



Piloting a resilience approach to peacebuilding:

**Insights from Interpeace's
Framework for Assessing Resilience (FAR) project**

Resilience has become a much-used word for those working in international development. It is used variably, and with little precision, but is generally understood to refer to the capacity to withstand and recover from shocks and crises. Specialists attach particular meaning to and emphasize different aspects of resilience depending on their field of work and mandate. The notions of “bouncing back” and “withstanding” have been most strongly associated with resilience particularly as it relates to natural disasters and humanitarian crises – floods, tsunamis, earthquakes and Ebola epidemics – where crises are momentous rather than enduring and can be attributed to an identifiable external shock. Nonetheless, all the while recognizing the specificity of each crisis, it can be observed that the consequences of shocks are often more perverse in societies where there are also long-term stressors that make them fragile and also more susceptible to shocks in the first place. The peacebuilding field focuses increasingly on these stressors: addressing the long term structures and processes that create situations of fragility and make societies vulnerable to violent conflict is considered a necessary step in preventing violent conflict. Therefore, a resilience framework must also include interventions aimed at detecting these stressors and creating the conditions for the changes needed to avert the crisis in the first place. In this conceptualization, resilience is not just about bouncing back and withstanding, but is also about transformation. This “transformative” dimension resonates particularly well with peacebuilders, who have argued that positive peace is not defined simply as the absence of violence, but rather constitutes an ongoing process of constructive social

change aimed at displacing exclusionary, unjust and inequitable structures and systems to foster inclusive and participatory institutions and promote equitable economic models.¹

There is undoubtedly a risk in “fashioning” resilience to suit the needs and perspectives of different disciplines, but it is also in some regard a testimony to the malleability and usefulness of the concept. The “building blocks” of peacebuilding are no mystery: there is sufficient documented best practice to inform a generic list of necessary conditions for peace: good governance, inclusive economic models, access to justice, legitimate institutions, trust, social and political cohesion. But in any given context, the priorities and interpretation of these factors as well as the pathways to their realization will vary. Many peacebuilding processes are oriented towards state building strategies, often trying to replicate imported models of state institutions; this is operationalized in the form of a string of capacity building workshops and technical support to governments. Recognizing that this can sometimes be effective, it is also important to appreciate the fact that those who are there after a conflict, who have returned or had never left, must have tapped into extraordinary courage and resourcefulness. An assessment of resilience draws attention to capacities and strengths in society, whether as individual personality traits, solidarity networks of communities or alternative livelihood strategies, and can therefore inform more context-specific and nationally owned peacebuilding processes.

1. See for instance the work of Johan Galtung (1967) and Adam Curle (1974) who talk about the distinction between negative peace as the absence of war and positive peace.

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Frameworks for Assessing Resilience

In 2014, Interpeace launched the Frameworks for Assessing Resilience (FAR) programme to explore the ways in which the concept of resilience can be used both conceptually and operationally in order to advance peacebuilding processes. Recognizing that the assessment of progress needs to be built in to peacebuilding programming, FAR puts a strong emphasis on the development of methods for assessing resilience, specifically as it relates to peacebuilding. In particular, FAR is designed such that the assessment approach is directly shaped by country-level participatory action research processes, which in turn inform and are complemented by quantitative surveys. It is a specific goal of the program to ensure that the criteria by which progress in peacebuilding is assessed, is based on the perspectives of people at the country level themselves, rather than merely imposed from the outside.

The three country cases chosen to pilot the development of a framework for assessing resilience – Timor-Leste, Liberia and Guatemala – are all fragile

contexts, but the specific manifestation of conflict and violence differs in important ways in each case. Timor-Leste is the second youngest nation in the world, grappling with the task of fostering social cohesion and national unity now that the Indonesian occupation has ended; Liberia is confronted with the ongoing task of social reconciliation and the rebuilding of state institutions in the wake of a not so distant protracted civil war; and Guatemala has somewhat moved on from the polarization and instability of the civil war which ended almost two decades ago but remains the site of extreme social inequality, pervasive corruption and very high rates of criminality. Whereas it is common to find country-level conflict analyses that look into obstacles to peace, this research is innovative in that it seeks to uncover the existing strengths, assets and capacities, as well as strategies, processes and structures that allow individuals, communities and indeed societies as a whole to overcome the legacy of past violent conflict, face up to current violence and threats to peace, as well as to potentially prevent future violent conflict. The central objective of developing and im-

plementing effective peacebuilding processes remains the same, but the approach is a new one.

