

# Commitments into Action: A holistic and coherent response to COVID-19 across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus

## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is having an unprecedented global impact on health, lives and livelihoods – disrupting economies, markets and societal relations. It is generating a devastating level of human suffering and there is the risk of a global death toll that numbers in the millions. At the same time, the pandemic has engendered an extraordinary level of global solidarity, based on the recognition that, in the words of the UN Secretary General, “the world is only as strong as the weakest health system.”

As the world comes together to step up to the challenge of addressing the impacts of the pandemic – to protect lives and limit the socio-economic consequences of the virus – world leaders have made ambitious and far-reaching commitments to tackle the virus<sup>1</sup>. The challenge now is to translate these commitments into practical, actionable steps – to turn **Commitments into Action**. This will require holistic, integrated and coherent responses that support the poorest nations, the most fragile contexts and meet the needs of vulnerable people and communities, thereby delivering on our collective ambitions in the Sustainable Development Goals of *leaving no-one behind*.

The pandemic, and its containment measures, will require a very different response in fragile and crisis-affected situations, where it creates both a public health and socio-economic emergency. The response will need to be contextualised, comprehensive and multidimensional, given that COVID-19 may compound broader challenges of conflict, poverty and stability, and undermine previous development efforts.

Ensuring that we make use of all the means at our disposal and that humanitarian, development and peace actions are delivered in a complementary, mutually reinforcing and simultaneous manner, to provide immediate life-saving assistance, while also addressing longer-term impacts, will be critical to our success. The response will also need to reinforce local ownership and trust; while being grounded in humanitarian principles and conflict sensitivity, to do no harm. The aspiration to *leave no-one behind* will need to be taken into account, grounded in a rights-based approach and with particular attention to the needs of marginalised groups, as well as the differentiated impacts of the virus on women, men, girls, boys, the forcibly displaced, the disabled and youth.

The following document aims to inform further thinking and stimulate practical measures that are informed by a ‘nexus approach’ that delivers: **the right financing**, in the right place, in the right way, at the right time; **partnerships that are inclusive** and engage a range of diverse stakeholders; coordinated, open and empowering; **knowledge and information sharing**, to ensure consistency and reduce overlaps while strengthening shared analysis and; **responses that are conflict sensitive and draw on the full range of political, economic and social tools** available.

If we succeed, the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic holds the potential to transform global cooperation and contribute to a more peaceful, prosperous, resilient and healthier world.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper draws upon a limited number of high-level global commitments, including: Extraordinary G20 Leaders’ Summit Statement on COVID-19; COVID-19 Global Pandemic: Joint Statement by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); the Press Release by the Peacebuilding Commission on the impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding and sustaining peace; *Safeguarding Peace during the Pandemic*; IDPS Joint Statement on COVID-19; Global Humanitarian Response Plan COVID-19; United Nations Coordinated Appeal; United Nations Sustainable Development Group: A Coordinated Response to Coronavirus.

# Commitments into Action: Financing

## **DAC & G20 commitment:**

*Ensure adequate resourcing from international and domestic public and private financial flows that meets the need for large-scale fiscal support, strengthens global financial safety nets and maintains the flow of credit to households and business.*

## **UNSDG commitment:**

*Call for a large-scale, coordinated and comprehensive multilateral response amounting to at least 10 percent of global GDP: The Secretary-General has established a dedicated COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund to support efforts in low- and middle-income countries. Its approach is underpinned by a coordinated multi-agency, multi-sectoral response for priority national and local actions to address the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis. It will count on the country leadership of Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams in swiftly supporting and enabling governments in this crisis, and recovery.*

## **IDPS commitment:**

*Acknowledges the need to galvanize support from the private sector to support pro-peace activities, as well as safeguard livelihoods and the immediate and longer-term economic effects for people affected by the crisis. It emphasizes that constituencies will strive to protect ODA budgets, encourage other financial flows to support governments and communities in FCAS, and invites all peacebuilding partners to do the same.*

## **Peacebuilding Commission commitment:**

*Members reaffirm that the Commission will continue serving as an intergovernmental platform to advocate for predictable financing... for peacebuilding and sustaining peace. [Members also] express concern that the crisis may adversely affect employment, livelihoods, and incomes and potentially exacerbate underlying tensions, as well as compounding already dire humanitarian situations in affected countries.*

