

SDC's Contribution to Peace

Background

The aim of this paper is to provide a narrative on how SDC contributes to peace based on an internal peace mapping as well as examples provided by different experts within SDC and the consequently developed peace contribution pathways. The narrative further illustrates SDC's work on peace in the nexus through selected examples. These examples are meant to be illustrative and are not an exhaustive depiction of SDC's contribution to peace. This mandate builds on previous work of SDC on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus, particularly SDC's Learning Journey on the Triple Nexus. It thereby also contributes to the action line (2) outlined in the Synthesis Report as it aims to contribute to a common understanding of the peace element of the nexus within SDC and by identifying avenues to increase the peace contribution of SDC's interventions.

Table of Contents

<u>SDC's Engagement on Peace through a Nexus Approach</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>1. Global and National Context</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>2. Peace Contribution Pathways</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>3. Final Considerations</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Bibliography</u>	<u>10</u>

List of Abbreviations

DAC	Development Assistance Committee – OECD
CS	Conflict Sensitivity
CSPM	Conflict Sensitive Project/Programme Management
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PHRD	Peace and Human Rights Division FDFA
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
WOGA	Whole of Government Approach

SDC's Engagement on Peace through a Nexus Approach

1. Global and National Context

As of 2022, the **world is experiencing the highest levels of conflict** since before the end of the Cold War, with 55 active conflicts averaging 8-11 years in duration. Civil and interstate wars have seen the highest fatalities since the mid-1980s, leading to a peak in violent conflicts globally. Despite this, comprehensive peace deals brokered by international actors are declining, coinciding with a displacement crisis affecting a quarter of the world's population, with 108 million people forcibly displaced by early 2023. Major donors like the EU, UK, and USA have shifted focus from conflict resolution to management, resulting in increased aid spending without significant impact.¹

Conflicts are becoming more protracted, involving multiple parties, internationalization, and access to advanced weaponry, often funded by the exploitation of natural resources and criminal activities. The UN's role in peacekeeping is declining, with less emphasis on comprehensive agreements and more on intermediate goals like ceasefire monitoring. This shift places greater responsibility on individual countries rather than the multilateral system, reflecting changes in the global peace architecture. Consequently, the cost of war is rising, with aid appeals increasing by 10% annually from 2012 to 2018, and UN funding appeals quadrupling since 2013.²

The **Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (Triple Nexus, hereafter nexus)** is increasingly promoted as an approach to tackle these global challenges in an integrated way³, where humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors are working complementary to one another to contribute more sustainably to address vulnerabilities, needs and underlying causes of conflicts and fragility.⁴

The triple nexus discourse is in parts also a result of increasing pressures on funding, as humanitarian needs are globally increasing but funding commitments remain steady or even decrease due to competing priorities. As of 2023, investment in conflict prevention and peacebuilding has been at a historic low. Peace ODA provided by OECD DAC members in fragile contexts has been dwindling, representing merely 10.8% of their overall ODA in 2021, totaling USD 5.27 billion – marking the lowest level in fifteen years.

This trend in funding stands in stark contrast with the fact that investing in prevention is far less costly compared to the ongoing and recurring crisis responses globally. Studies have shown that the costs of conflict prevention are typically a fraction of the expenses incurred in responding to conflict. The UN and World Bank estimate that every dollar invested in conflict prevention can save up to sixteen dollars in post-conflict recovery costs. Moreover, beyond the financial costs, conflict often exact a heavy toll in terms of human lives, displacement, destruction of infrastructure, and long-term socio-economic repercussions. As a result, the prevention and transformation of conflicts before they escalate and turn violent not only save lives but also preserve social cohesion, protect development gains, and promote sustainable peace and stability.

¹ Foreign Affairs, Emma Beals and Peter Salisbury, A World at War, What is Behind the Global Explosion of Violent Conflict, October 30, 2023

² Ibid.

³ Linking or better integrating humanitarian, development and to a lesser extent peace activities is by no means a new phenomenon, but dates back to previous debates such as the Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development debate and other efforts to promote stronger coherence and complementarity.