The methodology applied to this project is ambitious in its efforts to be both action-oriented and analytical. It was important to operationalize resilience as an analytical concept capable of bringing forth internal understandings that can become the drivers of peacebuilding processes, in addition to conducting a research exercise aimed at developing frameworks for its assessment. Therefore, the project is designed so that country-level research is driven and implemented by local stakeholders who are engaged in deepening their understanding of existing resilience capacities in their societies and are invested in promoting peacebuilding processes based on this understanding in their respective countries. In Liberia and Timor-Leste, it was the [Platform for Dialogue and Peace \(P4DP\)](#) and the [Centre of Studies for Peace and Development \(CEPAD\)](#) respectively, Interpeace's local partners who led the research whereas in Guatemala, a team from Interpeace's regional Latin America Office implemented the project. In each of the countries, the research teams

conducted nationwide consultations through focus group discussions and interviews in order to define resilience in a context-specific way, and to map the different resilience strategies and resources that people use. The findings of this exploratory phase have been documented in country notes capturing peoples' understanding of their resilience in each case, and currently serve as a basis for multi-sector dialogue processes between key national stakeholders that continue to follow. These dialogue processes are now leading to concrete policy recommendations and action plans to strengthen peace and the resilience needed for peace in the country. Additionally, in Guatemala and Timor-Leste, a national survey based on randomized sampling will complement the findings from the consultation phase and provide quantitative data on resilience capacities, as well as informing and testing the development of indicators for the assessment of resilience, specifically as it relates to peacebuilding specifically.

The country-level consultations, surveys and stakeholder dialogue were complemented by a rigorous and expansive literature review of

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resilience theories and practices. This was conducted at the outset of the project and played an important role in informing the thinking and design of the process and country-level reflections.

After one year of research at the country level, a first Global Methodology Workshop was held in April 2015. This workshop brought researchers from the three pilot countries, as well as international scholar-practitioners and policy specialists working on peacebuilding and resilience, together around the same table. For researchers from the pilot countries, this exchange with scholars and colleagues from the other pilot

countries enriched and contributed to enhance their research, practice and conceptual frameworks. On the other hand, for the international scholar-practitioners present, hearing from the case studies gave them invaluable access and insight into context-specific realities that could better inform both policy and critical scholarship. The combination of a multi-country mixed method research with a practitioner-scholar dialogue, has contributed immensely to the coherence and relevance of the project, and to the reflections of how ‘resilience’ has been considered and interpreted to date, conceptually, practically and in policy circles. The case

studies, practitioner-scholar dialogue and literature and practice review conducted to date in the context of the FAR project are already generating important insights on how to conceive of resilience in the peacebuilding field. This article is divided into three sections. First, it reviews the value addition of introducing a resilience perspective in peacebuilding processes, which are inevitably political in nature. Second, it discusses the emerging findings from the case studies and their implication for the peacebuilding field. Finally it explores how resilience can serve as a basis for creating linkages between peacebuilding and other communities of practice.

The value addition of a resilience orientation to peacebuilding processes

Processes of change can only be sustainable and truly peaceful when they emerge from inclusive dialogues engaging people from all sectors of society. However, people living in conflict-affected countries are often exposed to many peacebuilding activities, and may become fatigued by unending consultations which seem to have few demonstrable results for them. Traditionally, peacebuilding processes begin with a diagnostic of fragility, commonly referred to as “conflict assessment”, to map the drivers of conflict or obstacles to peace. For each problem identified, recommendations are provided to resolve or overcome the conflict drivers and obstacles. People often complain however that they rarely see the change happen, perhaps because they have no relationship to the diagnosis nor to the recommended solutions. Thus, there is a need for more effective means of engaging people through dialogue so that they are able to relate to, and take ownership of the peacebuilding processes. The experience of the FAR project has demonstrated that a resilience ori-

entation to peacebuilding could make an important contribution in this regard.

