

Inclusivity and the Implementation of Sustaining Peace

This document emerges from an informal discussion organized by the New York Peacebuilding Group¹ between member states, UN experts, and civil society actors in June 2016 at Quaker House in New York.

Introduction

The adoption of the joint General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA), with a focus on sustaining peace, opens the space for a new approach to the UN's peace and security work. The language on inclusivity and national ownership, civil society, women's groups and youth organizations offers an entry point for a more systematic and strategic collaboration between the UN and local actors. The recommendations in the 2015 reports of the Advisory Group of Experts (AGE) on the review of the PBA, as well as the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) and the Global Study on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325, are also important points of reference, as well as Agenda 2030, which is the overarching framework under which a more inclusive and people-centered UN approach to sustaining peace can take shape.

Sustaining peace: a roadmap for inclusivity

The AGE recommended in its 2015 report that the UN adopt a new concept for peacebuilding, one that addresses more than just post-conflict situations and links all three pillars of the UN (development, peace and security, and human rights). The AGE proposed sustaining peace as a new term to encapsulate this approach.

In their negotiations of the PBA resolutions, member states worked hard to concretely define sustaining peace. As defined in the resolutions, sustaining peace presents a normative shift for the UN by clearly linking peacebuilding with the prevention of violent conflict. It also encourages various actors in the UN system to address potential conflicts or crises early on before they escalate and become a threat to international peace and security. The sustaining peace approach is in essence about creating conditions for lasting peace. Sustaining peace is "a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account²," thus giving the UN a roadmap for moving forward in a more inclusive manner.

Why should the UN seek to be more inclusive? As the HIPPO, AGE and Global Study reports all found, local actors are best placed to help the UN identify the root causes of conflicts and develop responses that best serve the needs of all segments of the population. Conflict analysis that does not take a participatory approach leads to interventions that do not necessarily address the real needs of local people. Actors such as women and youth are key to resolving conflict and helping to build sustainable peace, and yet they are often not included or consulted in programming directed towards them. And rarely are they key partners in implementation.

¹ The New York Peacebuilding Group is a gathering of organizations (the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, the International Peace Institute, Interpeace, Nonviolent Peaceforce, PAX, Peace Direct, the Quaker United Nations Office, and World Vision) engaged on various peace related issues at the UN and in country. Since September 2014 they have actively worked together to strengthen the role of civil society at the UN on peacebuilding as well as create space for dialogue and collaboration with the UN and member states.

² A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282 (2016)

The important role played by civil society in conflict prevention is already enshrined in UN documents such as the 2001 Secretary-General's report on prevention of armed conflict³. The adoption of Agenda 2030⁴, with its focus on peaceful, just and inclusive societies, opens up the space for the inclusion of local actors even further. Despite these and other recognitions of the value added of inclusion at the UN, challenges remain at the political level.

Inclusive national ownership was another key term from the AGE report, but unlike sustaining peace, it was not specifically defined in the PBA resolutions. Despite the fact that people-centered approaches to peace and security have been recognized as vital across the UN's membership, particularly given the findings and recommendations of the HIPPO, AGE and Global Study reports, sensitivities remain around the role played by civil society in some political contexts. However, the need to broaden the understanding of national ownership as something that must be more inclusive of all segments of society is captured in the sustaining peace definition, as well as highlighted throughout the PBA resolutions. As has been seen in many peace processes, for long-term peace to be achieved, multiple viewpoints must be taken into account, even those that might be difficult or contrary, otherwise the risk for a relapse into conflict remains.

What might inclusion by the UN in the context of sustaining peace practically look like? The PBA resolutions state that sustaining peace can be met through strategic and operational partnerships with key stakeholders including civil society organizations, women's groups, and youth organizations. The specific reference to women's groups and youth organizations is an entry point for engagement by civil society, particularly given the existing Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security and youth, peace and security. However, the notion of inclusivity should encourage us to consult civil society actors beyond women and youth groups, and to make sure to include multiple viewpoints even within those groups. Ensuring linkages between the work of various UN agencies, funds and programs on women and youth and across the UN's three pillars is key.

