exacerbate tensions, fuel division and negatively impact the distribution of aid. If the conflict context is not properly understood and managed, well-intentioned aid can:

- reinforce inequalities and deepen divisions;
- limit the impact, efficiency and effectiveness of aid;
- risk security threats to access, workers and communities; and
- miss opportunities to support long-term peace and stability.

Additionally, the vast majority of humanitarian assistance is provided to countries experiencing prolonged crises, which endure for years and in some cases decades.⁷ This sustained presence makes the role of humanitarian actors even more critical in shaping local dynamics, influencing community relationships, and interacting with evolving conflict contexts. Long-term humanitarian operations can become deeply embedded in the social, economic and political fabric of the affected areas. This can support recovery but also create unintended consequences, such as dependency on aid or shifts in power balances among local actors.

In northern Uganda, humanitarian interventions during the Lord's Resistance Army insurgency, which lasted from the mid-1980s to around 2008, dramatically impacted local dynamics and coping strategies. The large-scale humanitarian response, including food aid and camp management, became deeply entangled with the Ugandan government's counterinsurgency strategy. More than 1.5 million people were forcibly relocated into government-designated 'protected villages', where aid agencies provided essential services. While this support prevented mass starvation, it also undermined traditional livelihoods, eroded local autonomy and created prolonged dependency on humanitarian support.⁸

Integrating peace, social cohesion and conflict sensitivity into humanitarian action is vital. By recognising the deep interconnection between peace and humanitarian efforts, the humanitarian sector can design responses that not only address immediate challenges, but also lay the groundwork for enduring resilience. This means going beyond 'do no harm' and proactively seeking ways to strengthen local capacity for dialogue, trust and inclusive decision-making – all key ingredients for lasting peace.

Humanitarian action with an inclusive and conflict-sensitive approach can improve the effectiveness, legitimacy and sustainability of assistance programmes. It can also ensure that aid reaches the most marginalised, reflects the lived realities of diverse communities, and aligns with local visions of recovery and peace. Humanitarian actors have both a responsibility and an opportunity to ensure their work contributes to a future where communities are not just surviving crisis, but building peaceful, inclusive and resilient societies.

Navigating complex landscapes

Peace is more than the absence of violence. Countries with high levels of positive peace are more likely to maintain stability, recover from shocks and avoid violent conflict.⁹ By investing in holistic and systemic improvements to the attitudes, institutions and structures that create peaceful societies, countries emerging from conflict can transition from violence to peace.¹⁰

Indicators for positive peace include:

- a well-functioning government;
- equitable distribution of resources;
- free flow of information;
- good relations with neighbours;
- high levels of human capital;
- acceptance of the rights of others;
- low levels of corruption;
- a sound business environment;¹¹ and
- positive health and wellbeing.

There are several different entry points for engaging with conflict-affected settings, as well as how humanitarian work can contribute to and support sustainable peace. For example, a humanitarian aid organisation might want to deliver food and medical supplies in an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp within a context where there are already high levels of poverty and food scarcity. This intervention could contribute to increased tension between IDPs and host communities.

Conducting a conflict analysis prior to intervention is widely recognised as a first crucial step to identifying potential risks and ensuring that programmes are conflict sensitive. Ongoing monitoring of conflict dynamics and adapting to changes are similarly acknowledged best practices aimed at minimising harm to both impacted communities and humanitarian organisations. These principles are embedded in key humanitarian guidelines such as the Sphere Standards, underscoring their accepted importance within the sector.¹² A recent sector review revealed, however, that the application of conflict analysis and dynamic monitoring is often intermittent or inconsistent in practice. For instance, the 2022 HDP nexus progress report published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) found that despite some progress on enhancing the systematic use of conflict analysis among some actors, conflict and political economy analysis were the least used input to inform planning and programming.¹³

Despite recognition of the importance of conflict sensitivity and integrated approaches to humanitarian assistance, significant barriers persist. In the context of decreasing humanitarian aid contributions and tighter budgets, with humanitarian workers operating under acute time pressure and stress, conflict sensitivity can be seen as an unwanted, additional burden.¹⁴ Furthermore, staff may not be supported or incentivised to integrate positive-peace outcomes into their work, nor have the guidance, tools and resources to do so. Humanitarian actors may also have concerns that engaging with conflict issues could contradict humanitarian principles of neutrality, risk securitising humanitarian assistance and potentially divert funding away from meeting acute needs.¹⁵ A further challenge is the predominance of standardised project cycles that are often too rigid to adapt quickly to dynamic conflict environments.