Peacebuilding that is oriented towards resilience emphasizes the strengths, assets and capacities that exist in society. Fragility is seen as the backdrop against which individuals, communities and institutions act in order to survive at the very least, and improve their conditions as best they can, but the spotlight is shone on the actions undertaken and resources deployed. More specific to peacebuilding, a resilience orientation signifies dialogue processes whose starting point is to ascertain the existing resources that people tap into and strategies available to them in order to cope with or even transform conditions that have previously caused or which may threaten peace and provoke new patterns of violence. The focus is no longer on change, as an abstract concept, but on the actors – individuals, communities, institutions – and the means they have to effect change so as to build peace.

At a more practical, and indeed programmatic level, reorienting the central question of a focus group discussion or interview

from one about fragility to one that asks about strengths, capacities or skills can in and of itself have a transformative impact on the persons engaged in a consultation process. The theory of appreciative inquiry suggests that “inquiry into the social potential of a social system should begin with appreciation, should be collaborative, should be provocative, and should be applicable” (Cooperider and Srivastava, 1987). Arguments put forward in favour of appreciative inquiry highlight that an appreciation of what works or could work promotes innovation and generates new ideas.

“People experiencing positive affect are more resilient and able to cope with occasional adversity, have an increased preference for variety, and accept a broader array of behavioral options.” (Fredrickson, 2001; 2006)

In Timor-Leste, participants in group discussions during the consultation phase of the research were very vocal in expressing their appreciation for the dialogue process, noting that it helped to raise their own awareness of the capacities they possess as individuals, as

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communities and as a nation. This process of self-discovery nurtures optimism, leading to new areas of collaboration. Helping people uncover their individual and collective resilience may serve as a catalyst for change and promote national ownership of peacebuilding processes. And indeed, it was encouraging to observe that in a country such as Timor-Leste, where people are saturated by consultations, a resilience orientation seems to have reinvigorated and inspired participation in dialogue processes.

Furthermore, “resilience” as opposed to “fragility” has a converging and convening power. Whereas different stakeholders may have different, and even diametrically opposed interpretations of a problem, they are more likely to agree on the need to address the problem, and may even have a shared appreciation of the existing assets in their society which could potentially form the basis of the solution. Thus, it may be easier to convene opposing parties to discuss the resilience of a country rather than its fractures. Dialogue processes become meaningful when they can bring together diverse stakeholders with different

interests. However, they are often unwilling to sit around the same table because of their different interpretations of the problem. The experience from all three pilot countries is that national actors have greater confidence in, and are more willing to take ownership of dialogue processes that are organized around resilience and focused on change. Government officials in particular are generally wary of such multi-stakeholder dialogue processes because they do not want to expose themselves to criticism from civil society and other groups. However, the FAR project, with its focus on resilience has successfully convened government officials and civil society, as well as private sector representatives (in the case of Guatemala) around the table and engaged them regularly for several months to develop recommendations for strengthening resilience to conflict based on the existing assets in the country. In the case of Guatemala, it is especially remarkable that private sector representatives and civil society actors, who have been at loggerheads on the socio-environmental consequences of large-scale mining and energy production projects, agreed to sit at the same table on a regular basis. It is

even more powerful to note that following the political upheavals that started in April 2015, and culminated in the resignation and indictment of the former president in October, both groups collaborated in facilitating a public forum to discuss how the transformative potential of the pacific protests could be leveraged for long term positive change. A resilience orientation to peacebuilding focusses on what works and the untapped strengths waiting to be utilized, rather than on what has failed or who is to blame. It sets the scene for a forward looking dialogue that can potentially transcend entrenched positions and give actors the confidence to act collectively in order to bring about peaceful change.

