



Thematic Paper

How building national capacities for conflict prevention contributes to sustaining peace

May 2020

Paper prepared by the [Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention](#) as submission to the 2020 Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace.¹

Introduction

Violent conflict has surged in recent years and more countries experienced violent conflict than at any time in nearly 30 years.² While the complex relationship between conflict, security and development is increasingly understood, international assistance and investment in conflict prevention have remained relatively low. At the same time, approaches to preventing conflict have been refined considerably, as policy and practice on peacebuilding have evolved – and the UN, its Member States and other partners are increasingly looking to prevention as a critical strategy for sustaining peace and nurturing development. Conflict prevention is increasingly recognized as a rational and cost-effective strategy for countries at risk of violence and for the international community.³

The Secretary-General identified the [Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention](#) as a model programme in cross-pillar collaboration making relevant capacities available for Member States. Since its inception in 2004, the *Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention*⁴ has become a flagship initiative building on the combined strengths of DPPA and UNDP. The Programme bridges the gap between political engagement and development assistance in pursuit of preventing conflict and sustaining peace in more than 70 countries. It serves as a vehicle to assist both Member States to deepen their national capacities and processes to prevent conflict;

Joint Programme in numbers

56 PDA positions globally in 2020, including 4 with multi-country roles

In 2019, 62% of PDAs supported national peace architectures, policies & strategies for conflict prevention

In past 3 years, 61% of PDAs supported, designed, or facilitated conflict analysis processes and 86% provided support to the UNCT on conflict sensitivity

More than half of PDAs made special efforts to enhance the participation of women and youth in dialogue and mediation efforts in 2019

¹ See annex for relevant recommendations of the 2108 Report of the Secretary-General (A/72/707-S/2018/43).

² United Nations; World Bank, “Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict”, Washington D.C. 2018

³ Ibid.

⁴ See [Programme Document: Preventing conflict and sustaining peace, Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme on building national capacities for conflict prevention \(2018-2023\)](#)

as well as to equip UN Country Teams to provide better support to the Member States to achieve these objectives.

Strengthening national conflict prevention capacities: a contribution to sustaining peace

Sustaining peace is first and foremost a responsibility of Member States requiring both capacity and political will. The approach taken by the Joint Programme is that investing in and supporting national capacities for conflict prevention is both critical and cost-effective.

The Joint Programme is designed to support capacities and initiatives geared at sustaining peace, with a focus on consolidating national structures and enhancing local mechanisms for conflict prevention. DPPA and UNDP jointly strengthen the role of local actors in mediation, dialogue, reconciliation; support the establishment of national policies and structures for sustaining peace; bolster national early warning systems and integrate gender-responsive approaches and participation of women. At the forefront of these efforts are 56 Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs) deployed in the offices of UN Resident Coordinators (RCs) across the globe. PDAs are in many contexts accompanied by a national peace and development officer, or international capacities deployed through UNVs or secondments.

“ Tunisia commends the work achieved by the Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention. It has been particularly helpful as it demonstrated that the UN genuinely believes that national stakeholders are the most capable actors for preventing conflict in their countries.

Khemaies Jhinaoui, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, at the Joint Programme Partner Event, July 2019

”

National peace architectures and policies are strengthened and geared towards sustaining peace

In **Nigeria**, a National Peace Policy was developed over the years with the support of UNDP and the PDA team. The Peace Policy encourages the development of institutional efforts towards conflict prevention and resolution, including the establishment of early warning platforms and peace structures at the Federal and State levels. Great strides have been made towards formal legislated peace architecture at state (Kaduna and Plateau States already have functional structures) and federal levels. With the persistent Boko Haram insurgency, coupled with new emerging challenges such as the herders-farmers crisis and inter-communal conflicts, such structures have proven critical to sustaining peace.

In **Guatemala**, the PDA in collaboration with UNDP, led and facilitated the elaboration of prospective electoral scenarios ahead of the 2019 general elections. This exercise was carried out jointly with the Electoral Violence Prevention and Mitigation Working Group of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal. The PDA also provided technical support and continuous accompaniment to the Working Group to monitor the evolution of the scenarios and the eighteen strategic actions to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Electoral Tribunal, and increase citizen confidence in the electoral process. The monitoring and follow-up system established around the prospective scenarios could be the basis for a future electoral early warning system.