Recognising these practical constraints and gaps is essential for advancing effective, context- and conflict-aware humanitarian action that truly minimises harm and supports long-term peace and stability. As the former president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer stated during his address to the Stockholm International Peace and Research Institute (SIPRI) Forum on Peace and Development, “humanitarian action could only escape the danger of prolonging war, if it were shaped in a way that it would contribute to the creation of peace in the long run”.¹⁶

How an integrated approach can help

Discussions around the HDP nexus have sought to initiate more honest and constructive dialogue between agencies. However, the HDP nexus remains somewhat contested in theory and challenged by complexity in practice,¹⁷ with the peacebuilding element less clearly defined and often excluded through limited funding.¹⁸ Nonetheless, such collaboration helps organisations to better understand the needs of communities, especially in rapidly changing environments, and to appreciate each other’s mandates and constraints. These conversations are an important step toward aligning goals and building stronger partnerships across HDP efforts.¹⁹

In fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS), HDP actors have increasingly adopted approaches such as ‘do no harm’, risk management and integrated crisis responses to better navigate complex operational environments. While there is broad consensus around these concepts at the policy level, implementation is inconsistent in practice. Many interventions continue to prioritise ‘do no harm’ focusing on minimising unintended negative impacts. This remains an important foundation for responsible humanitarian intervention. Conflict sensitivity builds on this by encouraging actors to engage more directly with the conflict context. It enables interventions not only to reduce potential harm, but also to identify and strengthen opportunities to support positive dynamics, such as improving social cohesion or reinforcing local resilience.

Peace-positive approaches go further by intentionally seeking to contribute to the conditions that foster sustainable peace, such as strengthening inclusive governance, supporting local conflict-resolution mechanisms, or enhancing trust between communities and institutions. These concepts can be viewed on a continuum, from harm reduction, to conflict-sensitive programming, to proactive peace integration. Within the HDP nexus, most current efforts fall within the ‘do no harm’ and conflict-sensitivity space, but there is growing interest in understanding how to build on these to achieve more deliberate peace outcomes.

Integrating conflict sensitivity across the humanitarian sector offers effective entry points to respond to current complex and interconnected crises and opens up paths for more peace-positive interventions. For example, incorporating conflict analysis into needs assessments before an intervention or ensuring that hiring practices and sourcing of goods do not reinforce existing tensions and grievances. By taking a conflict-sensitive approach, organisations can make informed decisions grounded in local realities, ensuring they can continue to reach communities, even in the most challenging conditions.²⁰ This must, however, be more than a technical or issue-by-issue exercise. At its heart, conflict-sensitive programming in FCAS should fully address individual and local contexts, considering people’s needs, aspirations and constraints as far as possible. This requires breaking

down silos between specialisms in aid delivery, and close working with – or better still leadership by – local actors who are closest to the communities being served.

When the delivery of aid is designed to consider conflict dynamics, it is more likely to support positive relationships and long-term stability, and less likely to fuel tensions. It also helps manage better the risks and complexity of working in FCAS. By collaborating with peacebuilding and development partners, and using peacebuilding approaches, humanitarian actors can gain a deeper understanding of conflict dynamics, align their efforts to address root causes, and more effectively anticipate and manage risks that could undermine their operations or exacerbate tensions. This can also help to improve access, reduce delays, and build trust with affected communities.

