

# Building peace in times of crisis

A messages document for  
policymakers and practitioners



**QUNO**

Quaker United Nations Office

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Since 1947, the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) has worked with diplomats, U.N. officials and civil society to support a U.N. that prioritizes peace and prevents war. QUNO seeks a U.N. that addresses key drivers of peace and violence, including the structures and systems that produce exclusion and injustice; that facilitates and supports change through peaceful means; and whose policies and practices reflect a diversity of voices, such that people around the world can safely and peacefully achieve their potential. QUNO's U.N. programming centers on building and strengthening constituencies of support for people-centered and sustainable strategies for peace. We seek to meet this goal through initiatives focused in two core priority areas, namely: the interface between crisis and peacebuilding; and policy and practice to build and sustain peace. Our policy-level efforts are grounded in knowledge and insights from partners working at the community and country levels.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Acknowledging that the world is moving towards increasingly complex crisis situations, which require ever more complex responses, the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) has increasingly 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 U.N. system as it seeks to develop policy and practice in crisis situations. Through the listening exercise, conversations were carried out with actors from U.N. Agencies, Funds and Programmes, Member States and civil society organizations over the course of eight months in 2021. The objective was to provide a synthesis of the state of play at both normative and operational levels as it relates to the interface between peace and crisis. More specifically, this included exploring 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. This publication captures insights and observations that arose during the process and may serve as a tool to assist colleagues as they grapple with policy and program development when seeking to contribute to peace in complex 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.

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## What changes are necessary?

In order to support peace contributions and impact during crisis situations, six recurring shifts emerged throughout QUNO's listening exercise as illustrating efforts that are already underway or that are needed going forward in order to further 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.

QUNO would like to express its deepest appreciation for those who shared their time with us through this iterative learning process and for their continued feedback during the development of these messages. The hope for this document is that it can be a tool and resource for those engaging within the interface between peace and crisis and that along with QUNO, partners will continue to use the learning captured in this document as a living resource that can be further built upon.

# I. Background

Along with the growing impact of migration and displacement and the increasing effects of climate change and deepening inequality, the COVID-19 pandemic has made it clear that the world is moving towards more, and increasingly complex crisis situations. 274 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection in 2022, an increase from 235 million people the prior year. In addition, extreme poverty continues to rise, reversing a two-decade long decline.<sup>1</sup> The number of countries experiencing protracted crises has more than doubled in the past 15 years and over half of those requiring assistance to deal with the pandemic are also enduring another long-term humanitarian crisis.<sup>2</sup> Within this context, humanitarian response is lasting longer in conflict settings. While these facts point to the centrality of investing in prevention, it is also evident that the nature of crisis is making those involved in the development and implementation of policy and program responses to crisis situations increasingly relevant for and key in building peace. As a result, using peacebuilding approaches and tools can contribute to fostering the connection between short-term crisis response and long-term peace and development needs, and can be of great service to actors as they operate in such environments. Additionally, the global landscape is showcasing the need for better coordination and alignment, where possible, across sectors, including but not limited to the peacebuilding, humanitarian and development fields.

Acknowledging the changing landscape of international crisis and conflict, QUNO in New York recognized the promotion of sustainable and people-centered strategies for peace within crisis response as a priority that has been uplifted in QUNO's strategic plan. To support the initial development of QUNO's work under this plan, staff carried out a research and learning process. This consisted of desk-based research drawn from literature within and outside of the U.N. on the nexus and related issues, and the implementation of a listening exercise to better apprehend how the "peace" component is understood within the U.N. system as it seeks to develop policy and practice in situations of crisis.<sup>3</sup> This work

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1 OCHA 2022 Global Humanitarian Overview

2 Development Initiatives' 2020 Global Humanitarian Assistance Report.

3 The listening exercise process included informal and off the record conversations with U.N. and Member State colleagues working across the development, humanitarian and peacebuilding fields at the Headquarters, regional and country levels. The active listening and learning carried out through those off the record discussions, in addition to the other work carried out during the Process, have directly contributed to the messages in this document. Additionally, the positive feedback received by those who participated in the listening exercise validated the need to engage on the topics in focus, and further affirmed QUNO's strategic direction for the coming years. QUNO staff would like to thank everyone who so openly spoke with us to share their experience and expertise. QUNO remains open to feedback and learning on this document so that we can continue to strengthen our efforts as we work to support our colleagues in the U.N. environment.



sought to provide a synthesis of the state of play broadly both at the normative and operational levels as it relates to the interface between peace and crisis and efforts taken or needed to contribute to building environments conducive to peace. This publication captures insights and observations that arose during the process and may serve as a tool to assist colleagues as they grapple with policy and program development when seeking to contribute to peace in complex crises.

