Photo: Ghana, Mikkel Rytter

INEQUALITY AND CONFLICT

OXFAM BRIEF FEBRUARY 2019

The global fight to address structural inequalities causing poverty and insecurity around the world is at the heart of our agenda in Oxfam. One way to do so is to address the structural causes of conflict, as inequality is both a cause and a consequence of violent conflict.

Inequality and poverty are increasingly tied to violent conflict. More than 2 billion people live in fragile and conflict affected states. It is estimated that by 2018 around half, and by 2030 most, of the world's poor will live in fragile and conflict affected states, with limited prospects of a better future[1].

We know that inequality spikes during and in the immediate aftermath of conflict, deeply tied to issues such as state/elite capture, corruption, and the war economy. We also know that 60 percent of conflicts take place in countries that have already experienced violent conflict, suggesting that multiple episodes of conflict may also lead to compounding and increasing inequalities over time. But we also know that inequality is not just an economic term, but can relate to broader manifestations of marginalization. Here again, there is a direct link to conflict and instability, as this policy brief will explain.

As stated in Oxfam IBIS' Strategy for 2019 to 2021, Oxfam IBIS will seek to address causes of conflict in fragile and conflict affected contexts and promote right and inclusion of particularly women and youth. We focus primarily on inequality - and here it applies to all inequality dimensions - political, economic and social inequality (gender, youth, ethnic, social, religious groups, etc.). In

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[1] OECD (2018), *States of Fragility 2018*, OECD Publishing, Paris,
https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264302075-en.

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this way, we will draw on the work of Oxfam IBIS and the broader confederation on issues related to inequality, while seeking to ensure that all we do is geared towards addressing various inequalities as structural causes of violence.

The particular challenges of inequality in conflict-affected contexts, and the rising number of people being 'left behind' due to conflict, needs to be given focus, having in mind that violent conflict is a central obstacle in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals[2]. In 2016 more countries experienced violent conflict than at any time in 30 years[3]. In the parts of the world where violent conflict is on the rise cycles of violence continue to have devastating institutional, infrastructural, economic and psychosocial impacts[4].Therefore a comprehensive approach is necessary to combat inequality and conflict, as conflict and the effects of it is complex and entail many dimensions, and are interrelated in various ways.

INEQUALITY AS STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

Conflict and peace, like inequality, are not random unexplainable phenomena, they are created and can be influenced, to put it more bluntly: "Inequality is a policy choice[5]".

Preventing fragility, conflict and violence is central to reducing poverty and achieving shared prosperity.[6] A peacebuilding lens provides a broader perspective that recognizes that stability does not equate to the absence of violence, underlining that long-term civilian led engagement a crucial for sustaining peace.

Inequalities and lack of access to political influence and power, justice and security, land and natural resources, and to basic services is closely linked to conflict[7]. Inequality is both a cause and a consequence of violent conflict. In terms of the causal relationship, various inequalities can become "built into" policies and systems whereby certain groups are marginalized and structurally disadvantaged. Over time, this may create the pre-conditions for violent conflict.

Conversely, violent conflict has significant consequences in terms of adding to social disruption and political instability, refugee flows, while also inadvertently enabling conditions that allow for the spread disease and hunger and undermine economic activity. So conflict undermines development and increase poverty levels. Up until 2013, not a single conflict-affected country was on track to achieve any of the Millennium Development Goals[8]. Conflict destroys productive economic activity and innovation at all levels, hamstringing a society's pursuit of sustainable development.

This policy brief will explain the multifaceted relationship between inequality and conflict, to inform the work on inequality of Oxfam IBIS and provide a peacebuilding perspective to this. Failure to tackle the growing inequality gap

By 2030, the share of global poor living in fragile and conflict-affected situations is projected to reach 46%

States of Fragility Report 2018

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[2] United Nations and World Bank. 2018. *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1162-3

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] The Conversation. (2018). *Inequality is not inevitable, it's a policy choice, says Oxfam.* [online] Available at: https://theconversation.com/inequality-is-not-inevitable-its-a-policy-choice-says-oxfam-90855

[6] United Nations; World Bank. 2018. *Pathways for Peace : Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict.* Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

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undermines social and economic progress. At the same time, overlooking structural causes of inequality when supporting peacebuilding efforts will only undermine prospects for success.

