

# CONFLICT SENSITIVITY & PEACEBUILDING IN UNICEF



## UNICEF'S COMMITMENT

UNICEF is committed to delivering and managing its programmes, in ways that contribute to sustainable peace and resilience.

UNICEF's Strategic Plan (2014-2017) states that "UNICEF is committed to strengthening its involvement in systematic reduction of vulnerability to disaster and conflicts through risk-informed country programmes that help build resilience." It also states that "systemic attention to risk analysis and mitigation is particularly important to effectively addressing the specific needs of children living in fragile and conflict-affected contexts."

The UNICEF Technical Note on Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding (2012) developed through a consultative process and endorsed by senior management, identifies three principal directions for the organization when it comes to conflict affected countries:

**1** All UNICEF strategies and programmes in these countries should be informed by a robust conflict analysis;

**2** All UNICEF strategies and programmes in these countries should be conflict sensitive; and

**3** UNICEF should take a more explicit and systematic approach to peacebuilding, where appropriate

The role of social services in peacebuilding has also been emphasized in a number of UN documents, including the UN Secretary General's 2009 report on "Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict," which highlighted the provision of basic services, such as water and sanitation, health and primary education among the five recurring priorities for peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict that require support. Similar priorities have been articulated by the World Bank, the OECD-DAC, the G7+ New Deal framework, and a host of Member States and their aid and development agencies.

In 2015, the UN undertook three major reviews related to peace and conflict all of which made recommendations on how the UN and its partners need to work together to respond to the root causes and dynamics of violent conflict across different sectors to achieve sustainable peace. These reviews have also emphasized the importance of provision of education, health and water and sanitation as critical components of peacebuilding.

At the global level, UNICEF engages in interagency policy advocacy and coordination in key forums related to fragility and peacebuilding (e.g. the UN Interagency Senior Peacebuilding Group, Peacebuilding Contact Group, the UN Working Group on Transitions and its Task Teams on Conflict Prevention and the New Deal, and the PCNA framework with the World Bank and EU) to ensure that the rights of children and women and the role of basic social services and related institutions are integrated and prioritized.

UNICEF is also the second largest recipient of support from the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). UNICEF has worked with PBF in Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Colombia, Central African Republic, Liberia, Nepal, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen, Sri Lanka, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Kyrgyzstan and other countries.

UNICEF recently implemented a large scale peacebuilding and education programme in 14 countries that was funded by the Government of Netherlands. The programme has helped UNICEF enhance its approach to working in conflict affected contexts and better integrate conflict analysis, conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding into its sectoral work.

## RATIONALE FOR CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT

More than 250 million children (one in ten children globally) live in areas affected by armed conflict and violence. By 2018, it is estimated that half the world's poor and the majority of out-of-school children will live in fragile and conflict-affected contexts<sup>1</sup> In such contexts, children are 3 times less likely to attend school, 2 times more likely to lack clean water and 2 times more likely to die before the age of five.<sup>2</sup> Crises in Syria, Mali, Central African Republic, Somalia, Nigeria, South Sudan, State of Palestine, Iraq, Yemen and several other countries have resulted in complex and diverse challenges that are unprecedented in scale and scope. Even countries that are said to be recovering from years of protracted conflict and violence and making progress towards sustainable development remain fragile and at risk for relapsing into violent conflict.

Peacebuilding involves a multidimensional range of measures that seek to reduce the risk of lapse or relapse into violent conflict by addressing the dynamics, underlying causes and consequences of conflict, and by strengthening national capacities at all levels to identify and address these factors to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and resilient development.

For peacebuilding to be effective, a focus on supporting higher level political and state-building processes, such as political reconciliation, elections, reform of security sector and rule of law institutions is necessary but not sufficient. It is crucial for peacebuilding strategies to also address the social and economic aspects of conflict. This includes a focus on the community level social cohesion, with particular attention to divisions within and among different groups, and through reducing incentives for violence, strengthening positive perceptions of the state, and providing mechanisms for building trust and cooperation across communities. UNICEF's equity approach is critical in this respect.