At the same time, it is important to address concerns within the sector around potential tensions between integrating peacebuilding approaches and upholding core humanitarian principles such as neutrality and impartiality. These principles are foundational to humanitarian action, ensuring access and protection for affected populations; however, incorporating conflict sensitivity and peace-positive approaches does not necessitate abandoning these principles. Neutrality does not mean disengagement from conflict realities or ignoring the root causes of violence and conflict. It means not taking sides in hostilities, while carefully navigating and responding to conflict dynamics to avoid harm. Peace-positive humanitarian action, grounded in careful conflict analysis and local engagement, can improve both the ethical integrity and effectiveness of aid delivery. By fostering trust with communities and navigating complex conflict dynamics proactively, humanitarian actors can uphold their commitments to neutrality and impartiality while contributing to longer-term stability and resilience.

Embedding conflict sensitivity and promoting social cohesion are not just important but essential. Although funding, time and resource constraints can be obstructive, the benefits far outweigh the challenges. Such approaches enable aid to be more adaptive, inclusive and sustainable. Communities living in these environments often face multiple pressures, including displacement, violence and limited access to services, which can make engagement difficult. Yet experience shows that early consideration of conflict, context and gendered dynamics leads to better responses. Acting in this way, agencies and their partners can deliver assistance that not only meets immediate needs but also strengthens the foundations for peace and resilience over the long term.

Delivering visible results

International Alert's experience shows how humanitarian actors can adapt their approach in conflict settings to support peace. Adopting conflict sensitivity and embedding a peace-positive approach can bring several tangible and sustainable benefits, as outlined below.

Supporting targeted designs

In many contexts, peace and conflict analyses have helped service providers to channel limited resources to those most in need. In Lebanon, Alert's work with Syrian refugees included regular conflict context analyses that supported frontline workers to assess the community's ever-evolving needs. This supported our partners to navigate tensions between Lebanese and Syrian service users

in healthcare waiting rooms where unequal access to healthcare, discrimination and medical costs became flashpoints for conflict. Healthcare staff with high workloads were struggling to manage tensions and understand the links to the wider tensions between the host and refugee communities. Our team provided support and training to healthcare staff on communication, managing conflict and building dialogue in healthcare outreach sessions. The programme helped healthcare workers to maintain equitable health services across Lebanese and Syrian populations, preventing tensions by fostering transparency and community dialogue, and building trust through inclusive communication to mitigate escalating tensions.²¹

Building resilience

Strengthening humanitarian contributions to peace can support community resilience to violence, conflict and shocks. Following Nepal's devastating earthquakes in 2015, Alert's 'Building back better or restoring inequalities?' report revealed a critical gap in how humanitarian aid was being delivered.²² Many humanitarian responses failed to consider the complex realities of gender, social inequality and local conflict dynamics. Standardised aid models, designed without a full understanding of the context, often excluded those most in need. For example, due to the deeply entrenched patriarchal system in Nepal, the majority of properties are registered under the names of male family members. Without property documents or key identity papers such as citizenship or marriage registration, some women faced major barriers in accessing government-administered humanitarian aid, which typically required proof of identity and property ownership. As a result, some women were forced into debt or exploitative labour to rebuild their homes. Programming that omits gender and conflict sensitivity reduces the impact of humanitarian aid and undermines resilience. Additionally, it leaves communities more vulnerable to future shocks, deepens social divisions, and increases dependence. By applying a conflict-sensitive, gender-responsive approach from the start, humanitarian actors can help turn crises into opportunities for empowerment, equity and peacebuilding.

Minimising and managing risks

Applying a conflict and gender-sensitivity lens to due diligence, risk assessment and risk management processes allows organisations to better identify, anticipate and manage risks in complex operational contexts. Alert's work with the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) on conflict sensitivity integration in West Africa included conflict and gender sensitivity training, research and conflict analysis. This helped to ensure the organisation's humanitarian mine action and armed violence reduction operations responded to local conflict contexts and mitigated risks to their interventions and partners. The project also supported a train-the-trainer programme for MAG's staff and partners in the Gulf of Guinea to enhance impact and boost the scale of the work.