## **Global Humanitarian Response Plan:**

*[The UN Secretary General calls] on all donors and partners to maintain core support to programmes for the most vulnerable, including through UN-coordinated humanitarian and refugee response plans. We cannot afford to lose the gains we have made through investments in humanitarian action and in the Sustainable Development Goals.*

## **Translating these commitments into action in crisis and fragile contexts could include:**

1. **Financing social safety nets** that bring together international and, where possible, domestic resources, targeted at those most at risk from COVID-19, both from a health and socio-economic perspective, including those that are hard to reach, for example marginalized groups, people in remote areas, and the forcibly displaced. Design these programmes to also stimulate social cohesion and citizen-state trust.
2. Working with the private sector to significantly **reduce the cost of remittances** to COVID-19 affected populations, and advocating for remittance services to be deemed essential businesses
3. Supporting self-reliance, especially in informal economies, including by **keeping markets open** with reinforced anti-transmission protocols, supporting increased local purchasing, providing subsidies to at-risk SMEs, and supporting regulation to control prices and distribution of goods during the Covid-19 crisis.

4. Ensuring that households, businesses and governments have **access to credit** to ensure liquidity and the rebuilding of livelihoods at different layers of society.
5. Encouraging private sector commitments to maintain jobs and livelihoods whenever possible, including providing finance.
6. Ensuring that adequate funding is reaching all actors, including local actors, who are closer to the population.
7. Providing adequate longer-term un-earmarked funding where possible, and/or funding for results rather than activities, to allow for a **flexible response** to match evolving humanitarian, recovery and stability needs. Incorporate 'milestones' in emergency response funds to allow for funding to shift to the recovery when appropriate.
8. **Avoiding the diversion of ODA** and other resources from other – non COVID-19 – critical humanitarian, stability and peace programming.
9. Ensuring that all financing is based on a **political economy and conflict sensitivity analysis** to do no harm. This could mean designing the humanitarian response with a longer-term objective of peace and development – building forward better – saving lives in both the short and longer-term, and increasing the return on investment.

## Multi-stakeholder engagement

### **DAC & G20 commitment:**

*Encourage and support sustained and coordinated action by diverse actors to address the immediate public health and humanitarian crisis, while addressing simultaneous needs to support economic, environmental and social resilience and institutional strengthening, including:*

- private-sector engagement to support the provision of basic services, maintain supply chains and other essential economic activity and contribute to the development, manufacture and distribution of diagnostic and vaccine responses; and*
- supporting civil society organisations efforts in tackling and limiting damaging socio-economic consequences.*

### **UNSDG commitment:**

*Adopt a people-centred approach, engage communities affected by COVID-19, respect human rights and inclusion, gender equality and dignity for all: A successful response and recovery will require international cooperation and partnerships at every level – governments taking action in lock-step with communities; private sector engagement to find pathways out of this crisis. Partnerships based on solidarity will be the cornerstone for progress. Civil Society, women and grassroots organizations, community-based organizations and faith-based organizations will play a vital role. In assisting the most vulnerable populations, these networks are active in bringing economic and livelihood opportunities and adapting responses to the community context. These organizations, in many locations in the world, are the first, or only, point of reference for individuals and families as they seek to cope with the impacts of COVID-19 and for the recovery ahead.*

**IDPS commitment:**

*Stresses that national responses alone will be insufficient to cope with the various dimensions of its impact (political, economic, social and human capital)...[and] encourages national governments to ensure that measures used to respond to COVID-19 contribute to just and inclusive societies and do not hamper contributions from various actors, including youth, women peacebuilders, and human rights defenders. It also reiterates the need to continue supporting the protection and expansion of civil society's operating space in implementing measures to address the pandemic, including during lockdowns.*