Inequality, During and Post-Conflict

Research suggests that levels of income inequality increase during the course conflict. This increase is further reinforced in the first five years after a conflict ends. The distributional effects of the post-conflict period will not be immediate after the conflict ends, but when individuals in the economy are sure that a long-term peace is present.[9] Moreover, about half the cases of post-conflict reverts to conflict within a decade[10]. This points to patterns of conflict resulting in more entrenched inequality, which in turn contributes to greater fragility.

Violent conflict has long-term effects for both the countries that experienced the war and on the neighbouring countries, this includes both financial cost such as reduced economic costs, trade and investment opportunities and the cost of reconstruction[11]. Violent conflict scatters populations and disrupts livelihoods, as we see in Yemen where conflict has led to severe consequences including famine and food crisis leading to displacement of people and deaths, having in mind that today's victims of conflicts as apposed to previously are civilians[12].

The overall cost of violent conflict is unevenly distributed and contributes to the global inequality – also between countries. Violent conflict is an integral part of the world economic structure[13]. Recurrent and protracted violent conflict ruins the ability of the states to rebuild their economies and hence prevent possible future conflicts[14]. Countries that have experienced violent conflict suffer a reduction of in annual GDP growth of 2-4 percent and up to 8.4 percent if the conflict is severe[15].

Even though some economies experience growth during conflict, such growth is very unequal. In Sri Lanka throughout the civil war, they experienced economic growth, but the Tamil areas (where the fighting was going on) were not enjoying the same economic growth. The same can be said for Myanmar at present. So the regions affected most by conflict might lose ties with the rest of the economy – leaving a whole group of people disadvantaged and contribute to a rise in inequality.[16]

The rise of violent conflict afflicts both low and middle-income countries with relatively strong institutions[17]. Very impoverished countries have difficulties in relation to economic recovery and are more at risk for conflict recurrence, with

Greater inequality may increase the likelihood of violent conflict, and violent conflict may worsen inequality.

[9] Bircan, Brück & Wothknecht, 2010, *Violent Conflict and Inequality* Discussion Papers, Berlin: www.diw.de/documents/publikatio-nen/73/diw_01.c.357459.de/dp1013.pdf

[10] Collier, Paul; Elliott, V. L.; Hegre, Håvard; Hoeffler, Anke; Reynal-Querol, Marta; Sambanis, Nicholas. 2003. Breaking the Conflict Trap : Civil War and Development Policy. A World Bank policy research report;. Washington, DC: World Bank and Oxford University Press. © World Bank.
https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/13938 Collier et al 2003

[11] Mueller, H. 2013. *The Economic Cost of Conflict*. IGC Working Paper, International Growth Centre, London.

[12] 90% of casualties in war are civilians.

[13] Brück, T., De Groot, O. and Bozzoli, C. (2018). *How Many Bucks in a Bang: On the Estimation of the Economic Costs of Conflict*. The Oxford Handbook of the Economics of Peace and Conflict. Edited by Michelle R. Garfinkel and Stergios Skaperdas.

[14] United Nations and World Bank. 2018. *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1162-3

[15] Mavriqi, R. R. 2016. *Global Economic Burden of Conflict*. In UN Pathways for Peace.

[16] Brown, Langer, Stewart (2011), A typology of Post-Conflict Environments.
https://www.diw.de/documents/publikatio-nen/73/diw_01.c.357459.de/dp1013.pdf

[17] United Nations and World Bank. 2018. *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1162-3

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one of the main challenge being shortage of human resources[18]. In the early 1980s it was estimated that half the doctors and 80 per cent of the pharmacists fled from Uganda[19]. Much of violence remains entrenched in low-income countries; however, some of today's deadliest and most complex conflicts are occurring in middle.-income countries[20].

Countries in post-conflict often provide fruitful conditions for organized crime and create black/shadow market economies – with space for human and drug trafficking. Especially human trafficking increase during violent conflict, creating spill-over effect into neighbouring countries (as we see across the Sahel, including in Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali) which continues after the conflict[21].

In many countries international support for development is suspended or postponed during conflict focusing on external resources are focussed on humanitarian aid greatly increase the costs of war[22] and countries receive less development assistance than their circumstances merit – as well as the inequality of aid to some countries over others, regions or within a country. Moves towards the 'securitization' of aid threaten and undermines aid effectiveness and contribute to insecurity. This requires clearer demarcation line between the national security goals of the donors. Allocating more funds to long-term solutions through peacebuilding efforts can help break the cycle of violent conflicts[23].