Enhancing efficiency

Integrating a conflict-sensitive approach can boost the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian programmes. When humanitarian actors ignore local conflict dynamics, their operations can face blockages, including protests or violence against aid workers and target communities, which can

cause costly delays or the suspension of an intervention. Conflict sensitivity integration can help humanitarian actors to anticipate risks such as identifying groups that may feel excluded and putting mitigation measures in place, so aid keeps flowing to the most vulnerable without interruption.

Through Alert's work in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), HDP actors are designing more integrated, collaborative programming that reflects complex local realities. Alert's Conflict Sensitivity Hub in DRC delivers conflict sensitivity training and tailored and practical real-time support to donors, HDP actors, and local civil society organisations, working with over 300 such organisations (277 local and 34 international). The aim of the hub is to improve aid delivery and effectiveness in the DRC by increasing the conflict and gender sensitivity of HDP programming. The hub's programme is tailored for specific sectors – for example, humanitarian aid and water sanitation and hygiene – to help establish a common understanding of conflict sensitivity and the risks in specific contexts. It uses a holistic approach that considers context, policy, programmes, operations, leadership and culture. Since its inception, the Conflict Sensitivity Hub in DRC has provided support to more than 1,600 staff from national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and more than 400 from international NGOs. It also aims to establish a conflict sensitivity network owned and led by a range of national and international HDP actors who are highly engaged on the issues. This collective approach is already delivering tangible benefits by reducing duplication, fostering synergy and ensuring interventions are better aligned with local needs. This helps actors not only to navigate risks, but also to unlock new opportunities for impact. Most importantly, it is leading to more efficient, sustainable and conflict-sensitive programming and improving outcomes for crisis-affected communities. By working through a conflict-sensitive lens, humanitarian actors are not only responding to immediate needs, but also laying the groundwork for long-term peace and resilience.²³

Improving sustainable outcomes

Applying a peace-positive approach can deepen and extend the reach of the impact of humanitarian interventions. It can provide a more complete understanding of different factors that contribute to a crisis and the dynamics behind barriers that limit access and aid effectiveness. In complex crises, taking a holistic approach can enhance the impact of humanitarian interventions designed to meet immediate needs while still contributing to broader social cohesion.

In northeast Nigeria, Alert partnered with humanitarian actors to strengthen social cohesion alongside the delivery of humanitarian relief in response to the Boko-Haram insurgency, which had internally displaced more than two million people. The conflict created competition over scarce resources and distrust between displaced people and host communities. We supported humanitarian actors to design aid delivery to avoid reinforcing divides and set up community-based reconciliation dialogues, while training staff in conflict-sensitive programming.

These reconciliation dialogues and training programmes helped foster local ownership and strengthened existing community structures for managing disputes, which is a significant contributor to sustainability. By adopting a peace-positive approach for this intervention, Alert and partners helped to build trust between the aid workers and communities. This meant that the communities were, in turn, more willing to cooperate and share information about their needs and grievances, which helped to make the delivery of aid more targeted and effective. Training staff and community members in conflict-sensitive skills meant that they were also better prepared to manage disputes in the future. Additionally, designing an intervention to be conflict sensitive ensured

that programmes did not exacerbate existing divisions, but rather helped to build relationships and contribute to greater social cohesion.

Recommendations

Effective and sustainable aid delivery outcomes require different approaches in FCAS, across all programming. The world is facing the highest level of conflict since the end of the Second World War.²⁴ In this context, all organisations and staff who are active in FCAS need to consider how their presence and actions can positively impact conflict dynamics through collaboration and the adoption of particular approaches. This can contribute to more effective programme designs, outcomes and, ultimately, support and stability for conflict-affected communities.

The following recommendations set out critical enabling factors to achieve this. They are based on the work of International Alert and our partners, as well as lessons from the wider peacebuilding and humanitarian sector. This is not an exhaustive list, but it is intended to prompt deeper discussion and exploration. The recommendations are targeted at humanitarian actors working in FCAS.