**Peacebuilding Commission commitment:**

*Members of the Commission take note of the ongoing efforts to leverage the global presence of the UN system in responding to the pandemic, including through its field presence ... [and] reiterates the importance of coherent and coordinated action across all pillars of the UN system in support of nationally defined peacebuilding priorities. Utilize the convening, bridging and advisory role of the PBC, including to the Security Council, to help bring Member States together with the UN system and other partners, including International Financial Institutions, regional and sub-regional organizations and civil society, to... advocate for coherent, coordinated responses to the pandemic. The Commission will continue serving as an intergovernmental solidarity platform.*

**Translating these commitments into action in crisis and fragile contexts could include:**

1. Identifying opportunities for **joint political and policy dialogue and coherence** to support local efforts to build a comprehensive, viable, sustainable and inclusive response to COVID-19.
2. Encouraging a **whole-of-government response**, across health, disaster management and other relevant aspects of national government, while also improving vertical relationships between national and local authorities. Special efforts may be required to support the distribution of COVID-19 funds, to ensure that this is accountable, participatory and inclusive. In addition, international support may be required to support government business continuity, contingency and preparedness planning, and the development or expansion of safety net programmes.
3. Promoting a holistic approach to the response, including **partnerships and collaboration** with and between national and local authorities, bilateral and multilateral partners, International Financial Institutions, local and international civil society organizations, the private sector, research institutions, and humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors, with a view to simultaneously reinforcing the emergency, risk mitigation, and recovery aspects of the response.
4. Drawing on lessons learnt from previous crises, including the 2006 food crisis in the Horn of Africa and the 2014 West Africa Ebola epidemic, to **engage with private sector actors** to identify innovative responses and partnerships and ensure that corporate social responsibility actions are geared toward supporting the immediate and longer-term needs of vulnerable groups. This could include the maintenance of viable supply chains, facilitating market access and protecting livelihoods wherever possible, especially for poor and marginalized groups.
5. Supporting **cross-border, regional and global collaboration**. This may include coordinated procurement, sharing knowledge and early warning information across government, regional approaches to limiting transmission, south-south co-operation, fragile-2-fragile approaches and triangular cooperation.

# Knowledge and information sharing

## **DAC & G20 commitment:**

*Provide timely and transparent information exchange, strengthen international scientific cooperation and share evidence, best practice, data and resources to improve epidemiological and clinical data and better address gaps in pandemic preparedness and response.*

## **UNSDG commitment:**

*The strongest support must be provided to the multilateral effort to suppress transmission and stop the pandemic, led by the World Health Organization. At the same time, there is great need for scientific collaboration in the search for a vaccine and effective therapeutics. This must be matched with assurances of universal access to vaccines and treatment.*

## **IDPS commitment:**

*The IDPS partnership will endeavor to mobilize diverse actors to ensure inclusive dialogue and collective engagement, and to foster South-South, triangular, and Fragile-Fragile cooperation.*

## **Peacebuilding Commission commitment:**

*Members reaffirm that the Commission will continue [to] effectively fulfil its advisory role to the General Assembly and Security Council, as appropriate. The Commission's members express their intent to fully leverage the convening and bridging roles of the Commission in support of a coordinated and coherent international response to the crisis, including by strengthening partnerships... [and] enhancing transparency of ongoing and planned assistance by bilateral and multilateral stakeholders in the affected countries. Finally, the members emphasize the important role the Peacebuilding Commission can play in developing and sharing good practices in peacebuilding.*

## **Translating these commitments into action in crisis and fragile contexts could include:**

1. Undertake **coordinated planning** that addresses the short, medium and long-term impacts of the virus, including immediate health needs and longer-term socio-economic impacts.
2. Ensure that all stakeholders have **full and comprehensive access to information** on the analysis and the evolution of the situation as well as on the collective response to COVID-19, particularly drawing on the capacities of the UN Resident Coordinator and UN country team.
3. Facilitate **the sharing and scaling up of good practice** from GAVI and other initiatives that address market failures to improve accessibility and affordability of Covid-19 prevention and treatment through increased collaboration and innovation in strategy, policy-setting, advocacy, fundraising, vaccine development, procurement and, when available, immunization delivery.
4. Strengthen the **capacity to undertake data modelling and scenario planning** to inform Covid-19 preparedness and response.
5. Ensure that **planning and analysis takes account of conflict dynamics** and includes the full range of humanitarian, social, economic, political and security considerations arising from COVID 19 and that responses mitigate the potential short or long-term adverse effects on human capital, particularly in the case of lockdowns and movement restrictions. In addition, focusing on sharing analysis of grievances around

access to health care and the impact of the pandemic on inequalities, which could further undermine peace gains.