In **Uganda**, the PDA played a critical advisory and facilitation role in support of UN efforts to advise national counterparts in the drafting of the National Peace Policy and the revision and advocacy for the Transitional

Justice Policy, hence setting national standards and policies for sustaining peace. The PDA in collaboration with UNDP also facilitated capacity building as well as collaborative leadership for the constitutionally mandated forum for political dialogue, the National Consultative Forum.

National stakeholders demonstrate stronger skills and understanding of sustaining peace

In the past three years, the PDA **Eritrea** has led a programme of capacity building for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, specifically focusing on upcoming young diplomats. The programme has consisted of intensive training courses on peace and security including on conflict and situation analysis, multilateralism and the role the UN, international human rights instruments, diplomatic correspondence and communication and negotiation and mediation. By the end of 2019, the number of young diplomats trained was 90, with an agreement to conduct iterative follow-up with course participants. This will enable participants to continue to deepen their understanding of the areas covered through an action-reflection process as well as build knowledge in new areas. The capacity building process is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Eritrea, DPPA and the Resident Coordinator's Office in Eritrea.

In **Côte d'Ivoire**, the PDA partnered with the Clingendael Academy to support a training on negotiation and mediation skills in the Netherlands for the Director of Social Cohesion from the Ministry of Solidarity, Social Cohesion and the Fight against Poverty. The Director of Social Cohesion then provided a training to fifty Civil Society Organization members working on early warning across the country. This investment led to a greater understanding of conflict analysis and conflict prevention amongst national stakeholders.

Mediation and dialogue engagements are more inclusive

In the **Republic of the Congo** the PDA supported the gender responsive implementation of a Peacebuilding Fund project in the Pool region. This resulted in greater inclusion of women in newly established dialogue and reconciliation committees, amplifying women's voices at the community and regional levels. At least 40% of the participants in these platforms were women, inclusive of women in leadership committees. This initiative is an example of how the Joint Programme is working towards the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, through strengthening gender-sensitive analysis, ensuring inclusive and gender-responsive process design, and the promotion of women's participation in peacebuilding processes.

The PDA team in the **South Caucasus** continues to organize and facilitate regional roundtable discussions focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), gathering civil society actors and UN agencies in the sub-region. In 2019, three UN-CSO roundtables were organized in Georgia as part of a collaboration between UNDP, IOM and UNFPA. The roundtables provide an opportunity for stakeholders from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to meet and discuss innovative delivery of the SDGs. These sessions provide an important opportunity for civil society members from the three countries to engage on issues of common concern.

Contributions to policy and operational coherence on prevention

Policy and operational coherence through cross-pillar approaches, partnerships and knowledge exchange

The Joint Programme contributes to operational and policy coherence of UN engagement by facilitating cross-pillar engagements both at HQ as well as the country level; providing spaces for knowledge-sharing and peer-exchange on conflict prevention practices; and promoting partnerships for sustaining peace.

At the country level, PDAs play a key role in ensuring linkages between the UN's political and development work. In **Nigeria**, the Resident Coordinator with the support of the PDA, established a coordination platform of partners and stakeholders working on the issue of herders-farmers conflict in the Middle Belt and North-Central of Nigeria. The platform brings together development partners, various government agencies at federal and state levels, national and international NGOs, pressure groups and UN agencies to support the implementation of the Humanitarian, Development and Peace nexus. A dashboard has been created to map the stakeholders and their initiatives to avoid duplication, enhance coordination and synergy building.

Through its convening capacity, the Joint Programme creates opportunities for peer-exchange and knowledge sharing with the overall purpose to ensure the UN can better work together to realize the commonly agreed prevention agenda.

The annual **PDA fellowship** programme organized in partnership with UNDP's Oslo Governance Centre brings together PDAs and conflict prevention specialists to engage in facilitated reflections on issues such as national ownership, gender responsive peacebuilding, and climate related security risks and sustaining peace (2019 cohort). Such initiatives ensure that practitioners' knowledge gained from the engagement at the country level is shared and fed into policy formulation processes.

Global and regional retreats for PDAs and other key UN experts are organized annually and provide space for peer-to-peer exchange, facilitate the sharing of innovative practices, and increase the collaboration at the field level, as well as between the country, regional and UN HQ level colleagues. In 2019, the first regional retreat for Africa enabled PDAs to reflect on peace and security dynamics in their sub-regions and identify concrete opportunities for collaboration at regional and cross-border level.