⁴ FDFA (2022) LJ Triple Nexus

Initiatives such as the [New Agenda for Peace](#) and the related [Summit of the Future](#) can be seen as a crucial starting point for revitalizing engagement in this area, as it re-emphasizes the need to take conflict prevention seriously and calls on member states to step up their engagement and inter-governmental cooperation to prevent violence, with the UN in a supportive role. The New Agenda for Peace stresses the interlinkages between the current trends in violence, inequality and the lack of sustainable development and outlines a series of recommendations with the aim to move towards a more holistic approach to peace which also focuses on tackling issues that are increasingly linked with global peace and security dynamics, including the climate crisis, a shrinking civic space and gender-based violence and inequality.⁵ As such, the New Agenda for Peace reinforces the argument for a more coordinated and coherent international system in which global conflict and security risks are not only addressed by traditional peace and security actors, but also by humanitarian and developmental efforts. **SDC plays an integral part in contributing to Switzerland's engagement on peace**, as outlined in the Strategy for International Cooperation and Swiss Foreign Policy and has undertaken efforts to strengthen its setup to work effectively in the nexus, thereby addressing drivers of fragility and conflict more comprehensively.

SDC is well-positioned to contribute to peace through a nexus approach due to its longstanding presence in many conflict contexts. Switzerland and specifically SDC is further renowned for its expertise in different areas such as rural development, WASH, good governance, and vocational skills development. It is often perceived as a trusted, reliable donor with relatively flexible approaches, including longer-term funding through program contributions, increasing nexus programming and a strong focus on gender- and conflict sensitive programming. Overall, these characteristics enable SDC to create entry-points for peacebuilding activities for other actors, and to increase its own contribution to peace through humanitarian and development interventions.

2. Peace Contribution Pathways

SDC's contribution to peace can be categorized in six pillars that encompass a variety of actors, working modalities, instruments, and activities. It is important to note that the contributions to peace outlined under these six pillars present possible pathways that are by no means automatic or inevitable.⁶ Working towards complex social outcomes, such as peace, social cohesion, conflict transformation or resilience in highly dynamic contexts, often subjected to overlapping crises and shocks, requires testing different hypotheses on how an intervention might contribute to these outcomes and to take an adaptive, learning-oriented implementation approach. It also means that it is impossible to attribute complex social outcomes to single interventions. Rather, it requires taking a long-term vision and engaging through coherent and complementary approaches together with other WOGA partners and donors.

Further, to contribute meaningfully to peace, it is important that the context is taken as a starting point. While there might be lessons learned and best practices for specific sectoral or thematic engagements, it remains crucial to tailor projects and interventions to the specific context realities. Ultimately, there remains a degree of uncertainty that despite well-designed and executed initiatives, the contribution to peace remains limited or experiences a set-back due to other developments outside the sphere of influence of individual actors or the international aid system at large. The outlined pathways or Theories

⁵ United Nations (2023), Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace.

⁶ OECD (2023), Peace ODA, OECD Publishing, Paris.

of Change are therefore best understood as entry-points through which SDC can enhance the peace aspects of its interventions. They are based on existing activities and initiatives of SDC.

Under **Pillar 1 - Social cohesion and trust-building** - SDC aims to enhance the social fabric of fragile conflict contexts by fostering improved relations, trust, and collaboration among diverse communities and stakeholders (*horizontal social cohesion*). This is pursued through initiatives addressing legacies of conflict and violence, promoting a culture of peace through historical memory, arts and culture, as well as fostering freedom of expression. Additionally, efforts are made to collaborate with and to strengthen civil society, while also advancing an independent media landscape, facilitating community reintegration, and providing mental health support.

Moreover, by incorporating elements that are intentionally designed to strengthen relationships among different groups in interventions that primarily address development and humanitarian needs, SDC aims to foster trust and social cohesion among communities while addressing the effects of fragility, conflicts and crises (CSPM+).

SDC Project Example (I) – Pillar 1

In Northern Sri Lanka, Switzerland has implemented several holistic post-tsunami and post-civil war reconstruction programmes for more than a decade, using the Build Back Better approach. Entire communities have been supported in rebuilding their homes, restoring livelihoods and markets, and rebuilding social infrastructure such as schools. In addition, the programme contributed to social cohesion, peace and reconciliation in the North, enabling Tamils to return home after 30 years of displacement through a conflict-sensitive participatory approach and community engagement, which also contributed to conflict resolution between Tamils and Sinhalese.