Addressing the structural barriers to peace

The origins and causes of systematic differences between different ethnic, religious groups or regions - be it ecological and climatological differences, or the distribution of natural resources, often stems from historical legacies such as colonialism and other forms of economic, social, and political exclusion and marginalization.

Inequalities and the many dimensions[1] of it are institutionalized and shaped by history, social and cultural cleavages. Sustainable peace requires efforts to address the built-in inequalities within a society both at a national, regional and international level.

Horizontal Inequalities

Horizontal inequalities are systematic economic and political inequalities between groups that can have different causes and origins such as ecological, climatological difference, distribution of natural resources, colonial legacy, and economic policies. To address root causes of conflict in terms of inequality it is necessary to look beyond income inequality, and to consider the social, economic and political dimension of inequality that contribute to conflict.

[18] Brown, Langer, Stewart (2011), A typology of Post-Conflict Enviroments. Centre for Research on Peace and Development: Leuven CRPD Working Paper; Vol 1; pp.1-22 https://www.diw.de/documents/publikatio-nen/73/diw_01.c.357459.de/dp1013.pdf

[19] Dodge, C.P and Wiebe, P.D 1985 *The West Nile Emergency.* In *Crisis in Uganda: the Breakdown of Health Services.* Pergamon, Oxford.

[20] United Nations and World Bank. 2018. *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1162-3

[21] Ibid.

[22] Brown, Langer, Stewart (2011), *A typology of Post-Conflict Enviroments.* Centre for Research on Peace and Development: Leuven CRPD Working Paper; Vol 1; pp.1-22 https://www.diw.de/documents/publikatio-nen/73/diw_01.c.357459.de/dp1013.pdf

[23] UNESCO, 2011, *The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education; EFA global moni-toring report.* UNESCO. http://bit.ly/1Lop5wV

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Horizontal inequalities consider the differential status, access, and power relations between groups or communities within a particular society, as well as specific social, political and cultural inequalities such as:

- Economic inequalities include access to and ownership of financial, human natural resource-based and social assets. They also include inequalities in income levels and employment opportunities.

- Social inequalities include access to services like education, healthcare housing etc.

- Political inequality include distribution of political opportunities and power among groups, such as control over local, regional and national institutions of governance, the army and the police. Also include inequalities in people's capabilities to participate politically and express their needs.

- Cultural inequalities include disparities in the recognition and standing of the language, religion, customs, norms and practices of different groups.[24]

In many fragile and conflict-affected contexts, multiple inequalities are interlinked which contribute to conflict, either in terms of triggering certain actions which lead to violence (such as the lack of access to certain opportunities or services) or relating to more deeply embedded structural dimensions).

Inequalities and collective action in conflict

Conflict is a group phenomenon. Conflicts are fought between groups - either between an organized group and the state, or between organized groups purporting to each represent particular identity groups. Research suggests that economic inequality in itself is not a strong enough unifying factor to bring together groups large enough to rebel against the state[25]. Inequalities measured on the individual level i.e.; Gini coefficient, cannot explain the group level inequality or conflict onset[26].

As noted, horizontal inequality goes beyond economic inequality and look at group inequalities, both on a local, national or regional level. Vertical and horizontal inequality provides different answers to why inequalities breed violent conflict[27]. Vertical inequality brings the notion that grievances among the relatively disadvantaged in society results in conflict, if inequalities are too sharp, then deprivation is too great then the relatively deprived will mobilize and rebel, resulting in a fight between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. This is not to say that economic inequality is not important but it should be seen in connection with broader cultural, social, political conditions. Whereas proponents of horizontal inequality would add that it is not only the relatively deprived groups that can mobilize, but as much the relatively privileged groups in society that cause conflict in the attempt to protect or maintain their privileges, as illustrated in the Biafra war in Nigeria or Basque conflict in Spain.[28].