## II. Language and understanding regarding the “Peace Piece”

“Language matters.” This critical point was raised by colleagues when reflecting upon how humanitarian, development and peacebuilding stakeholders working in complex environments understand and communicate with one another. Each of these fields have unique terminology, processes and frameworks that are foundational for, or guide, policy and programming. Therefore, effort needs to be taken to unpack terminology so stakeholders can understand their colleagues’ approaches and working methods, and how other frameworks relate to the mandate of a particular institution.

Some practitioners feel they need to become “trilingual” as a result. While this may seem like an impediment at first, taking a strategic and impact driven approach to understanding the terminology, frameworks and approaches across sectors allows for better relationship building and stronger program development and impact.

### Emergent peacebuilding themes

QUNO’s listening exercise identified a range of factors that programs and interventions impacting peace needs in crisis situations coalesce around promoting, namely: social cohesion, equity, trust and relationship building, inclusivity, resilience, continuity of services, dignity, good governance, and conflict sensitivity. Through deliberate consideration and inclusion of these elements within programming and as core goals, actors working in complex crisis situations can create explicit links to peace in their work and reflect on how their programming can contribute to peace gains more broadly.

Some colleagues have noted that the normative advancements of recent years<sup>4</sup> have provided the political space to increasingly and meaningfully engage with colleagues on the connections between peacebuilding, humanitarian action and development programming. In addition to the

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<sup>4</sup> This includes, but is not limited to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the convening of the World Humanitarian Summit, the prioritization by the U.N. Secretary-General of prevention, and the adoption of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Resolutions, among other normative advancements.

approaches noted above, the use of “nexus” language can be impactful because it can provide multi-mandate agencies and those working together across sectors an avenue to talk about how they relate to one another and to consider their unique contributions to building peace. Additionally, it supports focusing on synergies and added value over competition, promoting a more solutions-based approach. This focus on synergies does not mean changing mandates, but does require more than increasing communication between sectors. It also entails enriched systems-thinking and corresponding programmatic shifts that allow for collaboration that goes beyond consultation and fosters participatory and collective analysis, design, implementation and evaluation.

Challenges remain, however, most notably being that there is no universal understanding at the normative or practical levels of how to define or articulate the “peace piece” of the nexus, or peacebuilding more broadly. This can lead to confusion or different interpretations of what peacebuilding entails and may result in skepticism of the “P” in the nexus. For example, some colleagues understand peacebuilding through the lens of the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace resolutions, which is seen by some as a top-down and securitized process that stems partly from the U.N. Security Council and that is implemented at the national level in direct partnership with the government. Some colleagues are understandably skeptical of engaging in such perceived securitized or political processes and worry about the impact on humanitarian principles. Still others differentiate between peacemaking and peacebuilding or use the “Big P vs. little p” framing to distinguish between activities related to political solutions or securitized responses taking place largely at the national level versus activities at the community level that seek to foster capacities for peace and transform relationships. These approaches draw a line between high-level political processes and programmatic efforts that are implemented at sub-national or community levels. This spectrum of understanding of what does or does not contribute to and constitute efforts for building sustainable peace shows the need for the peacebuilding community to better articulate the “peace piece” of the nexus. This is not to create a rigid definition, but to seek to support greater coherence in understanding the approaches, tools and grounding principles for peacebuilding.

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**“Language  
matters.”**

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## Unpacking the “Peace Piece”

Simply put, at the heart of peacebuilding are actions that contribute to moving societies from a state of less to more peace. This can be a generational and often discontinuous process. Peacebuilding approaches are therefore long-term or contribute towards addressing long-term needs, and consider how to transform relationships, which is connected to addressing root causes of conflict and vulnerability. Peacebuilding attends to both national and local capacities and ownership; it is grounded in trust-building and the inclusive development of strategies.