SDC Project Example (II) – Pillar 1

SDC's Cultural Programme in Tanzania (7F10904) aims to foster cultural expressions, stimulate public engagement and enhance outreach of cultural productions. Young cultural managers are capacitated to improve the quality of cultural initiatives and micro grants are provided to amplify outreach. Furthermore, capacities of emerging cultural spaces, particularly in underserved regions, are strengthened to contribute to an accessible and inclusive cultural scene. Through this programme, SDC aims to contribute to an independent and diverse cultural scene that promotes artistic expression, strengthening social cohesion and inclusion.

SDC Project Example (III) – Pillar 1

In Moldova, SDC promotes the empowerment of women leadership as part of the 'Women Supporting Women' project (7F-11041.01), an initiative aimed at enhancing women's role and participation in the delivery of humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding initiatives. In the project, Refugee and Moldovan women from selected communities actively participate in the design and delivery of the humanitarian response, foster dialogue and lead initiatives towards confidence building and social cohesion.

Under **Pillar 2 – Good governance, human rights, equality and justice** – SDC seeks to strengthen the social contract between states and society, fostering just, participative, transparent, accountable and

inclusive institutions conducive to peace (*vertical social cohesion*). This is achieved through initiatives promoting good governance, human rights and the rule of law, by enhancing local ownership and supporting national and local institutions and other duty bearers in equitable delivery of basic services as well as empowering rights holders to claim their rights. At the same time, by fostering trust between different societal levels, promoting accountability and reinforcing effective governance practices, SDC aims to catalyze more inclusive decision-making processes, alleviate grievances, and ultimately foster enhanced stability and peace within communities.

Projects and initiatives under this pillar are aimed at strengthening the capacities of governments in equitable service delivery, decentralization and fiscal planning to contribute to more accountable public institutions. SDC also collaborates with local authorities to enhance accountability by reinforcing the capacity of local officials through capacity building and fostering inclusive participation, particularly involving youth, women, and civic groups, in local decision-making processes. Additionally, by strengthening vertical linkages, trust between communities and authorities is established or reinforced, facilitating dialogue, cooperation, and reconciliation, as seen in projects like Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA). SDC further engages in multi-level dialogue and projects to promote human rights and protection as well as activities aimed at preventing and addressing concerns related to SGBV. The dedication to human rights is also demonstrated through the reinforcement of accountability systems for grave violations and advocacy. SDC endeavors to secure access to quality, safe, and inclusive education in fragile contexts. Additionally, it tackles displacement-related needs by providing capacity building opportunities to national and local institutions on strategies and plans for durable solutions.

SDC Project Example (I) – Pillar 2

The ASIR-SABA project in Colombia (7F-09231.03) aims to enhance access to clean water and basic sanitation (humanitarian), to effectively address the protection needs of vulnerable groups through the implementation of innovative technologies to bolster resilience against climate change (development), all while endeavoring to rebuild trust between authorities and marginalized communities (peace).

SDC Project Example (II) – Pillar 2

One of SDC's initiatives in South Sudan (7F-11028.01) focuses on addressing significant civilian concerns such as child protection, SGBV, and women's empowerment. Simultaneously, it endeavors to strengthen the capabilities of existing community-based protection mechanisms and foster community engagement, with a particular emphasis on involving youth. Through these activities, the intervention underscores the importance of building trust, promoting inclusion, and reestablishing confidence in peaceful community relations.

Under **Pillar 3 - Sustainable and inclusive management and use of natural resources** – SDC promotes sustainable and equitable access to and use of natural resources. By doing so, SDC not only alleviates pressures on these resources but also fosters peaceful coexistence and (cross-cleavage) collaboration, while simultaneously preserving a healthy planet. This is achieved by implementing natural resource-related projects aligned with good governance practices complemented by initiatives centered on fostering trust within and between communities, as well as creating spaces for dialogue and conflict resolution.

Activities under this pillar include SDC's work in the area of transboundary water governance aimed at fostering collaboration and trust-building as well as activities in the area of climate-smart agriculture, and sustainable and inclusive natural resource governance that are coupled with activities promoting peaceful conflict resolution, participation (particularly of women) as well as inter- and intra-group trust-building.