[24] Willems, Rens (2018). *When do inequalities cause conflict?*. [online] The Broker - Connecting worlds of knowledge. Available at: http://www.thebrokeronline.eu/Articles/When-do-inequalities-cause-conflict

[25] World Bank, Development for Peace http://blogs.worldbank.org/dev4peace/inequality-and-conflict-some-good-news

[26] Cederman L, Weidmann N. B., & Gleditsch K. S. (2011). Horizontal inequalities and ethnonationalist civil war: A global comparison. *The American Political Science Review, 105*(3), 478-495.
doi:http://dx.doi.org.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/10.1017/S0003055411000207

[27] Østby, G (2013) *Inequality and political violence*: *A review of the literature*, International Area Studies Review 16(2): 206–231.
https://www.prio.org/utility/DownloadFile.ashx?id=676&type=publicationfile

[28] Østby, G (2016). *Inequality and Political Conflict: Chapter 3 in* France: UNESDCO. Retrieved from: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002459/245953e.pdf

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In many instances, horizontal inequalities are exacerbated by those in privileged positions, as a means of maintaining broader vertical inequalities that go beyond 'identity groups'[29]. Examples from South Sudan to Lebanon also show that horizontal inequalities are closely linked with systems of governance which seek to perpetuate differences between groups, despite the fact that elites from all groups may themselves be benefitting from growing vertical inequality. As such, a more detailed understanding can be gained by understanding of the relationship between inequality and conflict is possible if we closely examine the cleavages resulting from horizontal inequalities, and their interplay with aspects of vertical inequality.

Context matters for the relationship between horizontal inequality and conflict, such contexts could be; political conditions, natural resources and population pressure. If economic, social and political dimensions correspond with ethnic cleavages, identity can be a mobilizing agent[30]. Like exclusion from access to power, opportunity, services and security creates fertile ground for mobilizing group grievances to violence, especially in states with weak capacities[31]. Thus unequal access to economic resources by different groups can provoke collective grievances. Addressing these inequalities that drives conflict is one of the main entry points for preventing violent conflict and sustaining peace.

Perceptions matter

Perceptions play a critical role in driving violence related to real or perceived inequalities. It is often the case of how much a group mind about the differences that is the determinate factor for an outbreak of violence. This also mean that even severe structural inequalities do not necessarily spark violence, while at the same time it is possible that relative objective inequalities could lead to violence.

People in powerful positions can use these perceptions (or misperception) to gather support among groups by constructing efficient narratives to strengthen their position in society and to exploit power[32]. The risks of violent mobilization of groups increase when people are convinced that the inequalities are caused by deliberate exclusion and discrimination.

Youth, Conflict, and Fragility

More than 600 million youth live in fragile and conflict-affected countries and territories[33]. More than half of the world's 25.4 million refugees are under the age of 18. Only a third of secondary school ages refugees are enrolled in school, and less than 1 percent of refugee youth have access to post-secondary education.

The myth that young people cause violent conflict needs to be challenged, the growing number of young people pressures systems and societies, but does not in itself cause violent conflict. A very small percentage of young people are directly engaged or mobilized in violence, youth in fragile and conflict-affected contexts experience many types of marginalization and inequalities. Participation of young people is important in order to build inclusive and sustainable peace, as the participation and inclusion of young people

The disparity between people's expectations and the reality of their lives can exacerbate grievances, especially when people become aware or perceive that others elsewhere are faring better, these grievances can deepen social divisions and worsen fragility

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[29] Østby, G (2013) Inequality and political violence: A review of the literature, *International Area Studies Review* 16(2): 206–231.
https://www.prio.org/utility/DownloadFile.ashx?id=676&type=publicationfile
[30] Stewart, F (2000), *Crisis Prevention: Tackling Horizontal Inequalities,* Oxford Development Studies, 28:3, 245-262, https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:bc57f717-7bc4-498c-af44-add00037923d/download_file?file_format=pdf&safe_filename=Frances_Stewart_Paper.pdf&type_of_work=Journal+article
[31] United Nations; World Bank. 2018. *Pathways for Peace : Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict.* Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank.
https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337
[32] World Bank 3027 b
[33] UNDP, 2014 *Youth Strategy 2014-2017 - Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future.* UNDP. (2014) http://goo.gl/d6jjTE]

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strengthen a country's capacity to manage and avert conflict[34]. This highly depends on a country's ability to include youth in economic, social, and political life, to address the challenge of inequality that threatens current and future generations.

In conflict-affected contexts a young person's opportunities to education and livelihoods and engagement across social, political, cultural, and economic life are drastically reduced. Young girls and women are more likely to face situations of early and forced marriage.

Inequality, Gender and Conflict

Conflict is inextricably linked to gender (in)equality in a variety of ways. A high level of gender equality gives a lower propensity for conflict[35]. On the contrary, inequality and gender-based violence in societies affect vulnerability to civil and interstate war. A gender perspective on peacebuilding can help go beyond the security narrative and allows for the focus to, besides being on the military aspects of conflict, also include a civilian aspect (civilian's conflict-related experiences, role in peacebuilding etc.).