More concretely, the work of Civil Affairs in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) on community engagement strategies, which is a recommendation in the HIPPO report, is a practical approach that should be supported across the UN. The deployment of more UN Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs), a joint program of the UN Development Program (UNDP) and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), is another element that could provide more peacebuilding expertise to UN agencies in country and act as a bridge between the UN and local communities. Despite these types of initiatives, national civil society still reports that access to in-country coordination mechanisms like cluster meetings and UN offices in general remains difficult, particularly for local grassroots and community-based actors. Even when local actors are able to participate in cluster meetings, it has been reported that other UN staff do not necessarily always attend, so in the end these coordination efforts might not be that strategically significant.

When looking at promoting inclusion, it is important to keep in mind the challenges around access and representation. The UN has a tendency to work with NGOs and civil society groups based in capitals versus those based in rural areas. There are also groups which might not be formal organizations, such as women's cooperatives or faith-based initiatives, that may be overlooked for inclusion because of their informal status. For broad categories such as women, youth or civil society, none of these groups are

³ A/55/985-S/2001/574

⁴ A/RES/70/1

homogenous. Regular mapping and analysis of local actors should be carried out in order to ensure broad representation in the UN's partnerships. To facilitate this, the existing local networks of both international and national NGOs engaged in long-term peacebuilding can help. National platforms for dialogue are also useful entry points. A focus on promoting the development of national infrastructures for peace is another practical approach⁵.

With regard to the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) specifically, more should be done to improve access for civil society actors to its meetings and to strengthen the flow of information to and from civil society both at Headquarters in New York, as well as in connection to visits in country. The recent call for proposals on women and youth projects by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), which includes direct funding to NGOs, is a good step forward in this regard and should be supported. Non-UN resources and analysis on the PBC, including the betterpeace.org website, are also welcome. The Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) has specific staff designated as focal points on youth and on gender, which has greatly enhanced inclusion of these groups in its work to support the PBC and PBF. A similar focal point on civil society would help to further enhance inclusion and increase the PBC's access to local analysis and information on country situations. Moreover, officially appointing a civil society focal point (which could be an existing staff member) would contribute to broadening the ongoing partnerships with peacebuilding actors outside the UN.

Conclusion

There is a clear need to communicate to a wider audience the strategic importance and value of inclusion and the sustaining peace agenda. This needs to be addressed in both the policy realm and in practice. Donors are often just as siloed in their approach to peace and security as the UN entities are. Thus, clear communication to capitals is needed on the strategic shift that the implementation of a sustaining peace approach will require of governments. NGOs, member states, and UN agencies and departments all need to take up sustaining peace as something that is central to their work. Furthermore, sustaining peace and inclusion must be at the top of the agenda of the next Secretary-General. Ongoing discussions, brainstorming and planning in both formal and informal spaces at the UN, including with a wide variety of actors, on the implications and implementation of sustaining peace is imperative.

Recommendations on implementing inclusion and sustaining peace:

- **Improve access for civil society to the PBC in New York and in country**
 - The PBC should develop a monthly calendar of activities that is shared publically and circulate meeting materials to civil society actors well in advance of meetings
 - The PBC should revisit its working methods in regards to civil society inclusion, and more regularly include civil society representatives to brief and engage with the PBC
 - PBSO should officially appoint a civil society focal point to liaise with organizations in New York and in country and ensure that civil society perspectives are meaningfully included in the work of the PBA

⁵ <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/conflict-prevention/infrastructures-for-peace--approaches-and-lessons-learned.html>

- **Expand and institutionalize the Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs) Programme**
 - PDAs should be deployed to all UN country teams with relevant need on a regular long-term basis and be embedded in on-going governance and development work, rather than the current practice of one-year deployments only in highly fragile or crisis-prone environments
 - Dedicated funding, preferably from within the UN's regular budget, should adequately support this initiative as a core component of the UN's work on sustaining peace

- **Enhance in-country access for civil society to UN missions and strategic discussions**
 - All UN missions should develop community engagement strategies that include a focus on ensuring that civil society, including women's groups and youth groups, inside and outside of capitals, are well informed and consulted on the UN's activities in country
 - In non-mission settings, PDAs should play the important role of facilitating access and information flow with local actors
 - Missions and country teams should consider ways to create safe spaces for civil society to engage with the UN in countries where space for civil society is shrinking or limited