1. Employ a deep understanding of the local conflict context.

- Recognise the links between humanitarian action, peace and social cohesion.
- Conduct regular and robust conflict analyses to gain insight into local conflict drivers.
- Establish local, national and internal partnerships and connect with locally led peacebuilding initiatives and efforts on peace and conflict issues to enhance impact.

2. Proactively integrate peace and inclusion into programme designs.

- Go beyond 'do no harm' to actively support peace and resilience, building such outcomes into programme monitoring and results frameworks from the start.
- Embed peace and gender sensitivity in results frameworks, key performance indicators, standard operating procedures, risk assessments, actor mapping matrixes and evaluations.
- Use inclusive, transparent processes to build local trust and address diverse needs.

3. Apply adaptive and participatory approaches.

- Include adaptive management to respond to rapidly changing dynamics.
- Create participatory spaces for learning, exchange and advocacy.
- Elevate the perspectives and input of local peacebuilders and conflict-affected communities.

4. Commit to capacity and collaboration for sustainable impact.

- Invest in collaborative learning platforms such as conflict sensitivity hubs.
- Incentivise peace-positive proposals through funding frameworks.
- Train staff on conflict sensitivity and work with peacebuilding partners to reduce conflict risks.

Learn more about our approach to peace integration: <https://bit.ly/peace-integration>