Women, men and children experience conflict, violence and post-conflict settings differently. In relation to conflict, women can take various roles; civilians, combatants, terrorists, refugees, breadwinners, mediators, peacebuilders. Conversely, women and girls are often acutely targeted and affected by violent conflict. Gender-based violence is often used as a weapon in conflicts and women and children constitute 80% of refugees and those internally displaced by violence[36].

In terms of women's participation in formal peace processes, it is proven that the women's involvement as mediators increases the probability that the peace agreement will last at least 15 years by 35%[37]. Their inclusion in peace processes makes humanitarian assistance more effective, strengthens the efforts of peacekeepers, prevents radicalization and the spread of extremism, and accelerates the economic recovery of conflict-affected communities[38]. Despite the growing evidence of the impact on sustainable peace that results from the meaningful participation of women can lead, at present women only represent 4% of the signatories, 2.4% of the chief mediators, 3.7% of the witnesses and 9% of negotiators in peace processes[39]. Furthermore, between 1990 and 2017 only 5% of peace agreements mentioned conflict-related GBV in the final agreement[40]. Women are also important in transitional justice processes. In 2018, women comprised 30% of commissioners on UN-supported truth commissions[41].

In terms of the SDG agenda, there are clear linkages between SDG 16 related to peace and security, and SDG 5 related to gender equality. The target 5.5 in

Women's involvement as mediators increases the probability of a peace agreement lasting more than 15 years by 35%.

[34] Paffenholz, T., A. Hirblinger, D. Landau, F. Fritsch, and C. Dijkstra. 2017.*Preventing Violence through Inclusion: From Building Political Momentum to Sustaining Peace* Background paper for the United Nations–World Bank Flagship Study, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict,*World Bank, Washington, DC.

[35]World Bank, 2011. *World Development Report 2011.* Washington, DC: World Bank. https://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDRS/Resources/WDR2011_Full_Text.pdf

[36] Buvinic, Mayra; Das Gupta, Monica; Casabonne, Ursula; Verwimp, Philip 2013. *Violent Conflict and Gender Inequality: An overview.* The World Bank.

[37]UN WOMEN, 2018. *Young Women in Peace and Security: At the intersection of the YPS and WPS Agendas.* UN WOMEN: New York. http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/4/young-women-in-peace-and-security#view.

[38] Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, 2019. *Our Mission.* http://wphfund.org/our-mission/

[39]UN WOMEN, 2018. *Facts and Figures: Peace and Security.* http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures

[40] Council on Foreign Relations 2019. *Women's Participation in Peace Processes*. https://www.cfr.org/interactive/womens-participation-in-peace-processes

[41]UN WOMEN, 2018. *Facts and Figures: Peace and Security.* http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures

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the SDG 5 is among others indicated in the global proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by women. In June 2018, the global proportion stood at 23.8%. However, for conflict and post-conflict countries, data continue to show lower figures with a stagnating average of around 16%[42].

In post-conflict settings it is important to pay attention to gendered inequalities, as violence against women still continues and even increases after men return from the battlefield[43]. A global review of 50 countries found significant increases in gender-based violence following major wars[44]. In South Africa for example, the number of reported rapes has increased drastically after the end of apartheid[45].

However, conflicts can also be a chance to trigger positive change for gender equality. For example, evidence suggests that violent conflict can trigger unexpectedly positive civic and political behaviors by women and other groups in the population who are largely excluded from participating in civic and political life during peacetime[46].

Youth and children that have lived in high-violence context for longer time will more likely face challenges such as perpetrating violence or being victim of violence later in life, physiological trauma, and negative effects on cognitive and social development[47]. It is therefore essential that gender is taken into account in all peacebuilding processes.

Education, Conflict and Inequality

Research has shown that increases in horizontal inequality in educational attainment more than doubles the odds that a country will experience a conflict in the next five years. In a country with a high ratio of youth to adult population, doubling the percentage of youth with secondary education, from 30% to 60% would halve the risk of conflict[48]. Access to quality education remains a huge challenge: 123 million children are still out of school, about half in crisis and conflict affected countries, and the poor quality of education in many developing countries is leading to low literacy rates amongst growing youth populations. Just 79% of young people are literate in conflict affected states compared to 93% in other countries[49]. Children in conflict affected countries are not only less likely to be in primary school but also more likely to drop out. Reaching the last grade in poorer conflict-affected countries is 65%, whereas it is 86% in other poor countries[50].