Early observations from the FAR project summarized above indicate that at the very least, resilience is a useful addition to the peacebuilding vocabulary and an effective orientation to consider for stakeholder dialogues, which constitute the cornerstone of successful political processes. In addition to its potential as a peacebuilding focus, resilience can also help us to generate important insights on peacebuilding. The following sec-

tion discusses some of these, arguing that a resilience orientation can shed light on the importance of integrating different levels of society and helps to distinguish between structures that promote violence and those that do not.

Resilience and Peacebuilding

For peacebuilding, resilience is needed at all levels of society

In the context of peacebuilding, a definition of resilience is likely to be more nuanced than in the field of disaster recovery and may be more effectively understood as the spectrum of responses ranging from simply surviving all the way to the capacity of a society to transform itself. It is important to put a strong emphasis on the latter, more aspirational end of the spectrum because in order to overcome the legacy of past conflict and indeed prevent the (re)emergence of future violence, a society must have the capacity to transform the structures and processes that polarize populations, trigger confrontations and incentivize violence, so as to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. This is a multi-level process and depends

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on individuals, communities, as well as institutions. A country that is home to well-organized communities and collectivities, will be resilient to a certain extent, because in the face of adversity, as when there are natural calamities, solidarity networks can be activated so that people can help each other. However, if these well-organized community networks are not then also engaged in a relationship of trust with other communities and importantly with the state, the overall resilience to violent conflict in the country is likely to be compromised. In fact, a disarticulation between communities and the state apparatus can in itself be a source of conflict.

The FAR project has given many examples that help to illustrate this point. In Timor-Leste, people consulted both during in-depth group discussions and through a nationwide survey have highlighted the importance of good leadership as a critical factor in maintaining social cohesion. It can be observed that at the local and grassroots level, and in relation to regional or collectivities, people feel cohesive and are able to resolve disputes peacefully within their collectivities, indicating that there is some degree of resilience for peacebuilding. One of the most common reasons for this community-level resilience cited by those consulted in group discussions and interviewed for the survey, is

the strong ties to, and respect for, traditional chiefs and local leaders. We can therefore observe that responsive leadership is an invaluable positive contributing factor to the resilience of communities. However, people displayed much less trust in national institutions and the government, indicating that national leaders are not seen as contributing to the resilience of Timor-Leste and suggesting that there is a resilience gap at the national level. Many of the Timorese engaged in the consultation process described the relationship between communities and the government as disconnected breeds. In a young country such as Timor-Leste where people fought until 2002 to become self-gov-

erned, and also where communities have strong traditional ties and a legacy of organized resistance, real and perceived dichotomies between a centralized government that is often perceived to be catering to a small number of elites while the majority of people feel like they are left to fend for themselves can be a very real source of violent conflict.

Resilience contributes to peace only when it does not produce violence

The previous paragraphs have highlighted that a resilience orientation to peacebuilding must be mindful of all levels of society, as well as the need for harmony between these different levels. A second point of attention is whether resilience builds on capacities and responses that produce positive or negative outcomes. Here, positive and negative signal a distinction between processes, structures and resources that mitigate or prevent violence on the one hand, and those that contribute or have the potential to contribute to violence on the other. Although peacebuilding is not necessarily normative, there is a clear and uncontested mandate to reduce or prevent violence. Therefore, when assessing existing and potential re-

silience in societies, peacebuilders must pay particular attention to whether these do or could produce violent outcomes, whether directly or indirectly, structurally, or in other forms.