The bi-annual **Resident Coordinator workshops** on prevention offer a strategic forum for senior leadership at the country level to exchange lessons learned and best practices towards ensuring operational and policy coherence for sustaining peace. Early 2019, the first UN-World Bank leadership dialogue on operationalizing the Pathways for Peace study gathered Resident Coordinators and World Bank Country Directors/Managers from five countries. The exchange allowed participants to reflect on key prevention challenges in their respective countries and identify potential areas of UN-World Bank collaboration.

The Joint Programme strives to contribute to stronger **partnerships with International Financial Institutions** such as the World Bank and diplomatic delegations, as well as where appropriate with regional and sub-regional organizations. In **Tunisia**, the PDA team contributed to efforts aimed at anchoring UN-World Bank cooperation in the country. Following a joint mission to Tunisia in July 2018, the UN and the World Bank are discussing how to leverage synergies on the local level through capitalizing on the UN's methodology

for including marginalized youth in political decision-making. They are also cooperating on a joint analysis on the southern regions.

In **Liberia**, throughout the year, the PDA team supported regular coordination meetings and liaison with the diplomatic corps which led to valuable exchange of information, joint statements and harmonized messaging and accompaniment aiming to advance peace and stability.

Support to country-level leadership and processes

The Programme is an example of cross-system model which pools capacities and technical expertise, ensuring that Resident Coordinators as well as the broader UN Country Teams benefit from advisory support that are matched to the needs of national priorities. This results in analytical capacity of the UN system in support of Member States' efforts to advance policy and programmatic coherence on conflict prevention and support strategies for sustaining peace. Beyond long-term advisory capacity through the deployment of PDAs, the Joint Programme also provides surge capacity where requested by UN country teams.

In **Benin**, a short-term PDA was deployed in 2019, which ultimately led to establishing a long-term PDA position in the country. The PDA provided regular situational analysis related to the post-election crisis and facilitated collaboration between the Benin and Togo UN Country Teams to address cross-border challenges. This resulted in the elaboration of a joint cross-border projects funded by the Peacebuilding Fund on prevention of conflict and violent extremism between Benin, Burkina Faso and Togo.

Contribution to joint analysis and planning processes

PDAs actively engage in UN System processes related to country analysis, planning and programming including the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and new Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) processes.

In **Tunisia**, the PDA played a critical role supporting the Resident Coordinator Office to organize a series of conversations with various partners, experts and UN agencies, to inform the CCA with the lens of Leave No One Behind. The initiative helped identify for each of the twelve dimensions of the SDG-based Risk Framework: key stakeholders, peoples left behind and factors that may aggravate their exclusion, trends and forecasts, and resilience capacities (institutional, socio-economic, political, etc.), inter alia. The CCA was a collaborative process, and benefitted from engagements with the UN Regional Economic Commissions for Africa and West Asia, ECA and ESCWA respectively, and with the Institute of Security Studies that modelled Tunisia's development trajectory until 2040 based on the International Futures method.

In **The Gambia**, the PDA played a critical role providing technical guidance to the participatory and nationally driven Conflict and Development Analysis (CDA). This exercise allowed The Gambia to receive \$7 million in 2018 from the Peacebuilding Fund, which created an active momentum for 2019. Ghana's Peace Architecture, lessons learned, and challenges were studied during a tour organized by Government focal

persons and civil society representatives to Ghana. This allowed them to outline the lessons and experiences learned from the Ghanaian stakeholders, and plan to strengthen the infrastructure for peace for The Gambia.

Contribution to the UN's conflict sensitive engagement and prevention programming

The Joint Programme supports UNCT members in conflict sensitivity, translating analysis into programmes, and other programmatic support on prevention. Over the years, the PDAs have made a strong contribution to the increased capacity of the UNCT to engage in conflict prevention. By undertaking political and conflict analysis to connect the development and peace and security pillars of the UN, PDAs help UN Country Teams mainstream conflict sensitivity in programming and design programmes that address conflict drivers in the country.

In **Chad** the PDA focused on catalysing peacebuilding programming by working with several UN agencies and the government to finalize five joint peacebuilding projects. The projects were aligned to the Government's priorities identified in the PBF eligibility request, namely preventing radicalization and extremism, promoting inclusion, and reducing inter-communal tensions and cross-border transhumance. Following this, the PDA supported the development of two new joint peacebuilding projects which attracted \$6.5 million investment from the PBF, supported the design of the PBF Secretariat and continued to provide conflict-sensitive advice and quality assurance for the implementation of six existing peacebuilding initiatives.

