

LAND AND CONFLICT

Supporting peace-making and peacebuilding efforts in fragile states



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OVERVIEW OF LAND AND CONFLICT

Land is a key driver of conflicts and is a bottleneck to recovery. Although increasingly acknowledged as a critical factor in peace-making and peacebuilding, land-related issues are often linked to the development agenda but are not properly addressed in post-conflict and peacebuilding. Neither are they inserted in the conflict cycle analysis. Conflicts are often not linear in character and phases of insecurity and partial stability can alternate. Fragile states are often characterized by an absence of land administration, land records and by recurring tension between customary land rights and formal legal systems. Often land-related issues contribute to protracted conflicts, making it difficult to

create stability. The “treat-the-symptoms” approach used to deal with land issues in post conflict situations can prolong a crisis, reviving and/or exacerbating old conflicts and triggering new ones. This is even more evident in the rural-urban nexus, where competition among different land users is tougher due to the increasing urbanization and consequent scarcity of land suitable for cultivation, ultimately leading to food insecurity, increased poverty and the risk of more conflicts and further displacement.

The overall perception is that the United Nations (UN), and the development community as a whole, are not “fit for purpose” to support member states and local stakeholders in addressing the above challenges.

ONGOING WORK ON LAND AND CONFLICT

In 2014, the Rule of Law Unit of the Executive Office of the Secretary General requested UN-Habitat to lead the drafting of a Secretary General Guidance Note on “Land and Conflict”. Preliminary discussions with a variety of stakeholders and Member States represented in the Peacebuilding Commission demonstrated a shared awareness of the global challenges and need for the UN to be made for fit-for-purpose for engagement at scale. Conflict prevention and peacebuilding require more sustained interventions on land throughout the conflict cycle, and a better alignment of the different UN pillars, in particular the peace and security sector, the human rights actors, the humanitarian and development community, and the broader land sector. It has both rural and urban dimensions.

A draft Scoping and Status Study (“the Study”) containing key findings and recommendations on how to engage at scale on land and conflict was developed, in collaboration with a wide range of UN entities, including the Rule of Law Unit of the Executive Office of the Secretary General, DPA, DPKO, UNDP, UN Women, OHCHR, PBSO, UNHCR, UNEP, FAO and IOM. The content of the study aligns with the recommendations coming out of the High Level Reviews on Peace Operations, the Peacebuilding Architecture and the UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Key findings of the study include: (1) Increased focus on shared root cause analysis

as a basis for shared vision and strategy; (2) Integration across peace and security, development and human rights pillars and coordination with the land sector; (3) Need for continuum of responses throughout the conflict-cycle; (4) Develop sustained political foundations and solutions foundations; (5) Build on the fit-for-purpose and partnership mechanisms; (6) Increase the focus on prevention and mediation; (7) Adopt a more inclusive processes involving both parties to the conflict, communities, civil society; and (8) Develop capacities.

A change model is proposed through the adoption of an incremental approach, which focuses on identifying entry points in the UN-wide system at global and country level, where new knowledge and methodologies can be developed, awareness and advocacy undertaken, and capacity building of champions to lead further changes identified. The game changers are: (1) Fit-for-purpose land administration; (2) The continuum of land rights approach; and (3) Building an issue-based coalition on land and conflict of UN and non-UN actors to operationalize common priorities.

The issue-based coalition, created during the Land and Conflict Forum, confirmed the findings of the study and, in particular, that capacity development is regarded as a major driver of the change required in the UN-wide system to address land and conflict.



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THE GLOBAL LAND TOOL NETWORK

The Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) is an alliance of 70 international partners contributing to poverty alleviation through the development and implementation of pro-poor and gender-responsive land tools and approaches, awareness creation, capacity development and knowledge. GLTN’s Secretariat sits in UN-Habitat and is funded by the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, IFAD, along with other smaller streams of funding. The GLTN

land and conflict stream of work is funded by the Swiss Development Cooperation through a programme which includes knowledge, tool and capacity development, and the creation of an issue based coalition of UN and non- UN partners on land and conflict. This is in line with the Secretary General Report on *The future of United Nations Peace Operations: Implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (S/2015/682)*, which proposes, among other things, the creation of an “issue-based coalition”.

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