In Guatemala, as well as in Liberia, the FAR research revealed a strong sense of solidarity and capacity for organization and innovation amongst individuals and in communities. In both countries, access to justice and security is limited for various reasons: capacity, corruption, or inefficiency. In the face of this gap, organic arrangements have emerged: vigilante groups, community policing, neighbourhood watch, etc. These signal initiative, resourcefulness and a commitment to protecting the community, and is a source of resilience for peacebuilding inasmuch as it intends to provide safety and justice, two important components of positive peace. However, these groups also often operate as unaccountable vigilante groups and have recourse to violence, , sometimes lynching robbers in an effort to “take justice in their own hands”, because the courts will take too long, or the police is quite simply, absent, needs to be recognized as manifestation of negative

resilience. The violent outcomes that these groups do and can produce is problematic for peacebuilding and these arrangements cannot therefore be seen as positive resilience. Nonetheless, the organizational capacity for collective action which underpins the groups’ formation and activities is an important element of resilience and must not be overlooked. Moreover, these groups play an important function in the communities where they operate and their complete elimination could be highly destabilizing. Whereas, a more conservative approach to peacebuilding would recommend dismantling these groups altogether, a resilience orientation to peacebuilding will rather seek to build on the networks, arrangement and sense of solidarity that underpins vigilante groups, and focus on mitigating or eliminating the violent tactics employed.

Resilience casts a different analytical lens on peacebuilding dilemmas, and although it does not reveal new substantive components of peace – we already knew that leadership, trust, social cohesion, social justice, economic equity, etc., are fundamental to peacebuilding – it sheds light on how each of these are already mani-

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festing in a society and illuminates the dark spots, or the “resilience gaps”. Resilience, when looked at from the inside in, draws attention to what exists, and therefore increases the likelihood that processes of peaceful change emanate from local voices and are consistent with the needs and norms – however dynamic these may be – of the context where they take place. In Timor-Leste, it is apparent that local leaders and national leaders do not enjoy the same amount of trust and that this impacts the country’s resilience. In Guatemala and Liberia, we cannot build peace without acknowledging the pivotal function of community networks in providing security to individuals, but must recognize that they can be violent.

Peacebuilding is a political process of constructive social change, and positive peacebuilding interventions are ultimately about creating the conditions for these transformations to occur. Whereas it is possible to assume that in all contexts, peacebuilding processes are generally oriented towards the promotion of social justice, legitimate institutions, good governance, economic equity, social cohesion and trust, the specific

ways in which each of these manifest, and the gaps that exist will vary depending on the context. Resilience can be a useful analytical concept when it draws attention to the endogenous capacities in societies and how they can be leveraged for such change processes. By drawing attention to what exists, rather than what problems need to be resolved, a resilience analysis is more likely to stimulate peacebuilding interventions that are more context sensitive and have greater ownership of all sectors of society.

Resilience as a common basis for collaboration between peacebuilding and other sectors of intervention

If peacebuilding is about transformation, it is also multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral in nature. We cannot build peace without discussing development models, security provision, political participation, social services, environmental protection, rule of law or humanitarian protection, amongst others. Depending on the specificities of the context, each of these sectors will be more or less relevant to peacebuilding processes. To some extent, resilience offers a creative vehicle for linking and bridging between different disci-

plines and communities of practice, and integrating peacebuilding processes more effectively in parallel interventions.

The concept of resilience is employed – albeit in different ways – by different communities of practice and can therefore constitute the basis for common language. Conflict is a distinct type of “shock”, best described as a stressor because it is incremental in effect rather than momentous, and is also often produced as a result of internal causes within a society rather than because of external events, although these can play a catalytic role. In fact, conflict, especially when it is violent, is likely to undermine the very sources of strength and cohesion that enable societies to deal with external shocks such as natural disasters. In practice too therefore, there is an overlap between processes needed to build peace and humanitarian interventions required when there is a crisis. Moreover, as noted several times in this article, peacebuilding also intersects with processes of economic development, institution building, good governance, access to justice and social cohesion. It follows therefore that there should be symbiotic and

mutually reinforcing relationship between the specific interventions in each of these areas, especially because they happen simultaneously rather than sequentially. Resilience could provide a powerful basis for exploring the interactions and integrating between different interventions both because the word is already being used in most, if not all of these communities of practice and also because a resilience orientation emphasizes detecting existing assets, strengthening them and bringing about the necessary transformations before a natural calamity happens, global financial crisis causes a recession or long term drivers of conflict explode into violent riots. Resilience is about being equipped with the necessary resources and strategies so as to anticipate the destructive consequences of shocks and stressors and in this regard promotes a preventive rather than remedial approach to peacebuilding.