In its coordinating and advisory role, the PDA team in **Sri Lanka** is helping to mainstream conflict sensitive planning across the UNCT. When local communities expressed concerns regarding a project focusing on a sole women's cooperative, the team worked closely with the project owners, WFP and ILO, to help build trust and broaden the scope of benefits of soft infrastructure and public goods, thereby diffusing tensions, while retaining the original project objectives of serving female ex-combatants.

During the 2020 Covid-19 crisis, the PDA in **Uganda** has conducted a political assessment of the preventive measures taken against the spread of COVID-19 and is providing advice on reprogramming/repurposing of existing projects to respond to emerging risks of hate speech and stigmatization recorded in some communities. As a result, the UN Country Team focused on conflict-sensitive communication through social media, regular and print media messaging to build/repair trust and enhance social cohesion.



Our national capacity to prevent and manage conflict has received a tremendous boost from the Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme over the last two years. Political stability, pluralism and participatory democracy have become the order of the day. Press freedom is once again being consolidated with a prioritization of more print media, private TV stations and new media houses. Civil society is now operating with freedom, vibrancy and without fear of government clampdown or interference.

Lamin Faati, Deputy Permanent Representative of The Gambia at the Joint Programme Partner Event, July 2019



Moving forward

Understanding and addressing conflict drivers and strengthening processes and capacities for conflict prevention is dependent on appropriate, effective and sustainable national capacities being developed and supported. PDAs provide a vital resource to UN country teams enabling them to effectively support countries strengthen their own unique processes and mechanisms to prevent conflict and sustain peace.

To strengthen the capacities of PDAs and UNCTs to engage in sustaining peace, the Joint Programme is deploying in 2020 a cadre of Regional Programme Specialists based in Amman, Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Dakar, Istanbul and Panama. The Specialists will support regional conflict analysis and provide back-up support to PDAs and UNCTs in conflict sensitive programming, the strengthening of local capacities for dialogue as well conflict prevention.

Annex

Relevant recommendations of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Operational and policy coherence to strengthen support to peacebuilding and sustaining

3. I reaffirm my commitment to integration as a way of maximizing the impact of the UN in mission settings. I have also requested that the integrated assessment and planning policy be revised to improve coherent action across the UN system in support of sustaining peace.

4. I will build upon such initiatives [of cross-pillar cooperation] by encouraging the creation of additional cross-system models for UN joint technical support that pool capacities and funding, resulting in programming that helps to sustain peace.

6. I will ask senior UN leadership in the field to ensure joined-up analysis of risks and to translate such analysis into coherent strategies and actions in support of sustaining peace.

7. I will strive to ensure that the [United Nations Development Assistance] Frameworks are risk informed and become more effective tools for supporting national efforts to build resilience and for accelerating transitions out of crisis to sustain peace.

Leadership, accountability and capacity in supporting peacebuilding and sustaining peace

11. In relevant contexts, resident coordinators, including triple-hatted deputy special representatives of the Secretary-General, must receive integrated support from development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding entities in order to foster an integrated response that includes human rights and gender equality, and must be accountable for improving inter-agency collaboration to support national actors in risk management, resilience-building and the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies.

2020 Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Guidance for Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Thematic Papers

12. I will encourage diversity of experience across peace and security, development, human rights and humanitarian issues for all UN senior leadership, with improved and adequately incentivized inter-agency mobility, including across all three pillars of the UN.

16. I recommend that staff of the resident coordinator offices or of the integrated presence in a country have advisory responsibilities, in addition to planning and coordination, monitoring and evaluation and financing support functions, in accordance with the UN Development Assistance Framework. I

recommend that the Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention, which currently deploys more than 40 peace and development advisers to resident coordinator offices, in full agreement with the respective Governments, serve as a model for making such enhanced capacities available.

17. I will build upon these existing good practices in the provision of appropriate expertise and surge capacities to resident coordinators, UN country teams and peace operations to support national needs, including by encouraging all entities to work in effective cross-pillar partnerships.

Partnerships for peacebuilding and sustaining peace

34. I encourage system-wide engagement with regional and subregional organizations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, with a focus on regular dialogue, enhanced information-sharing, improved coordination, and joint approaches and activities, on the basis of comparative advantages.

41. I encourage the international community to tap into the peacebuilding potential of youth organizations, including by improving their access to funding, technical support and capacity-building and by providing space for youth participation in programming.