Quality education is key in the achievement of all Sustainable Development Goals, as it is strongly connected to future economic activity and well-being and plays an important role in national identity and social cohesion[51]. Years of violent conflict in Syria have reversed more than a decade of progress in

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Turshen Meredeth; Twagiramariya, Clotilde, 1998. *What Women Do in Wartime: Gender and Conflict in Africa.* London and New York: Zed Books Limited.

[44] Buvinic, Mayra; Das Gupta, Monica; Casabonne, Ursula; Verwimp, Philip 2013. *Violent Conflict and Gender Inequality: An overview.* The World Bank.

[45] Sigsworth, Romi, 2009. *"Anyone can be a rapist…" An overview of Sexual Violence in South Africa.* CSVR.

[46] Buvinic, Mayra; Das Gupta, Monica; Casabonne, Ursula; Verwimp, Philip 2013. *Violent Conflict and Gender Inequality: An overview.* The World Bank

[47] United Nations; World Bank. 2018. *Pathways for Peace : Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict.* Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337

[48] UNESCO, 2014.

[49] UNESCO, 2011, *The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education; EFA global monitoring report.* UNESCO. http://bit.ly/1Lop5wV

[50] Ibid

[51] Omoeva, C& Buckner E. 2015.*Does Horizontal Education Inequality Lead to Violent Conflict?* Education Policy and Data Center Working Paper, FHI 360: Washington, DC. (2015).

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children's education[52]. Education is often the first casualty of conflict, whether it be through direct attacks, or through the recruitment of young men and boys to forcibly take up arms. As the number of conflicts have grown in the past five years, so too the attacks on schools, increasing by 12,700 attacks from 2013 to 2017, harming more than 21,000 students and educators[53]

Violent conflict is one of the biggest obstacles to the right to education, as conflict exacerbate, worsen and reinforce existing education inequalities, if girls and young women prior to conflict had unequal access to education that will be worsened after conflict i.e.; girl's mobility is often highly restricted, limiting their access to school and can be further limited during conflict[54]. Trauma affected students will not be ready to fit in a learning environment.

A large youth population puts pressure on education systems to provide decent learning and skills that will allow young people to engage meaningfully in societies[55]. The right to quality education is a key equalizer in our work at Oxfam IBIS as it is crucial for gender inequality and the social and economic recovery from crisis and conflicts[56]. In times of conflict there is lower government spending on education, along with the destruction of educational infrastructure and the absence of teachers, often impedes the maintenance of schooling during war and results in lower overall educational attainment in the society[57]. Therefore it is critical for Oxfam to focus on education in crisis in the fight against inequality. Several studies indicate that greater government expenditure on education as well as availability of secondary education particularly for young men is linked to peace[58]. Lack of access to education lead to fewer economic opportunities, which correlates with low income and low income of certain groups leads to lower educational attainment, which creates a vicious cycle for relatively deprived groups[59].

ADDRESSING INEQUALITY AND CONFLICT

Non-violent mobilization

Collective action mobilized as a result of inequalities does not necessarily take violent shapes. In fact non-violent mobilization is twice as successful in achieving their objectives as those who use violence, and create the grounds for more peaceful societies[60]. Successful non-violent resistance may depend on access to resources that can sustain the participants during the campaign

[52] SOS Children's Village, 2014.

[53] Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2018, *Education Under Attack* 2018 www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/eua_2018_full.pdf

[54] United Nations and World Bank. 2018. *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1162-3

[55] Ibid.

[56] Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2018, *Education Under Attack* 2018http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/eua_2018_full.pdf

[57] Bircan, Brück & Wothknecht, 2010, *Violent Conflict and Inequality* Discussion Papers, Berlin: https://www.diw.de/documents/publikatio-nen/73/diw_01.c.357459.de/dp1013.pdf

[58] PRIO 2017, Inequality and Armed Conflict: Evidence and Data https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Inequality%20and%20Conflict%20Full%20Report.pdf

[59] United Nations and World Bank. 2018. *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1162-3

[60] Chenoweth & Stephan, (2011) *Why Civil Resistance Works; the Strategic Logic of Non-violent Conflict*, New York: Columbia University Press.