SDC Project Example (I) – Pillar 3

In Central America, SDC supports initiatives to tackle climate change by strengthening the capacities of local actors and women grassroots organizations, enabling them to influence regional agendas. In the case of a grassroots women building resilience and peace project in Central America (7F-10293.01), these endeavors are complemented by initiatives to promote dialogue among local actors, addressing concerns related to gender-based violence (SGBV) and peace processes.

SDC Project Example (II) – Pillar 3

A project focused on restoring degraded ecosystems in Eastern Chad's Sudanese refugee-hosting area aims to foster peaceful cohabitation between local and displaced communities by jointly rehabilitating overexploited ecosystems. With over 360,000 refugees in twelve camps since 2004, resource demands have strained fragile semi-arid Sahelian ecosystems. The initiative engages both groups in protecting and managing large Acacia Senegal tree stands, producing valuable gum Arabic, thereby enhancing livelihoods, resilience and peaceful coexistence, and serving as a low-cost climate change adaptation measure.

Pillar 4 – Economic incentives for peace – includes initiatives that provide economic incentives for peace, including through the promotion of HRBA and conflict sensitivity among private sector actors and initiatives supporting peaceful means of subsistence. The objective of activities under this pillar is to create perspectives for peace, social cohesion and stability in conflict-affected regions and alternatives to resorting to violence. They include initiatives promoting local entrepreneurship and decent jobs with the intention to provide alternative incentives and perspectives to youth and marginalized groups or better coordination between farmers and herders to improve food security and economic and social conditions and mitigate competition over scarce resources. SDC is also active in the area of private sector and financial investments for peace, leveraging Switzerland's status as an innovative finance hub by creating financial products for transboundary, multisectoral, and transgenerational investments promoting sustainable development and peace.

SDC Project Example (I) – Pillar 4

In the fragile context of Niger, Switzerland is promoting agricultural entrepreneurship for women and young people in the Dosso and Maradi regions. The aim of the project (7F-10413) is to contribute to inclusive economic growth, social cohesion, peace and stability in these regions by enabling women and young people to gain access to decent employment and income opportunities through agricultural entrepreneurship and by strengthening the business and financial environment to enhance climate-resilient agro-pastoral value chains, which are expected to contribute to improved economic and social conditions, better food and nutrition security and social cohesion.

SDC Project Example (II) – Pillar 4

The "Financing Durable Solutions Programme for Forcibly Displaced People" (7F-10857) is an initiative to engage the private sector and municipalities in providing sustainable solutions for displaced individuals and their host communities in the Horn of Africa. By promoting self-reliance and socioeconomic inclusion, the program links migration policy with international cooperation, reinforcing Switzerland's role as a leader in this area. The project's key outcomes include improved management of migration challenges by local governments and communities, increased private sector involvement in durable solutions, and enhanced coordination, knowledge sharing, and learning among stakeholders.

On the multilateral side, falling under **Pillar 5 – Strengthening the global peace architecture** – SDC is promoting and supporting multilateral and global policies, initiatives and funds working on peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and sustainable development. Through this, SDC aims to contribute to a strengthened global peace architecture that is well-coordinated, sufficiently funded and capacitated to support peacebuilding initiatives in different contexts.

Activities under this pillar include contributions to multilateral peacebuilding, development and humanitarian initiatives that are either contributing to nexus outcomes, such as ensuring development banks or humanitarian funds are better equipped to work in fragile and conflict-affected contexts and/or the global peacebuilding landscape is better financed, coordinated and capacitated. SDC's approach under this pillar entails strategic support, financial engagement, and political dialogue.

SDC Project Example (I) – Pillar 5

SDC, alongside partners like Norway and Germany, contributes to peace efforts in Colombia through the UN-Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Peacebuilding MPTF (7F-09499, phase III), supporting the implementation of existing Peace Agreements. This aid directly benefits vulnerable populations in former conflict regions, thereby reinforcing Switzerland's current role in supporting the government's comprehensive peace efforts in Colombia, and aligning with its mandate as an elected member of the Security Council.

SDC Project Example (II) – Pillar 5

Through the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Peacebuilding (Phase III) in Ethiopia, SDC is actively contributing to the protection, socio-economic recovery, and peaceful coexistence of displacement-affected communities in the Somali Region. The project (7F-10331.02) aims to bolster the support for the new Sustainable Durable Solutions (SDS) Strategy and aligns with the Government of Ethiopia's Strategic Plan to address internal displacement.

