

COMMUNIQUE

Study Conference on the Triple Nexus: Effective Development Cooperation in Contexts of Conflict and Fragility

10 – 11 November 2019 | Amman, Jordan

Conflict and fragility pose a major global threat to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Currently, about 1.8 billion people live in conflict and fragility. The world's poorest are also concentrated in these contexts. The number of poor people living in these precarious conditions is expected to grow by 80% in 2030 (OECD, 2018).[1]

Official development assistance (ODA) to fragile contexts has been on the rise from 2009 to 2016 (OECD, 2018).[2] Despite the growth of humanitarian funding over the years, it remains not enough to meet the rising needs of affected populations. Moreover, rising humanitarian aid is accompanied by decreased investment in development, climate change adaptation, and gender equality.

Durable solutions to humanitarian crises are not possible without lasting peace and addressing the drivers of development problems. The increasing use of aid as a 'quick fix' to humanitarian emergencies, without paying attention to longer-term development that addresses the root causes of conflict and fragility, can undermine visions for sustainable peace and development. Development actors need to understand the unique challenges of development in fragile contexts if development cooperation efforts are to contribute sustainable solutions in uplifting the conditions of poor people living in conflict and fragility.

The Study Conference '*Unpacking the Triple Nexus: Effective Development Cooperation in Contexts of Conflict and Fragility*' highlighted the various forms of humanitarian crises across different global regions and their impacts on sectoral groups. It examined the implications of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (i.e. the 'triple nexus') in terms of the challenges and opportunities in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable people.

CRISES IN DIFFERENT GLOBAL REGIONS

In West Asia and North Africa, conflict, war and occupation continue to have catastrophic consequences on poverty, development and growth, food security, and human welfare. In the Pacific, the worsening effects of climate change have induced migration and displacement of thousands of people from the region. In Asia, the number of refugees is growing at an alarming rate. These refugees experience further discrimination in the host countries and are without adequate rights to education, employment, and healthcare. In Africa, conflict and instability as a result of civil war, border and inter-state conflicts have been the driving forces behind the persistent occurrence of famine in the continent. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the asylum seekers at the US-Mexico border are rapidly growing. They suffer from lack of food, water, proper sanitation, physical assault and violence in immigration detention centers.



Participants to the Study Conference on the 'Triple Nexus'

Marginalized sectors are often the ones hardest hit by humanitarian crises. War and militarism disproportionately impact women. They are often forced to migrate due to conflict or targeted as victims of sexual violence. Meanwhile, farmers and rural communities, because of the worsening climate, become more vulnerable to the effects of drought and natural disasters. Development activities financed by donors and international financial institutions can also aggravate the plights of vulnerable groups. For instance, indigenous territories become sites for oil exploration, extractive industries, mining, and geothermal projects without prior and informed consent of indigenous communities. These activities, supported by merging ODA with private finance, have fueled conflict and militarization, widespread displacement of villages, violation of rights, and loss of lives from marginalized sectors.

The current realities in contexts of conflict, fragility, and occupation reflect the worst of the humanitarian crises having violated numerous, if not all, international laws and UN instruments.

Weapons of war have gone beyond arms and have included the blatant denial of fundamental human rights such as water, food, sleep, and education; the genocide of peoples, the killing of children, as well as the rape of women. These instances also result in states of emergency in the health sector with widespread starvation and repeated outbreaks of deadly diseases like cholera. Deadly risks are taken by poverty-driven people to find better lives. The most vulnerable experience daily physical, mental, and emotional abuse from these situations. Aid itself has also become a tool of war to breed dependence in people like that in Israeli-occupied Palestine

Unpacking issues around the 'triple nexus'

Reports from the regions and sectors commonly point to the lack of coherence among development, humanitarian, and peace strategies in national and regional policies. In the case of the refugee and border crises in LAC and Asia, the priority of national development policies is national security. Governments are more concerned about straining local resources to accommodate the influx of refugees. As a result, governments are less interested in the welfare and human rights of refugees and asylum seekers. Addressing the causes that drive people to

flee from their countries of origin is not an objective of national policies. Most countries in Asia, for instance, lack national legal frameworks to address forced migration that result in the neglect of refugees and asylum seekers. In WANA, aid to Gaza is restricted to support crops that do not compete with Israel's agricultural exports and not oriented towards Gaza's own agricultural needs. In the Pacific, the issue of climate-induced migration is inadequately addressed in regional policy documents.

Government approaches to recovery and rehabilitation at times also further increase the vulnerability of affected communities through policies that prioritize big business interests over the needs of conflict- and disaster-affected communities. This is reflected in the experiences of farmers and rural communities in Ethiopia and the Philippines. Policies skewed towards large-scale private commercial farming tend to neglect the needs of smallholder farmers and worsen food insecurity.

Donors' abuse of disaster relief to justify and expand military presence in disaster-prone areas was also highlighted in the reports. The rural sector presentation explained how humanitarian assistance served as pretext for the controversial Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement between the Philippines and the United States that allowed American troops to base their military facilities in the Philippines as part of humanitarian relief efforts.

Geopolitics and economic interests increasingly drive the foreign policies of aid providers. The US, for instance, is expanding its military support to ally countries to counter the influence of China and advance its geopolitical objectives. These activities risk creating conflict and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. The modernization of ODA rules risks further diverting the use of ODA to support and legitimize repressive measures under so-called counter-terrorist and other security-related initiatives in developing countries. It also allows reporting in-donor refugee costs as ODA, shrinking further the aid budget programmed for combating poverty in developing countries. Meanwhile, donor military spending is rising while donors continuously struggle to fulfill their ODA and climate finance commitments. The wide discrepancy between military budgets on the one hand, and development assistance and climate financing on the other, reflect contradictory objectives that undermine efforts to advance peace and sustainable development.

