B - Governing Document

Policy for Peace and Reconciliation

Approved by: The Board of Directors
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Digni

Introduction

Peace and reconciliation is a term often used in the context of development. The thought is that without peace there can be no development, and without reconciliation there can be no peace. Peace and reconciliation must therefore be seen in relationship to each other if we are to gain ground in development work, particularly in post-conflict regions.

Though a country may appear peaceful on the surface, there may still exist pockets of brewing conflicts between various people groups, or between people groups and the governing authorities.

In a world that is becoming increasingly globalised, the differences between various countries and societies are becoming more acute, and those that fall behind are becoming more aware of the fact that they do not have the same resources as others. This sense of injustice will be a greater challenge in the coming future, as it can foment conflict. Peace and reconciliation is therefore relevant in countries that currently appear peaceful on the surface, or that were in some sort of conflict years earlier. Having a good understanding of a natio, combined with dependable and relevant partners and conflict analyses, is therefore extremely important before starting a work in an area.

The goal of the peace and reconciliation policy

This policy is to be normative for developmental work in general, and for peace and reconciliation work among Digni's members, local cooperative partners, and secretariat in particular. The policy is anchored in Digni's governing documents.

Digni's approach to peace and reconciliation

The end of a war leads not only to political change but also to social change. It is important to be aware of these changes, working in ways that reduce conflict. A peace agreement is only the beginning of a peace process: it is when the violence stops and people begin returning to their normal lives that the challenges become visible and the peace process can actually begin. History has shown us that many countries that achieve a fragile peace often fall back into some form of conflict afterward. This may be due to the fact that people's wounds may not yet be healed, or they feel that real change hasn't been achieved through a conflict that was hoped to bring greater equality and justice. Various groups that were involved in the conflict can't seem to trust each other or live together in peace. In such situations a reconciliation process may be key to the creation of a sustainable peace.

In many ways, the act of reconciliation is foundational to the Christian faith and should thus be a natural part of the peace and reconciliation work of Digni's members, particularly when their primary cooperative partners are local churches that have established trust and connections with people groups at the grassroots level.[1]

[1] This can vary in relation to partners, geography and context. Most of Digni's projects that have peace and reconciliation as one of its primary activities do this in association with local churches.

That said, we cannot demand reconciliation, nor forgiveness, even when working with churches. Target groups cannot be pressed into participating in the peace and reconciliation projects we support. No one can demand a person to forgive. Forgiveness comes when a person is ready to extend it, independently of faith or development projects, if it happens at all.

Conflicts often arise from complex issues. The definition of the term 'conflict' is also dependent on the context it is used in. It is therefore important to take into consideration the causes of conflict and not simply deal with the symptoms. Peace and reconciliation work must consider certain aspects of conflict, such as the settlement of debt or reparations, justice and truth, and the rights and responsibilities of each of the various actors. Actors should not simply secure their own rights, but the rights of others as well. An awareness of the complexity of these aspects of conflict must be central in every work that Digni supports. It is therefore important that awareness is raised on these complex issues, that local ownership in the peace and reconciliation projects is established, with the hope that initiative for peace and reconciliation is taken by the target groups themselves.

Peace and reconciliation measures and initiatives supported by Digni must also comply with peace processesses that have already been started. Fundamental human rights must also be taken into consideration in every peace and reconciliation measure: When a war or conflict has ended, human rights issues or legal settlements and reparations must be resolved, otherwise a certain resistance to the work of forgiveness and reconciliation can arise. Though not always the case, a combination of the two – dealing with human rights issues and establishing a work of forgiveness and reconciliation – may be prerequisite to establishing sustainable peace.

In a post-conflict situation that includes a longer phase of reconstruction, those who support such measures must be conscious of the physical and material needs of each of the various groups that had been involved in the conflict, The meeting of these needs must be prioritised, and those who define these needs must be carefully monitored. 'Do No Harm' is crucial in such a phase, with conflict analyses being performed regularly (Refer to 'Principles').

The UN Security Resolution 1325[2] on women, peace and security must be adhered to in all work Digni supports in conflict areas. Women are to be involved in these projects in the same manner as men, in terms of both the right of decision and the right to participation in peace processes and negotiations.

Principles

Do No Harm: Digni is to ensure that all activities it supports work to promote dialog between various actors. Measures supported by Digni are to minimise sources of tension ('dividers'), and maximise sources of peace and reconciliation ('connectors') found in the local context. We must be acutely attentive to these dividers and connectors when choosing a particular side of a conflict.[3]

[2] United Nations: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/#DR

[3] For example, when we work with minority rights, or when the activities of a project largely benefit a particular people group.

UN Resolution 1325: Digni is to ensure that all activities supported by Digni in a conflict area include women, in the same manner as men, both in peace processes and peace and reconciliation projects. The voice of women is to be heard and their participation promoted, in accordance with the UN Resolution for Women, Peace and Security.

Conflict sensitivity: Digni is to ensure that conflict sensitivity will be considered in all projects that it supports, particularly in peace and reconciliation measures. We must understand the context in which we operate, and the interaction between the project and this context.

Human dignity and human rights: People's dignity and rights must be taken into consideration in peace and reconciliation work supported by Digni. Everyone involved must be listened to and included in this process, especially those from marginalised groups.

Freedom of religion or faith, and its analysis: Peace, stability and development depend on human rights and our ability to live together in peace by accepting the rights of others, despite our deepest differences. Violations of the freedom of religion or belief often have a devastating impact on individuals, communities and societies. According to the Pew Research Centre[4], over three quarters of the world's population live in countries where freedom of religion or belief is heavily restricted by the state, or with high levels of social hostilities related to religion, such as hate crimes, mob violence or religion-based terrorism. In order to build peace, stability and democracy, we need to foster a social, political and legal culture of freedom of religion or belief: a culture in which there are equal rights for everyone, despite deep differences existing in our beliefs.

