

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
WORKING GROUP MEETING: BACKGROUND PAPER

**Analysis Paper: On the Intersection between the *New Way of Working*
and the *Sustaining Peace* Agenda**

This analysis paper is based on contributions from a core drafting team¹. It draws on both formal and informal discussions within the IASC Task Team on Strengthening the Humanitarian Development Nexus (HDN TT) and builds on the joint work between the IASC HDN TT the UN Working Group on Transitions. This is not a consensus document but aims to present the agenda item and the complexity in arriving at consensus based on an analysis of the many dimensions involved. It is a background document aimed at providing a common analytical basis for conversation. It also proposes potential avenues for consensus.

Summary:

The *New Way of Working* represents an opportunity to achieve step changes in the working methods, efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian and development actors towards reducing needs, risks, and vulnerabilities. However, how this new approach will be applied in protracted conflict situations has generated some concerns mostly around the protection and preservation of humanitarian space vis-a-vis peacebuilding objectives as outlined in the Sustaining Peace resolutions. Thus, in these settings the *New Way of Working* needs to be carefully considered and its implementation clearly framed.

Background and origin

The term *The New Way of Working* has its origins in Secretary General Ban's Agenda for Humanity (AfH), prepared for the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), which was translated into a joint Commitment to Action signed by most of the UN IASC Principals at the WHS.² In its original formulation the *New Way of Working* is described as working over multiple years towards collective outcomes that transcend humanitarian and development divides to tangibly meet people's immediate humanitarian needs, while at the same time reducing risk and vulnerability."

Shortly before WHS, twin resolutions on Sustaining Peace were passed by the Security Council and General Assembly in April 2016³. These resolutions define *Sustaining Peace* as "encompassing activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict". The two resolutions called on the three pillars of the UN – (i) peace and security, (ii) development and (iii) human rights – each to make contributions to "proactively address root causes and support institutions that are required for sustainable peace and development."⁴

The resolutions on Sustaining Peace stress the importance of coherence and complementarity between the United Nations' peace and security efforts and its development, human rights and humanitarian work. Within the UN system, coherence and coordination in support of peace consolidation in mission settings is grounded in the UN Integrated Assessment and Planning (IAP)

¹ WHO and UNDP as co-chairs of the IASC Task Team on the Hum/Dev Nexus in cooperation with OCHA.

² Signed by former UN Secretary-General, WHO, UNDP, WFP, UNHCR, FAO, UNICEF, UNFPA, OCHA, endorsed by IOM, and the World Bank

³ General Assembly resolution (A/RES/70/262) and a Security Council resolution (S/RES/2282)

⁴ PBSO Guidance Note on *Sustaining Peace*

policy, which outlines important guiding principles, including respect for humanitarian principles and clarifies the link between humanitarian action and peacebuilding. It recognizes that while humanitarian action can support peace efforts, its main purpose remains to address life-saving needs and alleviate suffering and that, accordingly, most humanitarian interventions are likely to remain outside the scope of integration. The IAP is focused on the importance of including humanitarian actors in analysis and planning for sustaining peace, to “ensure coherence and complementarity with other actors.” It notes that, depending on the context, certain activities may be included in the UN’s integrated strategic approach and calls in all cases for shared analysis and coordination among humanitarian and peace consolidation actors. Peacebuilding action however, goes beyond peace keeping settings and can be done at any time, before, during and after conflict. The Guidance Note on Sustaining Peace, that is not limited to mission contexts, echoes these points.

The *New Way of Working* and the *Commitment to Action* signed at the WHS do not alter this framing. Policy discussions at global, regional and country level have further explored the programmatic and field implications of these two agendas and their intersection. Within and across the subsidiary bodies of the IASC and the UN Development Group (i.e. the UNWGT), in the CEB, QCPR, and Grand Bargain, discussions around the *New Way of Working* (joined up humanitarian and development action) have sometimes included ‘peace’ as a third prong⁵. The *New Way of Working* has been interpreted by some actors to encompass the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Conversely, others see the humanitarian-development-peace nexus as two separate sets (humanitarian-development and development-peace). Yet others will maintain that peace, and the concrete contributions towards peacebuilding by all actors will be an essential part of the success of sustaining development investments and decreasing humanitarian need.

Preserving humanitarian space and principles

It is in the contexts of protracted crises, that are often either driven or exacerbated by conflict, where the *Agenda for Humanity* calls for the greatest efforts: leaving no one behind, and reaching the furthest first in a joined-up and interoperable manner. It is in these settings the majority—indeed as much as around 80 percent of the caseload, where the greatest need for a coherent and joined up approach towards reducing risk and vulnerabilities is needed.