The FAR project was piloted in Liberia against the backdrop of the Ebola crisis, and has allowed for an observation of how humanitarian interventions, if not sufficiently mindful of conflict dynamics, can quickly become ineffective, worsen the humanitarian crisis and indeed

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Photo: Interpeace

contribute to violence. Conversely, when humanitarian interventions are sensitive to conflict dynamics and build on, rather than erode existing resilience capacities, they will have a greater chance of succeeding. The Ebola crisis in Liberia came and went in a little over a year, peaking for four months between July and October 2014. The initial response to this humanitarian crisis was a highly militarized one: troops were deployed, the US military came in with a heavy boot, a state of emergency was declared, curfews enforced, freedom of movement curbed, and borders closed. This strategy initially worsened the situation, creating panic and instability as it conjured powerful residual recollection memo-

ries of a not so distant war. In July and August, tensions between the population and the government had started to manifest in violent ways, reaching a peak on August 20, 2014 when state security forces clashed with community members in a quarantined zone of the West Point slum community in Monrovia and a fourteen-year-old boy was shot and killed by the Liberian Armed forces.

The transmission channels of Ebola are such that prevention requires extreme precaution in physical encounters, thus affecting many rituals, both quotidian and culturally specific. The imposition of a ban on certain customs such as cremation, although necessary, was

badly received by the population and viewed with suspicion; the enforcement of this ban by military means caused frustration and led to defiance rather than compliance. From a resilience point of view, the militarized strategy was all wrong because it exacerbated the mistrust between state and citizens, and further undermined the bases of community relations and networks, which are in fact an indispensable and powerful source of resilience for Liberians. The government of Liberia and the international community were able to pick up on this and reviewed their humanitarian intervention, investing more heavily as from September 2014 in community engagement, relying on community

networks for a much more culturally sensitive communication campaign. People were much more receptive and willing to respect the Ebola prevention measures from then on, resulting in a decline in the number of new cases and more effective detection of patients.

The case of the Ebola crisis in Liberia revealed the ways in which state fragility played itself out in the context of a humanitarian crisis, drawing attention to the importance of assessing existing sources of resilience and areas where resilience is lacking, before intervening. In 2015, Guatemala, another pilot of the FAR program, experienced a dramatic turn of events in the form of the political crisis that started in April with the International Commission against Corruption in Guatemala's (CICIG) investigations of corruption charges against high level government officials. Here, the state was itself the site of the "shock", whereas massive protests calling for greater social justice and reforms to the endemically corrupt institutional system demonstrated that, collectively, Guatemalans possess the capacity to initiate transformative processes that could potentially strengthen

the country's resilience for peace. The skeptics and the cautious have however pointed out that the demands for change have been varied and fragmented at times: although rallying behind a shared outrage at corruption, differing interest groups called for different degrees of institutional reform, and emphasized issues specific to their circumstances. Whereas it remains unclear what reforms need to be implemented, how these changes must be brought to fruition and who should play a role, there is a clear demand for change, and this is in itself a sign of resilience. That people have been capable of peacefully articulating their desire for a state which fends off rather than breeds corruption, exclusion, social injustices and inequities, is no small feat for a country that has a long history of violent conflict.

The impetus for change was also demonstrated by the results of the first round of presidential elections in September with a surprising victory from a political newcomer whilst the presidential candidate for LIDER, the party most associated with the political establishment targeted by the protests, tied for second place before eventually dropping out of the race. The

true test of resilience will however be during the reform process, if and when it materializes. From a peacebuilding perspective, it will be important that any intervention aimed at institutional reform, does not dismantle the existing formal and informal arrangements at both the community and national level which have up till now been critical to maintaining social cohesion. In other words, reforms should be contextualized within the broader aspiration to strengthen the country's resilience for peace rather than focus narrowly on technical interventions to tackle corruption and strengthen state institutions.

