



Introduction

Global context and issues

One in four people on the planet live in areas affected by fragility, conflict or large scale organized criminal violence. It is widely recognized and accepted that violent conflicts impede developmental progress and the achievement of the MDG'sⁱ. The poverty gap is widening between countries affected by violence and those not affected, with few of the former on track to achieve any of the MDGs by 2015. Analysis also suggests that conflicts have a negative effect on the economy, with countries on average experiencing a reduction in the annual growth rate of about two percent in terms of GDPⁱⁱ.

Complex intra-state conflicts - local and regional in nature - have emerged as a new challenge, replacing for the most part violent conflicts between states. Conflicts are often not one-off events as many countries and subnational areas face ongoing and repeated cycles of violenceⁱⁱⁱ. Conflict in one country also has a negative influence on neighboring countries. The causes of instability and relapse vary by country context and may include external stresses, such as, impact of cross-border conflict and international criminal networks, as well as internal factors, political exclusion, real or perceived discrimination against social groups, severe corruption, high levels of youth unemployment, and unequal distribution of natural resource wealth. In Asia, subnational conflict is the most wide spread form of conflict running into multiple generations and lasting over 45 years on an average^{iv}. The characteristics of conflicts in Africa include cross-border movement of weapons and conflicted natural resources. In Latin America, conflict is largely driven by growing inequality resulting in criminal violence.

Impact on youth and women

The direct impact of violence falls largely on women and children who are disproportionately affected. Women are especially vulnerable to sexual violence as a weapon of war. Youth face distinct risks in armed and post-conflict situations such as displacement, becoming targets for sexual violence, being forced to generate livelihood for themselves and others, thus missing-out on education opportunities. Youth are also more likely to be recruited into a fighting force with studies suggesting that most of the 300,000 child soldiers in the world have been forcibly recruited.

Yet, young people are also the greatest resource to achieve reconciliation, which serves to transform conflict into sustainable peace. It is imperative to invest in youth development in post-conflict settings and ensure their energies are channeled towards sustainable development. The process of reconciliation has to be long term for society to move from a divided past to a shared future and address structural factors that have driven conflict in the past.

Reconciliation has to be led by the state combined with people centric processes to break the cycle of conflict. It has to be backward looking - i.e. addressing the human rights violations of the past - and forward orientated - i.e. strengthening state society relationships by building social cohesion.

Approach

Political settlement: The UN has identified inclusivity and institution building that promotes domestic accountability as critical for peace and stability. Inclusive political settlement achieved either through a peace agreement or through inclusive behavior by the state is essential for reconciliation. Promoting a stable development pathway to break the cycle of violence requires strengthening formal and informal institutions, including core



governance functions and equitable service delivery to protect citizens, provide access to justice, invest in job creation and support social cohesion. Institution building is not a quick fix, though evidence suggests that the pace of transforming institutions has increased.

Peacebuilding and state building: There is growing international recognition of the linkages between these two areas. The g7+ has agreed on five peacebuilding and state building goals – inclusive politics, security, justice, economic foundations and revenues and services^v. A successful peacebuilding process must create space for young people, women, community and religious leaders, civil society and the private sector to participate. In promoting peace and reconciliation, it is essential to **teach young people conflict resolution skills and the responsibilities of a citizen**. Youth also play a key role in **advancing reconciliation by fostering dialogue and mutual understanding that cuts across ethno-religious lines**. Education for intercultural citizenship related to rights and social justice, knowledge about other religions and belief systems is critical as a means of understanding the diversity of human realities to foster peace. Similarly, investing in **innovative methods such as sports as a means to foster peace and development** can be a way to expose youth to diversity and engage them in promoting understanding.

Promoting Peace and Reconciliation through Curriculum Reform^{vi}

In Liberia the Ministry for Education in partnership with UNESCO is teaching youth conflict resolution skills to promote peaceful coexistence by implementing Peace, Human Rights and Citizenship Education in the Liberian School system. This has been incorporated as a single teaching subject in schools in Nimba, Lofa and Grand Gedeh counties.

Schools Twinning Programme Promotes Social Cohesion in Sri Lanka^{vii}

The School Twinning Programme linked 67 schools from 14 different districts with each other to increase interaction among students from different communities to enhance cohesive structures and collective action. It provided students with a better understanding of each other’s culture and environment while imparting life skills training to foster peace.

Kenya Youth Shoot for Peace^{viii}

In 2008, more than 2,000 Kenyan youth from across Nairobi kicked off a multi-ethnic football tournament to score goals in a United Nations backed bid to use the power of Sports to promote reconciliation after the inter-communal violence. The International Olympic Committee supported the competition along with the Kenyan private sector.

Recommendations

- Peacebuilding calls for:
- Coordinated, comprehensive and integrated country specific initiatives which are nationally owned with partnership between governments, civil society, private sector and international agencies.
 - Establishment of mechanisms for participatory dialogue with young people and women to ensure their voices and priorities are reflected in reconciliation and development plans.
 - Strengthening formal institutions and reinforcing their interface with youth groups and women’s collectives.
 - Investment in innovative programmes to engage youth in building social cohesion and promoting intercultural understanding to foster peace and



development.

ⁱ *Promoting Development through the Reduction and Prevention of Armed Conflict*, UN Secretary-General, 2009 and The World Development Report (2011)

ⁱⁱ *Promoting Development through the Reduction and Prevention of Armed Conflict*, UN Secretary-General, 2009

ⁱⁱⁱ The World Development Report (2011) indicates that 90 percent of violent onsets occur in countries with a previous conflict.

^{iv} *The Contested Corners of Asia: Subnational Conflict and International Development Assistance*, The Asia Foundation, 2012

^v These goals have been endorsed by a broad range of development partners, including the United Nations Development Group and the World Bank, through the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and State building and the Fourth High level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan, Republic of Korea.

^{vi} <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/themes/pcpd/unesco-in-post-crisis-situations/peace-and-reconciliation/>

^{vii} <http://www.lk.undp.org/>

^{viii} <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=33024%23.UzvfqKiSyE5>