SDC Project Example (III) – Pillar 5

Switzerland is contributing to three initiatives under the Agenda 2030's Sustainable Development Goal 16 (7F-09952.01) on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies (Pathfinders, TAP Network and SDG16 Forum), that are advocating complementarily at the global and national levels and aim to increase political engagement and financial means to advance reforms and good governance, while leaving no one behind.

Activities under **Pillar 6 – Security** – SDC actively enhances security governance, aimed at reducing armed conflict, and fostering safer communities through its engagement in Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R) initiatives and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) projects.

These efforts, alongside demining and ceasefire monitoring, aim to promote lasting security and stability in the targeted region or community. In striving to create safer environments, SDC endeavors to enhance capacities and foster collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including state institutions, police, civil society, and local governments. SDC also advocates for significant reforms in the police education system, community policing, and the establishment of efficient control systems for personnel. These initiatives are complemented by additional efforts to implement local and regional violence prevention and management mechanisms.

SDC Project Example (I) – Pillar 6

Through the integrated mine action program in Colombia (7F-10748), SDC assists mine victims and affected communities with demining activities and protection measures. At the same time, the initiative aims at contributing to communities' socio-economic recovery while facilitating the reintegration of ex-combatants and supporting the implementation of agreements with armed groups such as the ELN.

SDC Project Example (II) – Pillar 6

In Mozambique, SDC is supporting the implementation of the Maputo Peace Accord (7F-10547.01), including the ongoing Disarmament, Demobilization and Reinsertion (DDR) of ex-combatants, reconciliation efforts and enhanced decentralization.

3. Final Considerations

This work on SDC's contribution to peace provided a starting point to explore the diverse ways through which SDC is aiming to contribute to peace and prompted extensive reflections on the conceptualization of peace contributions and how humanitarian and development-focused projects, including double and triple nexus projects, can effectively contribute to peace.

Indeed, while projects with a primary focus on humanitarian aid delivery and/or sustainable development may inadvertently contribute to social cohesion and peaceful relations as positive side effects, it is insufficient to claim that these projects deliberately contribute to peace. Merely incorporating conflict sensitivity measures or adhering to the principle of '*do no harm*' may not suffice to substantiate claims of peace contributions or positive effects on social cohesion. It therefore becomes important to **establish clear criteria** to articulate when these connections genuinely exist and are effective. This involves discerning between interventions that have a direct and intentional impact on peace (**peace-targeted**) and those that either merely result in unintended positive consequences or take on measures to avoid triggering or exacerbating existing tensions (**peace-relevant**).

While the integration of conflict sensitivity is crucial for all projects operating in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, a more intentional, conscious contribution to peace requires a systematic, context-specific analysis to understand what the respective peacebuilding issues, needs and gaps are and to design interventions strategically to address specific aspects. Furthermore, to assess whether or not an activity has actually contributed to social cohesion or peace, it would also be crucial to conduct learning-oriented and complexity-aware monitoring and evaluation processes that are able to capture a potential contribution to peace.

Overall, the activities undertaken under this mandate only serve as a **preliminary step towards defining what constitutes a meaningful link to peace within SDC which may be refined further as SDC's reflections and efforts in this domain continue** It underscores the need for a nuanced approach in evaluating the peacebuilding potential of SDC's initiatives, moving beyond assumptions towards a more deliberate understanding of their impact on fostering sustainable peace.

Bibliography

Centre for Democracy and Development (2022): Response to Violent Extremism in Cabo Delgado from a Triple Nexus Perspective: Humanitarian, Development, and Peace.

Desai, H. (2020). Conflict prevention in fragile contexts.

EDA (2021): Rückblick für die Zukunft: 30 Jahre Friedensengagement im EDA 1990-2020.

FDFA (2022) A Learning Journey on the Triple Nexus. Synthesis report.

Foreign Affairs, Emma Beals and Peter Salisbury, *A World at War, What is Behind the Global Explosion of Violent Conflict*, October 30, 2023

IASC (2020) Exploring Peace withing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN)

OECD (2019) DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, OECD/LEGAL/5019

OECD (2022), States of Fragility 2022, OECD Publishing, Paris.

OECD (2023), *Peace ODA*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

United Nations; World Bank. 2018. Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict. © Washington, DC: World Bank. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/28337> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

United Nations (2023), Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace.