ISSUE BRIEF: INFRASTRUCTURE FOR PEACE

United Nations Development Programme

CRISIS PREVENTION AND RECOVERY

*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

Over 1.5 billion people around the world live in a community affected by war, violence or high levels of crime, and over 526,000 people die each year as a result of violence or conflict; approximately one per minute.

Armed conflict wrecks lives, destroys the social fabric within and among communities, imposes economic burdens on countries that can ill afford them and extinguishes any hope of eliminating poverty for millions of people.

Preventing violence not only save lives, but is also cost effective. The cost of measures to promote dialogue and peaceful mediation in a country in order to prevent violent conflict is, on average, just 10 per cent of the cost of recovery after a civil war.

Societies that are resilient to violent conflict are those where different groups can constructively interact with one another to address potential causes of tension, such as socio-economic, political, ethnic, or religious differences, or unequal resource allocation. Such societies have effective state, local and community institutions that can work together, network and deal with political and other challenges in an inclusive and peaceful manner.

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR PEACE

A network of interdependent systems, resources, values and skills held by government, civil society and community institutions that promote dialogue and consultation; prevent conflict and enable peaceful mediation when violence occurs in a society.

Political transitions after regime changes; differences over the conduct and management of political and electoral processes; and management of natural resources are examples of fraught issues that may spark violent conflict. Reducing the likelihood of violence requires adopting a strategic approach, strengthening local and national institutionalized processes, and the building of dialogue and mediation skills.

UNDP helps countries to establish and strengthen national peace infrastructure; the processes, policies and institutions that help design, support and enhance social resilience to violent conflict - and build sustainable freedom from strife.

UNDP'S APPROACH

To assist countries and societies reduce the chances of future conflict, UNDP helps to foster and strengthen the local and national capacity to build peace, by providing government institutions, civil society, NGOs, communities and individuals with advice, training and support in the analysis of issues, trends and patterns that may lead to violence. UNDP also helps to establish early warning and response systems to detect, anticipate, identify and swiftly act upon potential hostilities.

UNDP works to establish and support community, village, regional and national peace councils who engage with potential belligerents and mediate disputes.

When, despite these prevention efforts, violent conflict flares up, UNDP helps to ensure that there is a standing capacity to deal with it; enhancing the capability of stakeholders to resolve issues in a systematic manner. UNDP supports "insider mediators," who work inside communities to assist with non-violent conflict resolution. UNDP also advocates for the active participation of women in national and local peace infrastructure and initiatives.

Sometimes development efforts may exacerbate existing conflicts. UNDP's approach includes ensuring that peace and development initiatives are sensitive to the intricacies of local dynamics and don't inadvertently exacerbate or contribute to underlying tensions and hostilities.

UNDP is active in more than 40 countries, supporting a range of strategically interconnected activities that strengthen the respective national peace architecture. Examples of these initiatives include:

- Enhancing the coordination of local, regional and national peace groups and initiatives;

- Providing advice and support for the establishment of government departments and institutions responsible for national peacebuilding, dialogue and mediation, and supporting their work with community peace groups;

- Designing and facilitating the revitalization of existing conflict prevention systems, and assisting with, for example, new technology, and other innovative initiatives;

- Assisting communities, groups and nations, building collaboration and consensus among leaders and governments to address recurrent conflicts and violence, such as those related to disputes over natural or extractive resources, inequity, marginalization or exclusion, contested political transitions and elections, governance systems, or constitutional frameworks; and

- Assisting governments to design policies and regulations that support the establishment of peace infrastructure.

UNDP IN ACTION

In **Ghana**, in the lead-up to elections in 2012, UNDP helped build and strengthen the national and local peace infrastructure by providing mediation training, conflict prevention advice and support to the National Peace Council, police and election officers. These groups were then able to intervene to defuse potential violence, helping to ensure peaceful elections and a successful presidential transition in December 2012.

The peace council has now been established by law as a permanent conflict management body for Ghana and the model is being replicated in **Uganda** and **Zimbabwe**. Drawing partly from their own experiences and partly from the Ghanaian example Uganda is strengthening its constitutionally mandated National Consultative Forum, which facilitates inter-party dialogue; while Zimbabwe's new constitution now includes an independent National Peace and Reconciliation Council that is accepted by all parties.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, following violence and escalating tension after the April 2010 regime change, UNDP supported the development of local and national peace councils, who, together with government and other members of civil society, jointly analyze conflict trends, and act as mediators and facilitators on contentious issues. In order to help reduce tensions around the Kyrgyz-Tajik and Kyrgyz-Uzbek borders, UNDP supported the establishment of cross-border working groups who meet to address farmers' use of cross-border grazing lands and trade.

In the aftermath of the political transition in **Tunisia** in 2011, UNDP helped the new regime to design a locally-led model for political and social dialogue; giving political factions and civil society organizations more voice in the development of the new government and constitutional process.

Insider mediators, or skilled national peace facilitators, played a crucial role in **Lesotho** when in 2012, the country - for the first time in its history, saw a peaceful political transition when a civilian government willingly handing over power to its opposition.

Women's focus group discussions supported by UNDP in Kenya, 2010. Photo by UNDP Kenya

In 2010, **Kenya**, a country that has experienced past political hostility, held a constitutional referendum without a single incidence of violence. This was due in part to UNDP supported training of police, peace councils, the government and civil society in how to use technology and crowd sourcing to identify potential violent hot spots and act, through improved security or mediation, to defuse conflicts. This prevention effort identified and pre-empted nearly 150 incidents of violence, and helped political parties reach consensus on the draft constitution before the vote. The system is now in place for future elections.

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