



Quality Assurance in COVID-19 Crisis Response: Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention

What are the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on fragility¹ and conflict?

Despite the high relevance of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus in the Covid-19 response, it seems, with priorities shifted, there is a risk of the peace pillar falling off the nexus waggon. Planning and (re)programming gravitate between humanitarian aid and development co-operation and the respective double-nexus and responses are not adequately conflict-sensitive.

- **Fragility and risk of violence and violent conflict are increasing:** The Covid-19 crisis and the response to it are exacerbating the underlying roots of conflict, particularly inequality. In some places, this means violence is being reignited and peace processes threatened.
- **Securitization and law enforcement is an additional risk for the most vulnerable:** To contain the outbreak, many national governments have started pairing their medical resources with law enforcement. Police abuse has already been reported in several contexts that have imposed confinement measures. Security sector capabilities are also mobilized, notably to enforce lockdown. Recent Ebola outbreaks have shown that such deployments can exacerbate tensions, especially in countries where security forces face high levels of public distrust. In addition, in some areas where humanitarian workers are providing the bulk of medical services, the associations of health providers with mistrustful security actors raises concern.
- **The crisis is putting mediation on hold but has also provided opportunities to advance peace:** As is the case with many large-scale natural disasters, Covid-19 is an opportunity to (re-)shape diplomatic relations. For example, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait have offered humanitarian assistance to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Taking on the UN call for global ceasefire amidst coronavirus, a ceasefire has been reached in the Philippines. Despite these efforts, however, diplomatic work is curtailed by the pandemic. Special envoys have stopped traveling, and several mediation initiatives have been cancelled due to risk of contagion.

¹ Fragile contexts are defined through the OECD fragility framework. The 2018 framework recognizes 58 countries representing fragile or extremely fragile contexts. For more information see <http://www3.compareyourcountry.org/states-of-fragility/overview/0/>

- **Local peacebuilders are struggling to sustain their work:** Local peacebuilders are rooted in their communities and are used to adapting and integrating programs in response to changing needs. They have a vital role to play as trusted messengers and mediators in the communities, especially where trust in government may be low. However, with priorities shifting to Covid-19 responses, local peacebuilders fear reductions in financial support and attention from international donors. In addition, some governments are exploiting the crisis to further restrict civil society space and increase authoritarian measures.

What measures can we take to ensure adequate consideration of fragility and conflict prevention into response efforts?

- Promote coherent, and where appropriate, joint programming across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus in line with the respective [DAC recommendations](#).
- Covid-19 response and recovery efforts should address all the dimensions of fragility. This includes 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.
- Ensure that all financing is based on a political economy, gender, vulnerability and conflict sensitivity analysis to do no harm and maximize impact in support of sustainable peace, which includes the full range of humanitarian, social, economic, political and security considerations arising from Covid-19.
- Engage peacebuilding actors to support design and lead Covid-19 sensitization and response efforts to help mitigate further conflict, prevent violence, adapt and sustain peace processes, and (re)build social cohesion.
- Promote local response and avoid parallel structures by strengthening municipal authorities, the capacity of local civil society and credible local peace agents, drawing on their comparative advantage with access to hard-to-reach populations.
- Encourage human rights training and other capacities development measures for those who enforce containment measures, such as the police and military. In particular, programmes/projects supporting Security Sector Reform/Governance (SSR/SSG) processes should ensure that security and law enforcement capacity development measures include protection and international humanitarian law elements and follow a human rights based approach.

Some key resources:

OECD: [Covid-19, Crises and Fragility. OECD Tackling Coronavirus \(Covid-19\): Contributing to a Global Effort, April 2020](#)

The [States of Fragility platform](#) managed by the OECD Conflict & Fragility Unit features a new focus on Covid-19 and Fragility which is updated on a daily basis;

The International Crisis Group (ICG) put together a special coverage dedicated to [Covid-19 crisis and conflict](#). ICG's two podcast series "War and Peace" and "The Horn" featuring ICG's senior analysts and special guests are covering the Covid-crisis and impacts of Covid-19 on conflicts as well.

The programmatic linkages between Security Sector Reform/Security Sector Governance (SSR/SSG) and Covid-19

DCAF's Policy Brief „The impact of Covid-19 on Security Sector Governance, May 2020

Perspectives from civilian peacebuilders on the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on peacebuilding efforts

The Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR), policy brief