

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Building peace in times of crisis

A messages document for policymakers and practitioners

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**A**CKNOWLEDGING THAT THE WORLD is moving towards increasingly complex crisis situations, which require ever more complex responses, the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) has focused on the role of sustainable and people-centered strategies for peace within crisis response - a priority that has been uplifted in QUNO's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. As a first step, staff initiated a research and learning process, consisting of desk research and the implementation of a listening exercise, to better apprehend how peace is understood

within the UN system as it seeks to develop policy and practice in crisis situations. Conversations were carried out with actors from UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes, Member States and civil society organizations. The objective was to explore actions taken or needed within crisis response to contribute to building environments conducive to peace, and considerations of how peace approaches can support efforts to respond to multidimensional crises.



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# Key messages for building peace in crisis

## “Language Matters”

both in terms of how peacebuilding approaches are understood and communicated to other colleagues and in connection to fostering greater understanding and synergies across sectors. Addressing the question of how to find commonalities between each sector’s unique terminology, frameworks and processes in order to foster

relationship building and cooperation was continually raised as an important element of this work. Taking a strategic and impact driven approach to understanding the terminology, frameworks and approaches across sectors allows for consideration of synergies and stronger program development and impact.

## Recent normative advancements have created more political space and legitimacy for stakeholders to make connections between peacebuilding and crisis.

Many have found that “peace is on the table now,” allowing for agencies in the crisis response space to more deliberately draw connections between their work and peacebuilding in a way that wasn’t possible before. Discussions of peace and collaboration across

sectors have been able to be more prominently featured in white papers, corporate strategies and have also fostered the development of new programmatic approaches. These new opportunities allow for the promotion of a more solutions-based approach.

## A universal understanding of peacebuilding remains elusive.

While this increased space has been identified as an opportunity to connect peace approaches to crisis response, there is still a persistent challenge in the lack of a universal understanding of peacebuilding at both the normative and practical levels. The spectrum of understanding of what does or does not contribute to and constitute efforts for building sustainable peace shows the need to support greater coherence in

understanding the approaches, tools and grounding principles for peacebuilding. Strategy tools can be used to make the case for the added value of peacebuilding in crisis spaces, especially as understandings of the frameworks and approaches used across sectors are enriched through a stronger focus on collaboration spanning the analysis to implementation phases.

## There are always opportunities to contribute to peace—and for peacebuilding approaches to contribute to crisis response objectives.

Actors across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding spheres noted that identifying such opportunities requires ensuring that analysis and program development actively consider existing endogenous capacities for peace, how each intervention will interact with existing conflict, peace and social systems and networks of relationships, opportunities to positively impact the situation to support an environment more conducive for peace, and if and how efforts can be strengthened to become more sustainable in the face of risk and vulnerability. In addition to considering

possible contributions to peace, building peace in crisis also includes considering how peace-oriented approaches can enrich response efforts by supporting the longer-term goals of actors in this space. While the opportunity to contribute to peace was strongly emphasized, it was also noted that there is the corresponding need to consider what “success” looks like for more synergistic programming. This includes the development of indicators and monitoring approaches to support meaningful impact for peace in crisis situations.

## Efforts to draw systemic connections between crisis response and peace remain largely fragmented and, if unaddressed, this will perpetuate ad hoc approaches.

Despite progress and positive examples of efforts taken to support partnership and collaboration, fragmented or siloed approaches remain at all levels with regards to multi-sectoral efforts in crisis contexts, including within U.N. entities and Member State missions and governments. At both the policy and country level, this fragmentation can result in the

development of competing or unaligned policy tools and ad hoc collaboration largely dependent on context or personality. It also shows the need for increased understanding across sectors about the *how* and *why* of programming approaches to identify commonalities and opportunities for partnerships.

## Funding the “P” in the HDP Nexus must be prioritized

along with efforts to foster enriched cross-sector collaboration throughout project development and implementation. This requires continued consideration of not only how current funding systems influence

program development but also how to incentivize investment in work across the nexus in transformative and sustainable ways that can also be used to scale up existing projects for greater peace impacts.

## Crisis situations require flexibility and peacebuilding must not be lost in the complexity.

Actors implementing programming in complex crisis situations are faced with a range of challenging factors, not least the potential for the context to swiftly deteriorate and the time pressure of response programming. As a result, all actors must operate flexibly and have the room within their analytical and programmatic processes to adjust and respond to the changing nature of a situation. It is key that considerations of the contributions to peace are not forgotten

in such circumstances, but rather continue to inform analysis and program implementation when flexibly responding to the changing needs of communities or a rapidly shifting environment. This flexibility also can allow for a more context-specific understanding of and response to sub-national and local crisis dynamics which can foster the development of targeted approaches attending to different types of crises that may emerge within the same country or region.

## Despite identifying the centrality of inclusion, local engagement remains ad hoc.

While efforts have been taken within the U.N. system to support inclusive approaches, consistent meaningful inclusion remains ad hoc at best. Factors that contribute to this challenge include time, funding and capacity. Building the relationships, establishing participatory approaches and carrying out the stakeholder analysis needed to implement inclusive strategies and programs takes time which can prove challenging in complex environments where there

is urgent need and contexts change rapidly. Thus, methodologies for inclusion need to become integrated into program efforts so that, even in the midst of rapid change and complexity, they are seen as inherent to program implementation and goals. This will allow for more holistic analysis and impactful programming, greater understanding of endogenous capacities for peace, and more programmatic sustainability.

# What changes are necessary?

In order to support peace contributions and impact during crisis situations, six recurring shifts emerged, illustrating efforts that are already underway or that are needed going forward to further efforts to draw linkages between peace approaches and crisis response strategies:

## **Organizational, corporate or leadership level shift**

A shift at the leadership level illustrates to all within that entity and to the public that peace is a priority and that directly contributing to peace gains is an expectation of the policies and programming of that office. Such a shift can foster partnerships with other stakeholders and support internal organizational development for programming and technical responses.

## **Mindset shift**

To start to unpack and make strides towards the larger goal of contributing to building peace, colleagues working on peace, development or humanitarian issues need to strengthen their understanding of how their existing work connects to and can further support work in other spaces beyond their sector. This includes reflecting on how peace approaches can positively contribute to achieving humanitarian outcomes as well as how crisis response can contribute to sustainable peace in the longer term.

## **Program development and management shift**

To have a peace impact in crisis situations, actors need to reflect on how their actions already contribute to peace and what more must change in terms of how they develop, manage and implement programs to include a peacebuilding lens or approach.

## **Capacity and skills development shift**

It is critical to recognize that actors working in crisis or humanitarian fields, particularly those leading technical programming, may need direct support and training to develop or strengthen their capacities for contributing to peace. Additionally, it is important to allocate time and space for a reflective practice that allows for adapting to contextual changes and provides opportunities for ongoing learning to improve programming for maximal impact.

## **Partnerships shift**

Working in complex situations requires partnerships, including the development of new relationships with not previously engaged stakeholders, to maximize collective efforts and increase the impact for the communities in focus.

## **Funding shift**

Greater investment is essential to work across the nexus in transformative and sustainable ways, to scale up existing projects for greater peace impacts, and to contribute towards addressing regional program needs. This means increasing funding in these areas as well as looking at how to adjust and change funding structures and modalities to allow for easier access.



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