



LAND AND CONFLICT

LESSONS FROM THE FIELD ON CONFLICT SENSITIVE LAND GOVERNANCE
AND PEACEBUILDING

SECURING LAND AND PROPERTY RIGHTS FOR ALL

LAND AND CONFLICT

Lessons from The Field on Conflict Sensitive Land Governance and Peacebuilding

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FOREWORD

Conflicts are becoming more intractable. They are longer – more than 20 years on average – meaning that the people they displace are spending ever-increasing amounts of time away from their homes and communities. They are more complex, as armed groups compete for control over state institutions, natural resources and territory – and as extremist groups often leave little room for diplomacy.

Over the coming decades the land-conflict nexus will become more important, with the cumulative effects of mega-trends like population growth, urbanization, food insecurity, water scarcity and climate change, which have heightened competition for resources, tensions and instability. Mounting pressure on land and natural resources will increase the role of land in driving conflict dynamics at global, regional, national and local levels. There is growing recognition of the link between land and armed conflict and more and more concern that land can be a cause or trigger for conflict, a critical factor causing its relapse, or a bottleneck to post-conflict recovery. Almost every major peace agreement from 2005 to 2014 contained land-specific provisions.

As a result of all types of conflict, 65.6 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes: the largest number ever recorded, according to UNHCR. Most – 40.3 million – are people displaced within their own country. Refugees who have fled to another country make up the next biggest group, at 22.5 million. Around the world, someone is displaced every three seconds, forced from their homes by violence, war and persecution.

Land-related conflict is also linked to natural resources. Since 1990 at least 17 violent conflicts have involved the exploitation of natural resources. Research further suggests that over the last 60 years at least 40 percent of all intrastate conflicts have a link to natural resources.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides us with a clear, credible and common roadmap in relation to development. The Sustainable Development Goals include Goal 16, dedicated to “peace, justice and strong institutions”. This book gives a window on how land-related conflict prevention and peacebuilding is being done in nine countries by a range of UN actors, governments and national and international NGOs from conflict through to development.

We must bring the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding spheres closer together from the very beginning of a crisis to support affected communities, address structural and economic impacts and help prevent a new spiral of fragility and instability. Humanitarian response, sustainable development and sustaining peace are three sides of the same triangle.

This book demonstrates how this can be done in the land sector. It shows that addressing land requires an approach that includes both humanitarian and development issues. However, it also shows that we need to work harder on coordination between the United Nations and other organizations and continue to develop partnerships to address fragmentation at the country level to ensure sustainable peace. The UN’s humanitarian and development efforts would be insignificant without the active involvement of Member States and the contributions of civil society and others.

One of the core purposes of the UN System is to build sustainable peace. The 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, in its analysis of the evolving global context for peacebuilding, identified land as a key driver of conflict. Land and conflict issues are found across each of the UN’s three pillars, and through the different phases of conflict. The UN must work where it has a comparative advantage, while



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working closely with other organizations, such as governments and civil society and others.

This book gives inspiring stories of how UN staff and civil society are working in the field – often under difficult conditions – to prevent conflict, build peace and stabilize situations and ultimately create sustainable peace, where land is a root cause of conflict or has become a stumbling-block to peace.

We need to have practical steps and solutions including tools and approaches for land and peacebuilding. In the lead-up to widespread violence, we often see increases in repression, the closing of space for civil society and the rise of sectarianism. We must invest in social cohesion so that all people feel they have a stake in society. Our efforts must also be context-specific, with human rights as a strong foundation.

The cases in the book give practical solutions and tools to address land-related conflict. They show how important it is to ensure that communities, and especially women, participate so as to build society–state legitimacy. The cases also show how much work is involved in achieving this. There are many difficulties to overcome, including addressing land-related human-rights abuses such as eviction and displacement.

I commend the organizations that worked in partnership on this work on land and conflict, under the leadership of UN-Habitat. Also with major input from UN-Habitat, a Secretary-General's Guidance Note on land and conflict is nearly complete. This will serve to guide the UN as a whole on this critical issue. UN-Habitat and the Global Land Tool Network have built a global Land and Conflict Coalition which includes governments, UN and civil-society actors, funded by the Swiss Development Cooperation. This book is part of the Coalition's work

programme. All these endeavours are key to moving this important agenda forward to meet our goals.

Finally, the nine country cases show us what works and how to programme land into broader conflict-prevention and peacebuilding goals. They provide further insight into how to tie together the humanitarian and development agendas. Organizations working in conflict situations will find much in this book that they can learn from as they plan and implement their activities in the field.



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