Peace approaches are rooted in systems thinking, which provides the space for considering the consequences and impacts of actions that extend beyond the specific context in which the action is being carried out. Operational outcomes from systems-based approaches are more integrated and holistic as a result. These approaches are **grounded in an analysis and recognition of existing endogenous capacities for peace, and necessitate regular conflict analyses**. Viewing **peace as a system that is complex and dynamic** allows actors to engage with continuities and shifts in capacities for peace, as well as communities’ ability to **process grievance and difference** and **address marginalization and vulnerability**. In line with holistic ways of thinking and viewing peace as a complex process, **peace approaches are reflective and flexible** and should be **open to adaptation and transformation** given feedback from the communities that are being engaged. At their best, peace approaches and tools seek to build peace via transformative processes, and in this way allow for both responding to vulnerability or crisis and forward-looking dialogue.

These key components of peacebuilding and peace approaches underscore the fact that diversely mandated organizations can contribute to peace through many different entry points and interventions. This also demonstrates that peacebuilding and peace approaches are just as much about the means as they are about the end goals. Therefore, how programs are designed and implemented will determine their peace impacts. This recognition of the importance of process complements the systems approach integral to peacebuilding and demonstrates that measures taken by actors across sectors will have an impact on the situation they are seeking to address. In thinking about how the means become the ends, peace approaches provide space for actors to see themselves as part of peace and conflict systems through their relationship to and embeddedness within these dynamics. Integrating considerations of this relationality into program design and how impact is measured, supports efforts to go beyond doing no harm and move towards actively contributing to sustainable peace.<sup>5</sup>

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5 The messages in this box were drawn from the “What’s Next in Peacebuilding – Personal Reflection” document produced by QUNO in 2018 (accessible at [www.quno.org](http://www.quno.org)). This document followed the annual gathering of international peacebuilding organizations, hosted by QUNO, where participants gathered to reflect on the question – what’s at the heart of peacebuilding? Following the gathering, QUNO Director, Andrew Tomlinson, released the personal reflection document which expresses views on peacebuilding and peace approaches.

# III. Learning, challenges and opportunities

## *Impact of normative advancements on political space for peacebuilding*

Recent normative advancements have provided political space and legitimacy for stakeholders to progress on their work as it relates to peacebuilding and crisis. As one colleague noted, “peace is on the table now,” while another shared that “focusing on prevention is the new normal.” Many have found that the U.N. system’s evolution in understanding and approaching peace and prevention has created or increased the space for those working in the humanitarian and technical fields to deliberately work on peacebuilding. This is not to imply that these actors and their institutions were not previously contributing to or working on building peace, but rather that the newly created political space has given greater opportunity to meaningfully carry out work across U.N. offices, agencies, funds and programmes in a manner that was not seen as possible before. Additionally, U.N. bodies have increasingly been able to more explicitly and publicly make connections between their work and peace, including through the release of white papers, inclusion of peace in corporate strategies, and the development of new programmatic approaches.

## *Use of strategy tools to “make the case” for peacebuilding*

To make advancements on the relationship between peace and crisis, some have used internal programmatic reviews and the development of program and strategy tools to “make the case” for peacebuilding amongst colleagues. Using internal or institutional documents may open new ways of thinking and working amongst fellow staff who have not previously engaged on peacebuilding issues because the information is from their institution or office. This may allow for greater initial “buy in” on the subject, which can then help develop understanding and support a mindset shift with regards to the relationship between their work and building peace. Making the case for peacebuilding also requires demonstrating how peacebuilding tools and approaches can enhance crisis response in order to support action in this space that leads to more sustainable change and reinforces overall efforts to end need. This includes articulating the added value of peace-oriented crisis response in a way that is accessible and contextualized for all actors. Additionally, this work also involves identifying ways in which short-term crisis response can contribute to peace through various entry points that may at first appear detached from considerations of peace.

*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. This flexibility, however, is not always integrated from the start in conflict analysis or program design processes and is an area where more focused attention and effort is needed. 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.

*Crisis or conflict situations are not monoliths, and there are always peacebuilding opportunities*

While national strategies allow for coordinated analysis, identification of shared priorities and articulation of anticipated outcomes, every country is dynamic, requiring an understanding of and response to sub-national and local crisis dynamics. Efforts taken in one state or municipality may vary greatly from another, requiring the use of different tools or programs tailored to the context and to support the needs of communities. That said, many colleagues working across the peacebuilding, development and humanitarian fields were clear to note that there are always opportunities to contribute to peace, even within the most complex environments, when one takes a more localized or sub-national approach. 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.