During these policy discussions, concern has been raised that the need to protect humanitarian space may contradict, diverge from, or simply not contribute, to the calls to sustain peace. There is also concern that the discussion around *Sustaining Peace* further complicates the already enormous task of operationalizing better collaboration across the humanitarian and development sectors in the first place. Finally, some are concerned with introducing humanitarian actors in political arenas, especially in light of increasing number of attacks on humanitarian workers. If forced to adopt a blanket alignment to national development and peacebuilding goals, which are essentially political, they fear that this would result in the potential loss of the independence of humanitarianism and perceived neutrality of humanitarianism.

Some therefore adamantly say that, it is thus important to define, and where needed to limit, the notion of “collective outcomes” to the areas of reducing needs, risks and vulnerability. The *New Way of Working* language ⁶ emphasizes that the approach is intended to bring tangible

⁵ See mapping at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-task-team-strengthening-humanitarian-development-nexus-focus-protracted-contexts/documents-4>

⁶ See *Commitment to Action*

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development gains to the most vulnerable people, including those affected by protracted and recurrent crises – where context allows. The aim is to promote the kind of multi-year financing and cross-sector collaboration that allow for humanitarian actors to contribute to resilience where possible, and for development actors to increase their engagement and investment in fragile and at-risk communities where crises most often strike. The meeting point between the two communities is where collective outcomes can be identified.

It should not be taken forward in situations where working collectively would undermine the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance or the adherence to humanitarian principles. In some contexts, such alignment will not be possible. However, the risk that the approach of collective outcomes will be used to force humanitarian actors towards assimilation seems potent enough to have been duly raised several times among agencies and NGOs, and will therefore require greater clarity and clear guidance of what the *New Way of Working* does and does not entail. The further practical and operational work on advancing shared data, joint analysis and joined-up planning and programming within the H-D Nexus will necessitate unpacking the realities of the *New Way of Working*.

Implementing the New Way of Working

This being said, there are points of convergence. *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* articulates the threat that protracted humanitarian crises -- and the forced displacement they cause -- may pose to development. Similarly, humanitarian crises can reverse the gains in peacebuilding. In these protracted settings humanitarian actors find that the reduction of need and vulnerabilities relies on preventing crises through better preparedness, vulnerability and risk reduction, in many cases working in partnership with national and local institutions, including civil society. Depending on the context, certain activities may be included in the UN's integrated strategic approach.

There is no debate that humanitarian, development and peace action in those 'constrained' [settings](#)⁷ are closely interlinked: They all seek to either address or mitigate the impact of the root causes of crises, which often stem from violations and neglect of human rights, including persistent discrimination, impunity and violence. This however, this does not mean that all actors do peace/conflict work. It is widely acknowledged that prevention and peacebuilding is generally initiated too late or insufficiently sustained in fragile and conflict-affected contexts⁸; efforts should be scaled up but whether or not humanitarian action is appropriate for this must be very carefully reviewed, with a focus on ensuring that this does not threaten its very ability to access the most vulnerable people.

There is also no debate on the elements that need to be reviewed to implement the *New Way of Working*. It will have to be gradual; learning from the field as much as possible, providing guidance only where clarity is required. Four priorities have been identified to guide the early phases of implementation: a) predicable and joint situation and problem analysis; b) better joined-up planning and programming c) leadership and coordination; and c) financing modalities that can support collective outcomes.⁹

⁷ See typologies diagram at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-task-team-strengthening-humanitarian-development-nexus-focus-protracted-contexts/documents-5>

⁸ As documented in the 2015 Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations (HIPPO)

⁹ draft joint IASC-UNDG shared narrative, forthcoming.

What success may look like

If the IASC aims to adapt its working modalities to ensure more effective aid delivery in the short term while reducing risk and vulnerability in the longer term, it is imperative that the IASC determines what the *New Way of Working* entails vis-a-vis the elements in the *Sustaining Peace* agenda. Before operationalization, the parameters must be clear. Based on the points of convergence outlined above, a consensus may be formulated on what this parameter may look like: In short, *successfully implementing the New Way of Working is likely to contribute to peacebuilding, but is not its fundamental purpose.*

The *Sustaining Peace* resolutions recognize that a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding requires: “strengthening of the rule of law at the international and national levels, and promoting sustained and sustainable economic growth, poverty eradication, social development, sustainable development, national reconciliation and unity, through various means including inclusive dialogue and mediation, access to justice and transitional justice, accountability, good governance, democracy, accountable institutions, gender equality and respect for, and protection of, human rights and fundamental freedoms”.