<sup>1</sup> OECD (2014). Fragile states: domestic revenue mobilization in fragile states. Paris, OECD, p. 95. Retrieved on 17 February 2015 at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/governance-peace/conflictandfragility/docs/FSR-2014.pdf>  
<sup>2</sup> World Development Report 2011 – Conflict, Security and development, The World Bank, Washington DC, p.5

## UNICEF'S CONTRIBUTION TO PEACEBUILDING

UNICEF as one of the largest operational UN agencies and present before, during and after violent conflict, continues to be a major contributor to peacebuilding efforts. UNICEF seeks to enable the voices of women and children to be heard and their rights and needs taken into account in peace processes and wider peacebuilding efforts.

UNICEF's comparative advantage in peacebuilding is concentrated on the socioeconomic side of peacebuilding focusing on the equitable delivery and effective management of basic social services like education, health, clean water and sanitation as well as child protection. Recent experiences highlight that UNICEF's programmes can contribute to peacebuilding in at least three ways:

# 1

### **AT THE INSTITUTIONAL OR POLICY LEVEL** **STRENGTHENING VERTICAL SOCIAL COHESION THROUGH IMPROVED SECTOR GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Social services, when managed and delivered in conflict-sensitive, equitable and accountable ways, can reduce incentives for a return to violence in post-conflict situations, strengthen sector governance and accountability of related institutions, and ultimately re-establish or enhance state-society relations.

**EXAMPLES:** In the DRC, Cote d'Ivoire, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Yemen, peacebuilding and conflict-sensitivity were successfully integrated into education sector plans and policies. In several cases this has included revision to school curricula (e.g. Burundi, S. Sudan, Sierra Leone).

# 2

### **AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL** **STRENGTHENING HORIZONTAL SOCIAL COHESION THROUGH IMPROVED RELATIONS BETWEEN AND AMONG GROUPS**

Social services, when planned and delivered in communities in ways that create mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation, can build capacities and strengthen positive relationships among and across different social groups. This contributes to strengthening relations between and among groups and enhancing community resilience to violent conflict. It also enables them to respond to the causes and effects of violent conflict through peaceful means.

**EXAMPLES:** In Darfur, the WASH program focused on including communities, civil society and traditional authorities in water management. The increased collaboration helped address poor water management and some of the root causes of conflict. In Ethiopia, UNICEF has helped tribal authorities and structures to play a key role in mediating conflicts over water in the pastoral regions.

# 3

### **AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL** **STRENGTHENING INDIVIDUAL COPING MECHANISMS AND CAPACITIES TO DEAL WITH CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF CONFLICT**

Social services can also help alleviate the negative impact of violent conflict on individuals and build their capacity to not only cope with conflict but also address its underlying causes. Through this support individuals are able to contribute to peacebuilding processes and play a role in building more resilient and peaceful societies.

**EXAMPLES:** In Nepal, UNICEF helped develop a 'platform for children and youth's voices' in the transition to peace so as to prevent the further manipulation of youth to violence. This programme was crucial for creating a space for children in Nepal to be heard, opening dialogue on reintegrating child soldiers, and promoting inter-generational engagement. In Uganda, a capacity building project for teachers was initiated, to promote gender-equitable classroom environments. The capacity building involved shifting towards positive notions of masculinity and femininity, which can support the mitigation of tensions and violence and deconstruct negative norms around gender stereotypes. These shifts target some of the identified root causes of destructive conflict in society.

## RESULTS TO DATE

UNICEF has made significant progress over the last few years in strengthening its approach and capacity to deliver more sustainable results for children in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. Some of the key results to date include:

<p>→ Influenced global policy agendas and frameworks, notably the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and the UN peace and security reviews to recognize the rights and vulnerability of children and the importance of basic social services;</p>	<p>→ Through the PBEA, enhanced individual and institutional capacities to resolve conflicts peacefully, incorporated conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding into education policies and developed evidence and learning about the role of social services in peacebuilding.</p>
<p>→ Supported implementation of peacebuilding programming in the field, specifically: 22 countries implemented peacebuilding programmes, including conflict analysis, stronger conflict sensitivity and specific peacebuilding activities; and</p>	<p>→ Developed new guidance, tools on conflict analysis, conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding programming in 22 country offices and trained more than 550 staff.</p>

## CONCLUSION

Helping children live in peace, free of violence and fear, is central to UNICEF's work. In conflict, protracted crisis and post-crisis situations, UNICEF is on the ground and at the policy table protecting the rights of children and young people, and supporting countries to build more resilient and stable societies. UNICEF is committed to strengthening its current and future humanitarian and development programming to ensure greater impact and overall strategic coherence and to continue to strengthen its capacity to address fragility and build resilience and sustainable peace.