In both the Liberian and Guatemalan examples, although very different in nature, it is possible to observe and indeed appreciate how interventions in response to specific crises, can benefit from being informed by a resilience lens. In countries with a history of violent conflict and/or vulnerability to structural and manifest violence, peacebuilding organizations can play an important role in ensuring that interventions, whether humanitarian, political or economic in nature, do not exacerbate fragility but instead contribute to create positive peace dividends.

It will be necessary that the peacebuilding community clarifies its specific understanding of resilience, as the combination of processes, structures and capacities that different actors can deploy to promote constructive social change

It has been illustrated that resilience can be a useful framework premise for cultivating and the linkages between peacebuilding and other communities of practice, both from an operational and conceptual perspective as illustrated above. In order to be meaningful however, it will be necessary that the peacebuilding community clarifies its specific understanding of resilience, as the combination of processes, structures and capacities that different actors can deploy to promote constructive social change. It is equally important that the international community defers to the role of local actors in defining, prioritizing and conceptualizing the critical resilience factors and elements, as well as how to assess them, in any given context.

Conclusion

Peacebuilding is not a singular process but rather the synergistic coordination of a series of processes and factors ranging from economic development, political participation, and social protection, which together create the conditions for conflicts to be resolved in non-violent and constructive ways. In essence, peacebuilding is a deeply political process that requires the

participation of all sectors of society. Moreover, there is no unique or universal peacebuilding formula: each country, each society, every context must find its own pathway to lasting peace. The inherent complexity of peacebuilding means that practitioners are constantly challenged to innovate in how they work and how they think in order to keep up with changing contexts and the rapidly evolving nature of conflict. Consequently, as a discipline and certainly as a field of practice, peacebuilding is always subject to new trends. In recent years, resilience has become highly fashionable across various practice areas, intellectual disciplines and in a range of policy spaces such as humanitarian intervention, environmental sustainability and international development, and is now slowly finding its way in the peacebuilding field

Interpeace's Framework for Assessing Resilience (FAR) project is an attempt to consider resilience in peacebuilding, to test its applicability, relevance and efficacy, and to produce guidance for its assessment. FAR has been designed as an exercise in participatory action research and combined its exploratory intent with practical process-

es in three pilot countries. Liberia, Timor-Leste and Guatemala can all be qualified as fragile contexts, either because they have recently emerged from protracted periods of violent conflict or because they are vulnerable to different forms of structural violence, whether in the form of repressive regimes, extreme inequalities or polarized societies, and so provide the perfect testing ground for how resilience plays out in three different fragile contexts, each with its unique history, social structure, and political trajectory. At the same time, these are all countries where there is a real need for effective peacebuilding processes that can transcend long standing contradictions and bottlenecks that continue to threaten peace.

FAR has demonstrated that a focus on resilience can be an asset to peacebuilding processes. Firstly, it provides a means by which to de-emphasize fragility and draw attention to the endogenous capacities in society, and in so doing can be an effective mobilization strategy for engaging actors in political processes. Secondly, resilience gives us the opportunity to develop peacebuilding programmes that take into account the specific as-

sets, as well as gaps unique to the society in which they are being implemented. Thirdly, resilience can form the basis for greater coherence and synergy between the different communities of practice so that humanitarian interventions, economic development and peacebuilding actors work more symbiotically. This could potentially make a valuable contribution to the effectiveness of preventive action.

Finally, the value of resilience also lies in the ways it can challenge us to reflect on peacebuilding and revisit our own assumptions about what it means to build peace and, more importantly, how we should build peace. Comparing the use of resilience in peacebuilding to its application in other fields, such as humanitarian intervention or sustainable development, has in some respects highlighted the importance of transformation, the central role of social justice and inevitable political nature of peacebuilding processes. To assess resilience for peacebuilding is to understand the capacities a society possesses and conditions for the transformative processes that can consolidate peace and bring about greater social justice.