This list, which is also echoed in the QCPR resolution of 2016,¹⁰ offers a menu of programmatic entry points where coherent and joined-up humanitarian-development action may be applied, through principled, yet neutral, action. Humanitarian and development actors are already engaged in these approaches, albeit currently constrained by administrative, budgetary, and structural silos. Breaking these silos between humanitarian and development actors and reducing needs, risks and vulnerabilities through the *New Way of Working* will allow for more effective efforts towards achieving and protecting the development gains necessary for a peaceful society.

In practice, for the humanitarian system, project timeframes should be flexible and recognized as contributing to protecting hard-earned development gains. Where possible, humanitarian programming can also contribute to resilience before, and at the onset of, an emergency through contributing to (share data) and engaging in joint analysis, capacity building and preparedness activities. Even in the most intractable conflicts situations where rights and protection are denied to some, the aim of immediate lifesaving assistance (food, shelter, health, etc.) and the targets that guide them should be designed to protect development gains and contribute improvements in development outcomes, including basic social services, safety nets and other measures that increase resilience in the face of future shocks.

Development actors, by the same token, must be less risk averse, must come in much sooner and have the flexibility to quickly adapt their programming interventions to crisis settings, working on institution-building, capacity development, restoring social sectors and services, and graduating humanitarian caseloads as early as possible onto national programmes. Development planning and programming must therefore be sensitive and adaptable to the risk of crises and be responsive to sudden shocks and changes in the needs of vulnerable populations. In doing so, development plans must be sensitive to those who are marginalized, and seek at all times to prevent or reduce risks, reduce vulnerabilities, and advocate for equitable distribution of public services. After a shock, development actors must seek to resume, rebuild or expand access to

¹⁰ Para 24, 24a, 24b of A/RES/71/243

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basic social services, safety nets and other measures that will help affected become self-reliant again as quickly as possible and increase resilience in the face of future shocks.

In conflict-affected situations, strengthening the security sector will be essential. This is a role only peace and security actors can play. Humanitarian action may contribute to peace dividends¹¹, but it will not be the explicit objective of humanitarian action. Humanitarian actors may contribute to developing capacities and supporting inclusive dialogue and grievance mechanisms, but the IASC must not shy away from asking the appropriate actors to intervene where neglect, discrimination, and abuse occurs by holding national authorities accountable and when needed, leveraging existing mechanisms such as *Human Rights Up Front* in a more systematic manner.

In these settings where a constrained environment hampers humanitarian action, the comparative advantage of humanitarian actors will be self-evident. By balancing common sense pragmatism and the principle of do no harm, it is clear that in some contexts, such alignment towards collective outcomes will not be possible. Buttressed by thorough risk, conflict, and situation analysis, pockets of contexts within an affected region, would and should be excluded from the explicit linkages to inherently political instruments. This no one denies -- effective humanitarian collaboration with development actors and mechanisms must be principled and rights-based at all times. This should however not mean that humanitarian actors withdraw from the formulation of collective outcomes. *Collective* outcomes do not mean common ones.

Ultimately, if done coherently – through shared data, joint analysis and joined-up planning and programming – a strong, effective and interoperable *New Way of Working* between humanitarian-development actors can contribute directly to preventing the outbreak of conflict, as well as building and *Sustaining Peace*.

Discussions Point:

These global level discussions and the working methods of the IASC must answer only one question: What does this mean in practice? What needs to be clearly articulated is how these priorities can contribute to preventing or reducing humanitarian needs, sustaining development gains, peacebuilding and addressing root causes.

Specifically – and against the back drop of the new Secretary General’s focus on prevention as a priority across the system -- the IASC must a) clearly delineate what are its asks of the peace community, the possibilities to work more closely together, and its red lines; b) clarify how *Sustaining Peace* relates to prevention more broadly, factoring in the broader range of risks and drivers of humanitarian need; c) what roles and responsibilities humanitarian actors can have; and d) to what extent and in what contexts these are possible keeping in mind both the need to maintain humanitarian space and uphold humanitarian principles.

¹¹ Where contexts allows, humanitarian sectors can build on its conflict sensitive programming and begin to identify opportunities to support peacebuilding. Using health, WASH, and livelihoods projects, and as means to provide platforms for mediation and reconciliation have been proposed by some ‘double-mandated’ agencies as a viable path to moving from ‘working *in* conflicts to working *on* conflicts’.