

SHORT-TERM, LONG-SIGHTED: HOW CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND HUMANITARIAN AID CAN EMPOWER LOCAL RECONCILERS

INSTITUTIONAL LEAD

The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers; Mercy Corps; Crisis Management Centre Finland

MODERATOR

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OVERVIEW

National and international actors in conflict areas are often guided by the short-term time frames of the media, politicians and donors. This risks harming the locally led work of reconcilers and peacemakers, which is often framed by religious or traditional values. These can underpin local social fabrics and are thus often the best basis for long-term peacebuilding and sustainable reconciliation. In this session, a panel of local religious peacemakers, civilian crisis-management experts and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) discussed humanitarian assistance and crisis response in relation to local dynamics. How can humanitarian assistance and crisis response be adapted to promote a peaceful recovery and begin to lay the foundations for sustainable peace? What are the strengths and limitations of international organizations in peacebuilding and what is best done by local reconcilers, such as religious leaders, tribal elders, local and national government officials, the police, the military and business leaders? The panel also explored how international organizations can identify legitimate and effective local reconcilers and peacemakers, how to ensure alignment of interests across local and international actors and how to plan inclusive humanitarian assistance that supports locally led peacebuilding.

FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES

The session discussed how civilian crisis management can best take local views and values into account; how can humanitarian actors engage local actors in creating an enabling environment for sustainable peace; and how local reconcilers see these interventions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Humanitarian assistance and crisis-management actors should combine forces with national and international actors working on peacebuilding. Humanitarian actors and crisis-management missions should also support the primacy of local actors and reconcilers within the constraints of their respective mandates. Moreover, while international NGOs use humanitarian assistance to support local reconcilers and peacemakers, there are challenges and opportunities in working together. Finally, there are challenges and opportunities for local reconcilers and peacemakers when working with international civil society organizations, but collaborations can be built so that the sustainability of the work is ensured.

There is a wide recognition that there is conceptual tension between the way that humanitarians and peacebuilders on the one hand and international and local actors on the other work on the ground. There is also a recognition that there is a capacity difference.

There is a need to coordinate and find ways for humanitarians and peacebuilders to collaborate. More attention should be paid to the risk that usually arise from conflicts. Since the work of the international peacekeeping community takes it to diverse communities, it needs to be culturally sensitive.

When programming, designing and planning, the structural drivers should be taken into account, while at the same time addressing vulnerabilities on the ground. There should be understanding, and be sensitivity to, what affected communities are going through.

There should be clarity on respective roles and goals. It is important that mandates are not mixed. Humanitarian assistance and crisis-management actors should remember why they are there in the first place and, for the sake of transparency and better relations, clarify their mission to local actors. All conflicts are different, so it is important that international actors find their space and understand their role.

Finally, there is an emerging trend to include community cohesion in humanitarian work; something that is appreciated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Clarify how and what role local actors should play in the peace process.
- Find ways for humanitarians and peacebuilders to collaborate.

The Network for
Religious and
Traditional
Peacemakers



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