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period[61]. The support that INGOs can provide is connected to the network they have and are part of. INGOs can help legitimizing the resistance domestically and internationally which helps the effort of the non-violent mobilization achieving their goal[62]. Supporting nationally led non-violent mobilization aimed to address and change the underlying inequalities/causes of violent conflict can be possible entry points for Oxfam in the process of building inclusive peace, supporting peacebuilding initiatives and civic engagements on peace locally, thus contributing to an equal and just society.

Engaging with young people

Youth are often depicted as being the trouble makers, but through peacebuilding and local civic engagement on peace Oxfam can support youth in not only being the change but to lead the change tin fight against inequality and have equal access to education, influence and resources. It is important in this effort to have a deep understanding of what youth means and what it means to be a female or male youth in a fragile context[63], as youth are not one homogenous category. To provide meaningful support and avoid the danger of youth refer to male youth and gender refer to women.

Young people face multiple discriminations based on ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class, disability or just the fact of their age. These forms of discrimination reproduce and reinforce each other and accentuate social, economic and political exclusion amongst youth and thereby contributing to inequality for young people to engage meaningfully in their societies.

Many youth-led organizations are often severely underfunded and heavily dependent on volunteerism[64]. Equitable partnerships with youth-led organisation can provide information sharing, filling knowledge gap and providing data through partnerships expanding visibility and influence. Engaging with young peace builders can help bridge the gap between the operational silos between development, human rights, humanitarian action, peace and security[65].

Oxfam is well positioned to address the underlying structural inequalities and asymmetries of power between youth and class/political elites, to enable youth to make actions for peace and change[66]. The vast majority of young people want to contribute meaningful in shaping their societies. Many already are. But to ensure the demographic dividend becomes a peace dividend, we must collectively invest in young people's capacities, transform the systems that reinforce exclusion, and prioritize partnerships and action where young people are in the drivers' seat.

Through policies and support for civil led engagement

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to addressing inequalities as structural causes of violent conflict. It is essential to understand the context in which we work and to understand the nature and extent of inequalities, in order to design appropriate and effective policies, measures and support for civil-led engagement. It is important to be aware of the inherent tensions that arise

The longer and more intentionally a society has worked to address structural factors and create the incentives for peace the harder it is to derail that society from a peaceful path.

Pathways for Peace UN 2017

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following the implementation of policies and other measures aimed at redistributing resources among groups. Since all efforts in conflict affected and fragile settings have the potential to exacerbate conflicts, both in terms of triggers of violence and reinforcing structural dimensions of conflict.

The best way to prevent societies from descending into crisis and violent conflict is to ensure that they are resilient, by addressing inequalities and exclusion[67]. Preventing violence and violent conflict requires departing from traditional economic and social policies and seek inclusive solution through dialogue, adapted macroeconomic policies, institutional reform in core state functions, and redistributive policies. [68] Building inter-group trust after conflict (and during, if possible), pointing to what people have in common and emphasizing multiculturalism can help prevent recurrence of conflict; this can be achieved by increasing contact across ethnic groups, further supported by political intuitions in the formulation of constitution and electoral system[69].

Countries emerging from conflict are in a delicate transition process, one which often risks relapse into violence. When working in fragile or conflict-prone societies it is important to pay attention to these horizontal inequalities, to ensure that these inequalities are not reproduced or exacerbate existing inequalities that can lead to the outburst of violent conflict. But instead work on solutions that counteract these systemic inequalities to get out of the conflict cycle and prevent conflict.

Looking at inequality from a peacebuilding perspective provides new ways and practices to help fight inequality in the quest for an equal and just world. Given Oxfam's work in supporting civil society actors, one important contribution related to the linkages between conflict and inequality could be to draw attention to the vertical inequalities that affect multiple groups. In doing so, this draws attention to structural political and socio-economic factors which may serve to reduce inter-group tension, while pointing towards deficiencies in existing governance and institutional frameworks related to distribution at a national level. In this way, Oxfam can contribute to informing social movements that cut across group affiliations and communities, galvanizing civil society actors around a collective agenda that links inequality and its conflict-related dimensions.

As this brief has demonstrated conflict is not an isolated phenomenon, but one which is increasingly and inherently tied to inequality and poverty. For Oxfam IBIS, this not only underlines the value added of our work on peacebuilding as part of an integrated effort to address the structural causes of inequality and conflict. It also calls for ensuring all our work is informed by an understanding of the conflict dynamics in any given context, which is a critical starting point to ensuring that our work is addressing inequalities that can help foster sustainable peaceful societies.

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