Endnotes

- 1 Conflict and climate drive record global hunger in 2024 UN Says, Reuters, 16 May 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/conflict-climate-drive-record-global-hunger-2024-un-says-2025-05-16/>
- 2 Countries with the highest military spending worldwide in 2024, Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/262742/countries-with-the-highest-military-spending/>, accessed 1 August 2025
- 3 2025 Global Humanitarian Overview: Commissioner Lahbib calls for the respect of IHL and for boosting efforts to address the humanitarian funding gap, European Commission, 4 December 2024, https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/news/2025-global-humanitarian-overview-commissioner-lahbib-calls-respect-ihl-and-boosting-efforts-address-2024-12-04_en
- 4 S. Abdullahi, D. Lilly and L. Poole, Reckoning and renewal: A future-ready humanitarian system, 2025, <https://alnap.org/help-library/resources/reckoning-renewal-future-ready-humanit-system/>
- 5 S. Ward and V. Ferrante, Humanitarian-Development-Peace Coherence practice note series: South Sudan, Washington, DC: The Implementer-Led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning (IDEAL) activity, 2024, https://fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/IDEAL_PracticeNote_SSudan_Web.pdf
- 6 Research, Local to Global Protection, <https://www.local2global.info/research/>, accessed 1 August 2025
- 7 N. Rieger et al, Falling short? Humanitarian funding and reform, Development Initiatives, 2024, p.19 <https://alnap.org/help-library/resources/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2024/>
- 8 C. Dolan, Social torture: The case of northern Uganda, 1986-2006, Berhahn Books, 2011, Chs. 5 & 6; A. Branch, Displacing human rights: War and intervention in northern Uganda, Oxford University Press, 2011; S. Finnström, Living with bad surroundings: War, history, and everyday moments in northern Uganda, Duke University Press, 2008, Ch. 4
- 9 Institute for Economics and Peace, Positive peace report 2024, <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/research/positive-peace/>
- 10 What does terrorism tell us about peace?, International Alert, November 2017, <https://www.international-alert.org/blogs/what-does-terrorism-tell-us-about-peace/>, accessed 1 August 2025
- 11 These are the “Eight Pillars of Positive Peace” advanced by the Institute of Economics and Peace; see Institute of Economics and Peace, 2024, Op. Cit, pp.8-9
- 12 Sphere, The Sphere Handbook, 2018, <https://www.spherestandards.org/handbook-2018/>
- 13 R. Brubaker, W. Bennett and H. Ajelet Eriksen, Towards common ground: Strategies for effective collaboration between the humanitarian and peacebuilding, International Review of the Red Cross, 2024, 106 (927), pp.1088-1107, <https://international-review.icrc.org/sites/default/files/reviews-pdf/2025-03/towards-common-ground-strategies-for-effective-collaboration-927.pdf>; OECD, The humanitarian-development-peace nexus interim progress review, 2022, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/the-humanitarian-development-peace-nexus-interim-progress-review_2f620ca5-en/full-report.html
- 14 Based on feedback from informal discussions with humanitarian partners during training
- 15 H. Youssef, Ten challenges facing humanitarians, ALNAP, 31 January 2023, <https://alnap.org/humanitarian-resources/publications-and-multimedia/ten-challenges-facing-humanitarians/>
- 16 The contribution of humanitarian action to peace, ICRC President Peter Maurer address, SIPRI Forum on Peace and Development, Stockholm, 14 May 2019, International Committee of the Red Cross, 13 May 2019, <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/where-humanitarian-action-meets-peace-building>
- 17 ALNAP, The humanitarian-development-peace nexus: Current status and discourse, 21 June 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/humanitarian-development-peace-nexus-current-status-and-discourse>
- 18 J.M. Norman and D. Mikhael, Rethinking the triple-nexus: Integrating peacebuilding and resilience initiatives in conflict contexts, Journal of Peacebuilding & Development, 18(3), 2023, p.248, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/15423166231200210>; The forgotten pillar of the triple nexus – why is peace so under-resourced?, Saferworld, 6 June 2023, <https://www.saferworld-global.org/resources/news-and-analysis/post/1007-the-forgotten-pillar-of-the-triple-nexus-a-why-is-peace-so-under-resourced-#:~:text=Recent%20analysis%20shows%20that%20funding,also%20the%20least%20well%20funded>
- 19 See, for example, European Commission, HDP nexus: Challenges and opportunities for its implementation, Final report, 2022, https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-05/eu-hdp-nexus-study-final-report-nov-2022_en.pdf
- 20 Save the Children, Conflict sensitivity is key to more effective and timely humanitarian aid, December 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/conflict-sensitivity-key-more-effective-and-timely-humanitarian-aid>
- 21 Conflict in the waiting room: Syrian refugees and Lebanon's struggling healthcare sector, International Alert, November 2014, <https://www.international-alert.org/stories/conflict-in-the-waiting-room-syrian-refugees-and-lebanons-struggling-healthcare-sector/>
- 22 International Alert, Building back better or restoring inequalities?, 2016, <https://www.international-alert.org/publications/building-back-better-or-restoring-inequalities/> https://www.international-alert.org/app/uploads/2021/08/Gender_ConflictSensitivityNepalEarthquakes_EN_2016.pdf
- 23 Conflict sensitivity rewired: A call to innovate, collaborate and transform, 19-25 May 2025, 2025 CSC Hub Conference, <https://oxfam.app.box.com/s/6n16g791pu2gfwxk4oycqo2n3xr6vsn>
- 24 Institute for Economics and Peace, Global peace index 2024, 2024, <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/global-peace-index/>

Acknowledgements

This paper was written by Elizabeth Laruni and Ruth Simpson. The authors would like to thank, Angus Urquhart, Nic Haley, Faith Dawes and Samantha McGowan for their review and input. In addition, the authors would like to extend their appreciation to Jonathan Marley, Sara Batmanglich, Heloise Heyer and David Adam for the review and valuable feedback of an earlier iteration of this paper.

International Alert is also grateful for the support from our key funding partners: the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. The opinions expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of our donors.

International Alert works with people directly affected by conflict to build lasting peace. We focus on solving the root causes of conflict with people from across divides. From the grassroots to policy level, we bring people together to build sustainable peace.

www.international-alert.org

International Alert
info@international-alert.org
www.international-alert.org

Registered charity no. 327553



Published October 2025

© International Alert 2025. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without full attribution.

Layout: Marc Rechdane

Cover: © Victoria Ford