When humanitarian interventions are sensitive to conflict dynamics and build on, rather than erode existing resilience capacities, they will have a greater chance of succeeding

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Timor-Leste	
APPROACH TO RESILIENCE	Resilience as a set of attributes that exist in society that must be given right conditions or used in specific ways in order to promote peace.
CONTEXT OF FRAGILITY	The overarching context of Timor-Leste is one of nationbuilding: after decades of occupation by the Indonesians, a transitional UN government, the challenge of the Timorese is to exist as a nation. Peacebuilding is thus equated with keeping the country together. The 2006 conflict revealed fractures between east and west in the army, and the 2012 crisis was largely the result of a struggle between leaders.
RESILIENCE TO WHAT?	Resilience for peacebuilding translates into "holding the country together", now that the external, common enemy is gone. The absence of social cohesion and national unity -both as a result of conflicts between elites and because of a deep disconnect between the ruling elite and the population - is seen as the biggest threat to peace and likely to engender violence.
NORMATIVE VALUE OF RESILIENCE	Exploration of "resilience elements" as contributing to both greater peace and greater violence; but tendency to equate "positive" resilience with peace.
ABSORB, ADAPT, TRANSFORM	Nuance not made explicitly in analysis except when commenting on culture as dynamic (resilience stems from innovation in culture) and on legal systems (hybridity between traditional justice and modern law).
LEVELS AND CONSTITUENCIES	Recognition that consultation focused on communities and individuals, rather than macro-level resilience. Interpreted as reflection of the disconnect between the political centre (Dili/Elites) and the periphery in Timor-Leste.

Guatemala

Liberia

Resilience as an analytical concept that may provide tools and an innovative approach for bringing together stakeholders in a given conflict.

Positive resilience as a desirable policy objective.

With the peace accords signed almost 2 decades ago, Guatemala has made important strides in recovering from its civil war. But this may have come at the cost of an exclusionary form of governance and the normalization of violence into everyday institutions. There may no longer be a war but violence is pervasive, manifest in the high criminal rates, rampant corruption, extreme social and economic inequality and the marginalization of certain groups. These structural drivers and indeed forms of violence are referred to as conflictivity.

Liberia was the site of one of the biggest UN peacekeeping missions, following the end of the second civil war in 2003. The number of efforts aimed at reforming the justice system, building strong institutions, disarming rebels, reforming the security sector are countless, and in this regard, in the imagination of Liberians, and certainly of the international community, Liberia is classified as a fragile state where efforts must be made to prevent a relapse to conflict.

Resilience for peacebuilding amounts to the transformative processes of social change that will displace the exclusionary processes and structures that lead to conflictivity which has been defined along four axes: fragility of state institutions, socio-economic fragility, socio-environmental conflicts and crime related insecurity.

Against the backdrop of the Ebola crisis, it became key to distinguish between resilience to sudden, external shocks, and resilience to structural/ long term threats to peace such as regulation mechanisms of land disputes, corruption and inefficiency of state services as well as social norms that create marginalization of certain groups.

No use of positive/negative resilience language. Resilience used as an analytical tool/concept to observe actions and identify capacities with a view to addressing specific political dilemmas and problems.

Strong tendency to use resilience as synonymous to “coping with hardship”, although there is appreciation of coping mechanisms that can undermine peace.

Strong emphasis on the importance of (social) change and transformation - in peacebuilding and political processes, Absorbing and adapting can be short and medium term options, transformation should be on the horizon.

Vocabulary gravitates towards coping mechanisms, because of the focus on Ebola.

Analysis explicitly attempts to explain resilience at each level, and state-level or macro level resilience has been treated as an important objective and organizing principle.

Consultation was predominantly at the grassroots level and sought to capture the voices of the people and data presents resilience strategies of individuals. There is an explicit effort to understand resilience from the perspective of women because they are disproportionately marginalized and victims of violence.