The inclusion of civil society groups in relevant decision-making processes was also described to be lacking. In WANA and the Pacific, CSO participation in decision-making is hardly present. Meanwhile in LAC, CSOs are subjected to abuse, arrest, and surveillance by government forces for providing humanitarian assistance to asylum seekers at the border.

CSOs, in their own capacities, play a critical role in helping vulnerable groups. The LAC report documented CSOs providing humanitarian services including legal training and medical assistance to asylum seekers. They also engage in policy advocacy and building national and international solidarity across organizations and countries. As the report from Africa highlighted, CSOs also involve themselves in peace talks and help promote reconciliation. They enhance local ownership of peace-building initiatives and contribute to the democratization of process. They also provide a credible bridge between policymakers and their constituencies.

Upholding effective development cooperation in conflict and fragility: key messages

Things do not happen in a vacuum. Events influence and determine each other. Often, they breed conflicts where there are wars of aggression that are waged for political and socio-economic hegemony; and in response there are also wars of defense and liberation. Issues of humanitarian, development, and peace need to be addressed in a nexus. Drawing from the rich discussions and experiences shared by regional and sectoral civil society representatives during the two-day activity, participants to the Study Conference unite on the following key messages:

- Promoting coherence among humanitarian, development, and peace objectives and committed implementations is critical for addressing the immediate and long-term needs of people living in conflicted and fragile settings, including those living under occupation. Development planning coherence needs to be practiced by humanitarian, development, and peace actors in the context of establishing regional and national development priorities, strategies, and actions.
- The ‘triple nexus’ approach to financing, planning, and programming must be consistent with the international humanitarian law, and human rights laws and norms, with particular regard to women's rights instruments, and promote the use of gender and human rights-based approaches. This is essential in ensuring the rights and welfare of women, indigenous peoples, youth and children, the elderly, persons living with disabilities, rural communities, and other vulnerable sectors in conflict and fragile contexts are protected and upheld. Governments must recognize and fulfill their extra-territorial obligations in upholding these commitments.
- Donors must end the politicization and militarization of humanitarian aid. They should refrain from fusing humanitarian and geopolitical economic objectives, and pooling humanitarian and development funding to advance security, migration, and geopolitical interests that could breed conflict.
- In embarking on development cooperation projects and key activities, donors and governments should prioritize the needs of poor and vulnerable people over commercial and business interests. Activities that facilitate resource extraction, seabedmining, and land grabbing risk exacerbating the vulnerability of marginalized groups. Likewise, all forms of commercialization and co-option of conflict and humanitarian responses, organizations, and institutions, such that profit becomes a key driver of aid and humanitarian action, must end.
- The inclusion and meaningful participation of civil society organizations in humanitarian, development, and peace-building processes and initiatives should be strengthened. Enhancing the participation of CSOs adds value to local democratic ownership of these strategies and is precondition to transparency and accountability of governments, donors, and other duty-bearers. Ending impunity is key in holding actors accountable to rights frameworks.
- Advocacy on the implementation and adoption of policies concerning the welfare of the most vulnerable groups trapped in humanitarian crises needs to intensify. These include policies promoting the right to employment, education, movement, etc. while in refuge but at the same time addressing the causes of displacement to enable them to return.
- More than highlighting stopgap measures, humanitarian, development, and peace actors need to recognize the importance of addressing the structural determinants of the humanitarian crises such as long-standing poverty, power relations, socio-economic and gender inequalities, landlessness and land and resource-grabbing, political violence and insecurity, and resource extraction. Addressing the root causes of the problem is a vital step in finding solutions that promote just and lasting peace and realize the right to development.

Amidst intense conditions and deliberate deprivation of civic space, the persistence of civil society and people's movements in asserting their rightful positions in the discourses on humanitarian, peace, and development is a gleam of hope to those living under conflict, fragility, and occupation. The decades-long humanitarian crisis in Palestine is an eminent example of how the people's demands for sustainable development, justice, and lasting peace are interlinked under the national quest for freedom from US-Israel occupation. The Palestinians' assertion of

their right to return home is among the many inspiring cases of how people are standing up and resisting around the world to end injustice and violence.

The CPDE Working Group on Conflict and Fragility resolves to forward the key messages of this communiqué in strong affirmation of the vision of just and lasting peace and security for the people.

ACT Alliance

Arab Group for the Protection of Nature (APN), Jordan

Bethlehem Farmers Union, Palestine

Cameroon Youths and Students Forum for Peace (CAMYOSFOP), Cameroon

Centro de Estudios e Investigación sobre Mujeres (CEIM), Spain

Center for Research and Advocacy Manipur (CRAM), Northeast India

CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE)

Ibon International

International Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self-Determination and Liberation (IPMSDL)

International Migrants Alliance (IMA)

Iraqi Society for Consumer Rights Defense, Iraq

Iraqi Society for Nutrition and Food Safety, Iraq

National Confederation of Traditional Fishing (CNPAM), Morocco

National Observatory of Participatory Citizenship, Tunisia

PacificWin

Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations (PIANGO), Pacific Region

Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees (PARC), Palestine

People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty (PCFS)

Refugee Welfare Association of Cameroon (RWAC), Cameroon

Roots for Equity, Pakistan

Servicio Jesuita a Refugiados, Ecuador

Tanzania Organization for Agricultural Development (TOFAD), Tanzania

[1] OECD, 2018, States of Fragility 2018: Highlights, Retrieved from: https://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/docs/OECD%20Highlights%20documents_web.pdf

[2] Ibid.