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“Peace is on the table now.”

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*More effort is needed to demonstrate the added value of peace approaches in crisis situations*

As with many aspects of peacebuilding, there is the need for bringing greater visibility to ongoing measures to bring a peace lens to crisis response, including through building an evidence base. There are many known inherent challenges to evaluating peacebuilding efforts – the time it takes to build peace; the challenge of proving a counter-factual if further instability or conflict is prevented; the difficulty in measuring aspects of peacebuilding such as the strengthening of relationships and community cohesion – which are then made more difficult in complex crisis situations. That being said, there remains the need to further articulate the peacebuilding change needed and to consider what “success” looks like, including through the development of indicators and monitoring approaches, to support meaningful impact for peace in crisis situations. As “nexus” work or the impact of peace approaches in crisis response remains relatively new in operational terms, it may be useful to begin with small scale scenarios to test methodologies before working to scale up efforts. With the rise in learning

and evidence, steps will then need to be taken to consider the wider systemic change taking place to build and sustain peace in complex crisis situations.

### *Funding the “P” in the nexus must be prioritized*

Peacebuilding funding is typically the “lowest rung priority at the field level,” which is only then amplified when looking at support to cross sector or nexus efforts in complex environments. While many donors will speak to the centrality of joined up analysis and programming, it is felt that funding is not following the rhetoric to support such work and finance efforts to contribute to peace in crisis situations. This may be the result of the bureaucracy of funding and difficulty in changing internal structures. Additionally, there is a lack of scaling up of existing catalytic programming, despite indicators of progress or success. This was raised most notably in relation to Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) activities, with some colleagues sharing the impact and success they found with implementing PBF projects in crisis situations only to find that impact short lived as additional external funding was not available to maintain or scale up the initial project. This results in the continuation of short-term peacebuilding interventions in complex crises that, despite any initial peace impacts, will likely not have the long-term and sustainable effects needed to truly contribute to building peace.

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**Peacebuilding funding is typically the “lowest rung priority at the field level.”**

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### *Fragmentation remains and, if unaddressed, 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. With policy formation, such fragmentation can result in the development of competing or unaligned policy tools and resolutions across the peacebuilding, humanitarian and development fields. At a country level the impact can lead to ad hoc collaboration and coordination based on context and personality, or to the ongoing implementation of parallel independent, and possibly competing, programs.

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

Policy makers and practitioners are increasingly recognizing the urgent need to engage and meaningfully partner with local actors and communities to build peace, including in complex environments. Inclusion allows for more holistic analysis and impactful programming, greater understanding of endogenous capacities for peace, and more programmatic sustainability. Efforts have been taken within the UN to support inclusive approaches, including through the publication of the U.N. System-wide Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace. However, 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. The short-term nature of projects as well as the lack of funding of staff capacities needed to support community engagement must also be addressed, allowing for longer-term and more sustainable programming that is equipped with the staff and financial resources to meaningfully deliver on inclusion.

### *The politics of principled approaches*

Humanitarian actors may have understandable concerns that need to be considered with regards to the interface between peacebuilding and crisis response. However, there may also be the risk of defaulting on humanitarian principles in a way that limits space for collaborative thinking, or the perception that such principles are being used to limit progress across the nexus. Additionally, there is the risk of rising tensions with those working in the peacebuilding and development fields who also see their efforts as being guided by and grounded in principled approaches. This shows a greater need for understanding across sectors about the *how* and *why* of programming approaches, which can allow for the identification of commonalities across their fields and enable relationship and trust building, which is key for meaningful and sustainable partnerships.

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## **Opportunities**

The below features several opportunities identified through QUNO's research and learning process, including those raised during the listening exercise, that, if seized, can further progress practical advancements to build peace in countries and communities impacted by crisis. This is not a comprehensive list of avenues for further exploration, and not all opportunities will be relevant for every context or stakeholder.

### *COVID-19 response and recovery*

Response and recovery measures for the COVID-19 pandemic can serve as key opportunities and direct entry points for humanitarian and peacebuilding actors to partner and engage. For example, vaccination efforts carried out in complex environments will need to be implemented in a conflict sensitive and peace informed manner. Peacebuilding actors working in communities may be well placed to support health and humanitarian workers leading such efforts by supporting relationship building that contributes to understanding and acceptance of vaccine safety, providing peacebuilding analysis to vaccination planning, and liaising with local community or government leaders to roll out distribution.

