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HOW HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE CAN STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE TO VIOLENT CONFLICT AND END NEED
RECOMMENDATIONS

THE PROBLEM

Humanitarian need has outstripped the resources for response, and it continues to rise.

Violent conflict is at the origin of most humanitarian needs, and at the heart of most protracted crises. Strengthening resilience to violent conflict must therefore be a priority to end cycles of violence and need.

To address this, the global community must find ways to go beyond delivering aid to end need.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

Affected people around the world are clear: despite unspeakable hardships, crises can also be catalysts for positive change. But they have to be managed with that goal in view to make such change happen.

In a project funded by the government of Sweden and undertaken with our local partners Indigo (Cote d'Ivoire), Pole Institute (DRC), and Mustakbalna (Palestine), people told us about their own experiences of crisis and response. We learned from them that collaborative approaches to humanitarian response can contribute to resilience to violent conflict – but adjustments need to be made.

Building from the insights and experiences of participants from locations in three countries, and drawing on Interpeace's 20-plus years of experience in crisis-affected contexts in more than 20 countries, we propose five steps the global community can take towards ensuring that humanitarian response helps to end need:

1. MOVE BEYOND CONFLICT SENSITIVITY TO PEACE SENSITIVITY

Taking a peace-sensitive approach to humanitarian response adds a focus on the role and impact of local capacities and resources, instead of focusing on the role and impact of outside interventions alone. In doing so, it extends the attention of humanitarian actors beyond immediate conflict and aid dynamics to include medium- and long-term peace impacts. To move beyond conflict sensitivity to peace sensitivity:

- Ensure that a systems view is employed in the design, planning, and implementation of humanitarian interventions to ensure that the effects of interventions on the system of relationships within a society are taken into account.
- Require transition planning (from humanitarian aid to development assistance) that:
  - Is based on an assessment of local capacities for RVC
  - Is incorporated in programme design from the outset of crisis response, and
  - Includes a risk assessment of potential impacts of the transition on local capacities for RVC.

2. REDEFINE SUCCESS TO INCLUDE RESILIENCE TO VIOLENT CONFLICT (RVC)

Meeting the current humanitarian challenges requires changing the definition of success for humanitarian response from 'patching up wounds' to contributing to conditions that will make it less likely for new wounds to be created in the future. To redefine success to include RVC:

- Adopt a more holistic understanding of humanitarian mandates to include responsibility for protecting and strengthening local capacities for resilience to violent conflict.
- Expanding policy and programming considerations of resilience to include an RVC focus, which gives explicit attention to three key components: inclusivity, social and political cohesion, and transformation and hence moves beyond a focus on livelihoods and economic self-sufficiency.

3. ADAPT THE SYSTEM TO ACHIEVE THAT SUCCESS

In order to ensure that our collective efforts contribute concretely to RVC, we must make it a strategic priority and adapt the humanitarian system at each level accordingly. To adapt the system to achieve this success:

- Adapt donor requirements to establish RVC as a priority outcome area, and to create space for interventions to be both adaptive and responsive to local contexts.
- Develop organizational incentives to create both political and operational requirements and support for activities that identify, assess, and strengthen local capacities for RVC.
- Develop criteria to shape staff competencies and evaluate performance to achieve practice change that supports RVC at both organizational and individual levels.

4. COMMIT TO MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS

Collaboration between international and local actors does not inherently lead to strengthening local capacities for resilience. Meaningful Partnerships can be a 'north star' for guiding collaboration between affected populations and external providers towards the objective of enhancing local capacities for resilience – not only for direct partners, but for the community or society more generally. To implement Meaningful Partnerships:

- Ensure partnerships are composed with local partners who are selected based on their resilience potential including their ability to build bridges between different groups and levels in society; their legitimacy and trust among the local community; and with a view to fostering inclusion.

- Require partnerships to be designed with a long-term perspective that treats transitions from humanitarian aid to self-sufficiency and sustainable peace as crucial junctures to plan for from the earliest stages of humanitarian response.
- Manage and monitor partnerships to ensure they are conducted in ways that facilitate local agency and leadership, valorise existing capacities, and ensure an adaptation of programming in line with negotiated solutions. This requires moving beyond classical aid provider-beneficiary relationships and making different kinds of roles available to be played by local actors as well as shared/participatory decision-making throughout the humanitarian response cycle.
- Evaluate partnerships for their concrete contributions (and threats) to RVC just as systematically and explicitly as they are evaluated for their delivery on results-based management criteria.

5. MOVE FROM A "BEST PRACTICE" TO A "BEST PROCESS" APPROACH

Adopting a best process approach is a commitment to locally informed and adapted programming, that is locally effective through both the consequential use of local knowledge, and involvement of local actors. To apply a best process approach:

- Adapt existing resilience assessment frameworks to the particular needs of Meaningful Partnerships in the context of humanitarian response.
- Support RVC assessment and research over time, so that mission-critical information is available before crisis strikes (e.g. such as local capacities that can be mobilized in response, resilience potential of possible partners, etc.).
- Develop approaches and requirements for translating resilience findings into the design of policies, programmes and partnerships as a way to ensuring they build from existing RVC capacities.