6. Incentivize **'whole of society' approaches** to knowledge and information sharing that takes account of both global scientific knowledge, as well as local and indigenous knowledge at all layers of society.
7. Promote **inclusive dialogue** that takes account of the needs of women, men, youth, the elderly and other vulnerable communities and tailor responses appropriately
8. Together, analyzing the **risks and opportunities arising from COVID-19 and related containment measures**, and proposing alternative models for reducing disease transmission where necessary.
9. Promoting **research and learning** that contributes to an understanding of the interplay between COVID-19 and fragility at the global, regional and local response and that supports effective and contextualized preparedness measures.

## Utilizing the full range of tools and approaches

### **DAC & G20 commitment:**

*Ensuring that the full range of humanitarian, development, peace and security, and diplomatic actions are used in a complementary, coherent way for response and recovery to minimize economic and social damage through: the strengthening of health systems; securing of livelihoods; protecting global supply chains; supporting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; and the strengthening of technical capacities.*

### **UNSDG commitment:**

*The 129 UN Resident Coordinators and the UN Country Teams will provide comprehensive policy and operational support at the national level in support of a whole of society approach and address structural challenges and strengthen normative frameworks to deal with transboundary risks.*

### **IDPS commitment:**

*Draw the international community's attention to the need for a holistic COVID-19 response to ensure that hard won peacebuilding, statebuilding and conflict prevention gains in FCAS are sustained. This will require responses that draw on integrated support from partners across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, which are also inclusive, nationally led, conflict-sensitive, attuned to conflict drivers, and focused on prevention and resilience.*

### **Peacebuilding Commission commitment:**

*The members of the Peacebuilding Commission... stress the importance of working together and acting fast to address the multi-faceted and multi-sectoral impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Members of the Commission note that the COVID-19 pandemic may undermine social cohesion, strain the capacity of governance institutions, increase risks of instability and have potential consequences for food security in countries and regions under its consideration. They further stress the importance that responses to the pandemic recognize the importance of leaving no one behind and ensure that the most vulnerable are protected and empowered.*

### **Global Humanitarian Response Plan:**

*Support countries around the world in addressing the socio-economic implications of this pandemic, which will require an adequate funding mechanism*

## Translating these commitments into action in crisis and fragile contexts could include:

1. Promoting **coherent, and where appropriate, joint, programming, across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus**. This includes programming to address all the dimensions of fragility – linking COVID-19 response and recovery efforts to on-going actions that promote the protection, well-being and livelihoods of individuals and households. This could include a specific focus on ensuring that containment measures are conflict sensitive and that the range of pandemic response measures also aim to simultaneously address the drivers of conflict and peace outcomes.
2. Together, **supporting the designation of “essential workers” during periods of confinement**, potentially to include local civil society actors, peace agreement negotiators and similar.
3. Supporting and **prioritizing a local response and avoiding parallel structures** where possible. This may involve:
  - Community outreach and engagement, drawing on the comparative advantage of local organizations with access to hard-to-reach populations, and promoting participation;
  - Building the capacity of local civil society and supporting their role, including credible local peace agents;
  - Supporting local and municipal authorities in areas at risk of, or already experiencing, COVID-19 outbreaks.
4. Provide **human rights training and other capacity building measures** for those who enforce containment measures, such as the police and military.
5. Supporting and **promoting social protection measures** across the emergency and recovery phases of the response, including harmonizing criteria and modalities for cash responses and other social safety nets.
6. **Building forward better** – designing and implementing the foundations for recovery across all the dimensions of fragility during the emergency phase of the pandemic response. Working together to design a “new normal” rather than returning to business as usual programming and operations post-COVID.
7. Including **social cohesion measures to rebuild trust and promote a sustainable peace**, especially focused on marginalized and at-risk groups. This may include inclusive dialogues on the status of the response and the design of the recovery phase.