### *Peacebuilding & sustaining peace*

The 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA) Review and adoption of joint resolutions in the U.N. Security Council and General Assembly have put forward



a path for the agenda for the coming years. This includes the Secretary-General's (UNSG) reporting process, a high-level event on financing for peacebuilding, and the next PBA Review. These streams can be used as both targets for making progress and entry points for reporting on the UN's efforts with regards to the peace and crisis interface. Specifically, measures should be taken to ensure that the forthcoming UNSG reports provide a space for continued consideration of the UN's peacebuilding efforts in complex environments as well as reflection on measures to support more joined up efforts along the nexus. The high-level event on financing can serve as an opportunity to consider the relationships across peacebuilding, development and humanitarian funding mechanisms, as well as how existing humanitarian funding streams may be able to contribute to supporting peace needs and gains. The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) can continue to serve as an avenue for working alongside countries to discuss and develop approaches for addressing peace needs within multi-dimensional crisis situations. The convening power of this body can also be a strength in supporting holistic policy conversations across the U.N. system, including with country-based staff. Lastly, the forthcoming PBA Review should serve as a marker to see tangible progress on U.N. nexus implementation and be used as a platform to strategically assess the future of the UN's peacebuilding efforts, including in crisis situations.

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**“Focusing on prevention is the new normal.”**

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### *2030 agenda & decade of action*

The processes surrounding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including the Voluntary National Reviews (VNR), annual High-Level Political Forum and the Decade of Action, can provide avenues for further consideration of the intersectionality between development and peace, including in crisis situations. Sustainable Development Goal 16 in particular can provide a key entry point, as well as the inclusion of peace as one of the “five p’s” of the Agenda. Reporting mechanisms, such as the VNR, can allow for learning from the country level to practically understand and illustrate program development and implementation in practice. Additionally, using the 2030 Agenda as an entry point can support further engagement with the development community as well as serve as a more palatable political entry point for some stakeholders when considering the connections between peacebuilding and crisis.

### *Our common agenda*

Although the Secretary-General's report, Our Common Agenda, was released after the period covered by this document, an initial assessment suggests that the proposed New Agenda for Peace and Emergency Platform may also provide further opportunities for engagement with the question of how the international community can promote peace in the face of increasingly complex crisis situations.

### *UN – World Bank partnership*

The partnership between the U.N. and the World Bank is an additional area of opportunity that can continue to be harnessed to further promote contributions to peace within crisis situations. A recent shift in this relationship emerged through the joint publication of the *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* Report, which utilizes the comparative strengths of each partner to

advocate for the international community to invest more attention in prevention through holistic, sustainable and inclusive strategies. This strengthened partnership can be an entry point for greater sustained funding and program development at the country level.

The continued operationalization of the connection between the U.N. and the World Bank has been showcased both through the implementation of the Bank's Fragility, Conflict and Violence Strategy and through the creation of the Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding and Partnership (HDPP) Facility. The HDPP Facility is meant to support U.N. coherence and strategic partnerships with IFIs (with Terms of Reference expanded to including support to UN-IMF collaboration) through joint data initiatives, joint analysis and the roll-out of innovative solutions with short-term and small-scale grant funding. The Facility also seeks to leverage partnerships among humanitarian, development and peace actors, the private sector and civil society in order to increase impact, reduce multi-dimensional risks and support actors with evidence-generation, priority setting, programmatic alignment and operational synergies. One recent example of the positive effect of this partnership has emerged through collaboration on the Burkina Faso Prevention and Peacebuilding Assessment, a joint African Development Bank–European Union–U.N.–World Bank exercise to support the government's articulation of prevention priorities in regions most affected by insecurity and fragility. Through establishing common priorities integrated in a new national development plan and a prevention and resilience strategy, the government was able to access additional IDA funds from the World Bank in support of peacebuilding objectives.