Digni recommends that all of its members and partners make use of the material prepared by the platform, particularly in those projects that work in areas where this is relevant.

Cultural sensitivity: Projects working with peace and reconciliation are to be adapted to contextual considerations in relation to local culture, tradition and religion.

Violence: As a principle, Digni expects that conflicts are resolved through non-violent means.

Responsibility

Digni's board of directors and leadership are responsible for ensuring that:

- All work dedicated to peace and reconciliation supported by Digni is in accordance with Digni's criteria for support and applicable strategies, particularly those that follow Do No Harm principles, nurturing local ownership for these processes.
- Peace and reconciliation, together with conflict sensitivity, are to have an increased focus in Digni's project folio and in Digni's secretariat.

[4] https://www.pewresearch.org/

- Digni continues to promote itself in relevant professional groups and forums, expanding Digni's network by becoming more visible to civil society actors and to relevant Norwegian authorities, both domestic and international.

Implementation

All projects supported by Digni are to adhere to Digni's policy guiding its work for peace and reconciliation. Before a member of Digni can apply for financial support for a reconciliation measure, they are to become familiar with Digni's guidelines and policy, sharing these with their project partners.

Components of peace and reconciliation are to be included in projects and programmes

It is important to Digni that components of peace and reconciliation are to be included to a greater degree in projects and programmes it supports. Many of Digni's members have projects in conflict and post-conflict areas, and this theme should therefore be relevant for specific peace and reconciliation projects.

Conflict sensitivity

Focus on conflict sensitivity will contribute to the implementation of a larger number of reconciliation measures. This will require competence-building in Digni's members, partners, and secretariat. Many of Digni's members already work with the 'Do No Harm' method and with Freedom of Religion and Beliefs (FORB) learning platform (see below). Conflict sensitivity is to be a natural part of planning a new measure. A conflict analysis must be performed when a measure is being planned for inside a conflict area.

From grassroots level to leadership level – and vice-versa

Initiatives started at the grassroots level must be connected with the various leadership levels, both locally and nationally. Work is often done only on one level, whether it be at the grassroot level, middle-management level, or top leadership level. Connecting and coordinating these different levels to a greater degree will lead to stronger and more sustainable peace processes and strengthen the roles and responsibilities of the various actors. Target groups must be encouraged and empowered to participate in and influence peace processes and other political processes that affect peace and security in their society, which will work to strengthen these peace processes. This can also be done by starting first at the government level and then working down to the grassroots level.

Good governance

It is nearly impossible to establish a sustainable peace without first focusing on the establishing of quality leadership on all levels, from grassroots organisations, churches and other civil society actors up to both regional and national leadership levels. Unbalanced, unhealthy power relationships, unfair

distribution of goods and corruption are some of the primary causes of conflict. Good governance must be accepted on all levels we work on and unhealthy power structures must be challenged, if we are to reduce violent conflicts and create more peaceful societies.

Definitions

Peace
There are different levels of peace; the minimum definition would be the absence of violence, or *negative peace.* Another level of peace is the absence of structural and cultural violence, such as access to basic means of life and dignity, which is *positive peace*[5].

Peacebuilding
Measures designed to consolidate peaceful relations and strengthen viable political, socio-economic and cultural institutions capable of mediating conflict, and to strengthen other mechanisms that will either create or support the necessary conditions for sustained peace.

Reconciliation
Reconciliation means *to come together, to assemble*. It is the restoration of broken relationships or the coming together of those who have been alienated and separated from each other by conflict to create a community again.

Conflict
The result of parties disagreeing about the distribution of material or symbolic resources and acting on the basis of these perceived incompatibilities.

Conflict (violent)
Resort to psychological or physical force to resolve a disagreement.

Conflict prevention
Actions, policies, procedures or institutions intended to avoid the threat or use of armed force and related forms of coercion by states or groups to settle political disputes, or to avoid the recurrence of violent conflict.

Conflict sensitivity

[5]5 Galtung, J. (1996) "Violence and Peace" in Smoker, P., Davies, R. and Munske, B. (eds), *A Reader in Peace Studies*. London: Pergamon Press pp 19-30. See also "Conflict Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding Resource Pack", and Assefa, H. (1993) "Introduction" in *Peace and Reconciliation as a Paradigm.* Nairobi, Kenya: Nairobi Peace Initiative, pp1-18.

This means the ability of your organisation to:

- understand the context in which you operate;
- understand the interaction between your intervention and the context; and
- act upon the understanding of this interaction, in order to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive impacts.

Do No Harm
The Do No Harm Programme (DNH) is an effort to identify ways in which international humanitarian and/or development assistance can be given to a project in a conflict setting in a way that does not exacerbate or worsen the conflict, but rather helps the local people disengage from fighting and develop systems for settling the problems which exacerbate conflict within their societies

Freedom of religion or belief
The Freedom of Religion or Belief Learning Platform www.forb-learning.org is an initiative of the Nordic Ecumenical Network on Freedom of Religion or Belief (NORFORB), in partnership with a wide range of secular and faith-based organisations (Digni and some of its member organisations are members of NORFORB) that seek to promote the human right to freedom of religion or belief for all, as given in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Civil society
Civil society is a domain parallel to, but separate from, the state and the market, in which citizens freely group together according to their own interests. This may include, for example, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations, religious bodies, professional associations, trade unions, student groups, and cultural societies.

Relevant material

FORB
The Freedom of Religion or Belief Learning Platform: https://www.forb-learning.org/index.html

Do No Harm
Collaborative Learning Projects: https://www.cdacollaborative.org/what-we-do/conflict-sensitivity/

Digni's gender and equality policy