### *Country level entry points*

With regards to further strengthening work across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding nexus and considering how to contribute to building peace within a country, the UN's Common Country Analysis (CCAs) provides an entry point for joined up analysis, strategy development and goal setting for U.N. country teams. Drawing upon the knowledge and mandates of the various entities operating in the country, the CCA process can be a strategic opportunity for strengthening understanding across sectors and offices and developing shared visions forward to contribute to peace. Additionally, the analysis processes required to produce a CCA, which are updated at regular intervals, can allow for consideration of existing risks to and capacities for peace, including existing endogenous capacities or structures that can support peace efforts in complex crisis environments. The CCAs then contribute to the creation of the U.N. Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, which are developed based on national priorities and development plans. These frameworks serve as a coherent and collective U.N. strategy for meeting the development needs of the country and can allow for consideration and inclusion of peacebuilding and humanitarian efforts to meet those goals.

In addition to these analytical and national frameworks, there is great opportunity to further the UN's country-based programming and impact with regards to building environments conducive for peace within multidimensional crisis situations. Notably this includes the ongoing progress following the UN's reform processes, including with regards to the role and authority of the Resident Coordinator position. Additionally, the inclusion of positions such as Peace and Development Advisors, and of Humanitarian-Development-Peace Coordinators within the Office of the Resident Coordinator (RCO) can contribute to supporting more holistic analysis and program alignment across the U.N. Country Team. It is critical, however, that such positions are sustained with financing provided to ensure long-term if not permanent placements within the RCO.

## IV. Six key shifts to support building peace in times of crisis

Through QUNO's research and learning process, six recurring shifts emerged as illustrating efforts already underway or needed going forward to support peace contributions and impact during crisis situations.

1. **Organizational, corporate or leadership shift:** One should not underestimate the value and impact of prioritizing connections to and understanding of peace at a leadership or corporate strategic level. This can include the publication of corporate or strategy documents that focus on or include consideration of the connections between that entity or Ministry's work and peace; delivering public statements on the subject; etc. 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, particularly through the publication of strategic documents, can foster partnerships with other stakeholders and support internal organizational development for programming and technical responses.

In 2020, The World Health Organization (WHO) produced a White Paper on its "Health and Peace Initiative." This Initiative takes a more direct focus on WHO's role with regards to peacebuilding by articulating its responsibility to contribute to peace. It also provides examples of approaches taken within the organization and across the Triple nexus to build environments conducive for peace. While WHO's work has had peace components in the past, this new initiative allows for the explicit articulation of WHO's unique contributions to building peace and shifts the way of working to consider how health objectives can and do contribute to peace.

2. **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 begin to or strengthen their understanding of how their existing work connects to and can further support other areas across the nexus.

Mindset shifts may be impacted by creating sustainable positions or departments within government Ministries or U.N. entities that specifically focus on connections with peacebuilding or are tasked with coordinating across the “nexus”. Such individuals or departments would be responsible for supporting understanding of the contributions to peace, including by, but not limited to, developing practical tools to unpack the “peace” component of the entity’s mandate; working directly across the Ministry or with regional or country offices to support understanding and capacity development; providing relevant analysis within policy or program materials; and representing the entity or Ministry in U.N. or other spaces to bring their expertise to conversations across the nexus. It is key that such appointments are not seen as being solely responsible for the “peace piece” of the office’s work, but rather as resources or tools to strengthen and support a system-wide approach to contribute to building and sustaining peace.

- 3. Program development & 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. This can include, but is not limited to, considering if/how to adjust or create new analytical frameworks, identifying peace indicators for existing programs, creating new program areas specifically focusing on contributions to peace, and monitoring impact. Efforts should be taken to ensure a reflective practice that allows for adapting to contextual changes and provides opportunities for ongoing learning to improve programming for maximal impact. Additionally, where possible, program development should implement inclusive approaches that allow for learning from partners and populations being served to ensure more holistic design and to foster relationships with communities.

In 2018, World Vision undertook a program development and management shift with regards to its work in fragile contexts. Recognizing the challenges of working in complex and fluid environments, the organization created its Fragile Contexts Programming Approach (FCPA) which allows for more flexible programming across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus, including by considering avenues to support building resilience and contributing to longer-term stability and peace gains. This approach has been piloted in a number of countries to understand how the approach works practically across a number of contexts, and to make adjustments to have the greatest positive impact for communities. While still in its first years, the FCPA illustrates an example of deliberate institutional efforts to ensure that programming measures are designed with the deliberate intention of contributing to peace gains where possible.

- 4. 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. Support may include developing and implementing training modules and workshops and using new programmatic tools to concretely explore peace contributions. Additionally, allocating the time and space for reflective processes on implementation, particularly to identify areas of progress and new or emerging challenges, is critical to learning and to adjusting processes. This work also includes supporting actors in their efforts to strengthen participatory approaches to analysis and program design.

Following the approval of its *Corporate Framework to support Sustainable Peace in the Context of Agenda 2030*, in 2019 FAO developed, in partnership with Interpeace, *The Programme Clinic: Designing Conflict-sensitive Interventions*, comprising both a facilitation guide and a participants' workbook. It is accompanied by a separate FAO *Guide to Context Analysis: Informing FAO Decision-making*, which is an essential precursor to the Programme Clinic. The Programme Clinic approach was created following extensive testing and feedback processes from staff in FAO offices around the world and serves to concretely implement FAO's efforts to more explicitly contribute to peace through conflict-sensitive strategies. The tool serves as a training to support the development of capacities and skills of FAO staff with regards to conflict sensitivity and enables staff to integrate these skills into program design and implementation. The Programme Clinic is designed with the intent that once staff have facilitated or participated in the trainings, they will be able to iteratively develop further competencies and awareness regarding how FAO interventions can minimize harmful impacts and maximize their contributions to creating environments more conducive to peace. The Programme Clinic Facilitation Guide and Participants' Workbook can both be found on the FAO's website.

5. **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. For example, some colleagues identified the need for the peacebuilding community to develop or strengthen relationships with multi-mandate or technical actors. Others pointed to the centrality of meaningful and inclusive partnerships with communities and local actors when working to build and sustain peace in complex and conflict-affected crises.

The U.N. Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) has increased its focus on and funding for cross-border programming in response to the changing nature of conflict and the growing complexity of peacebuilding needs. One example of this innovative programming is the launch, in 2020, of the joint FAO / IOM project, *Promotion d'une transhumance pacifique dans la région du Liptako-Gourma*. The project, which "aims at tackling conflict drivers between farmers and herders linked to transhumance in the conflict-affected Liptako-Gourma region between Burkina

Faso, Mali and Niger<sup>6</sup> has also provided an opportunity for meaningful partnership and engagement with communities which the project is supporting. FAO and IOM colleagues have worked closely alongside leaders within the farmer and herder communities, through the use and development of various tools for early warning, such as the Track Transhumance Tool, as well as distribution of radios and telephones as alerting systems to prevent conflict-related issues arising. Through the establishment of early warning tools within the communities, FAO and IOM are able to receive feedback from the communities on the utility of these tools to continue improving their efficiency in preventing conflict, while ensuring communities are integrated and involved in project development, to increase impact and sustainability.

6. **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.

The Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) was continuously raised as a positive example of supporting funding for innovative nexus programming within the U.N. system, including across borders and in situations of extreme fragility or complexity. Additionally, the Fund's way of working supports skills and capacity development within and across UN entities. For example, the proposal process requires an extensive conflict and peacebuilding analysis, which supports U.N. agencies, funds and programmes in practically applying a peacebuilding lens to their work and strengthening their understanding of why a peacebuilding intervention is needed. While the work of the PBF should be applauded, there is the need to increase and broaden other funding opportunities by the donor community, including to support and scale up successful peacebuilding projects. Additionally, consideration should be given to how existing funding streams for humanitarian programming or responses may support peace gains, depending on the context.

## V. Conclusion

As efforts to attend to the connections between peace and crisis are continually evolving, more time and experience across sectors will be needed to identify successful strategies to promote the shifts outlined in this document. Moving forward, addressing many of the challenges raised as well as seizing collective opportunities will support both prevention efforts and responses to future multidimensional crises that help to foster environments more conducive to peace, and support outcomes that are more people-centered and sustainable. Here it will be of utmost importance to identify and support endogenous capacities for peace and build connections across sectors to enrich mutual understanding and foster continued joint work. It will also be critical to encourage further engagement of the U.N. system with community-level partners such that their experiences and insights can be elevated to the policy space and thus contribute to the development of frameworks and programs that can better address immediate needs while also fostering longer-term peace and development efforts. Finally, building off of the importance of people-centered strategies to utilize peace approaches in crisis contexts, continued work on this topic must engage with the question of how to ensure that these approaches are not reduced to another box to tick or buzzword to include in policy level discussions. This will include further consideration of how to measure the impact of cross-sector efforts as well as peace-oriented crisis response.