

Case study

Social cohesion and peacebuilding in the Rohingya refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

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Abstract

This case study, which was conducted in the framework of the [KOFF Joint Learning Process on Peacebuilding & Migration](#), draws on practical experiences in the refugee 'crisis' in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, and aims to identify challenges and opportunities for social cohesion and peacebuilding in this context.

Since the late 1970s, Bangladesh has been a host country for Rohingya refugees fleeing from systematic repression and violence. In 2017, incidents of extreme violence committed against the Rohingya, a stateless Muslim minority in Myanmar, forced hundreds of thousands to flee to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, creating one of the largest refugee crises in decades. In this context, addressing social cohesion from a holistic perspective and with a sensitivity for the challenges and opportunities of migration is key to preventing conflicts and sustaining peace.

The following key messages and entry points for peacebuilding engagement at the peace-migration nexus result from this case study.

Key Messages

- Local, national, regional, and global power dynamics and interests shape responses to migration and play a role in social (de-)cohesion and conflict dynamics.
- A good understanding of factors that disrupt the cohesion in a migration context is essential to prevent conflicts and sustain peace. Building on factors that strengthen social cohesion in a migration context can contribute to peacebuilding.
- Peacebuilding programming on social cohesion in migration contexts requires defining what is meant by social cohesion and whom it will address.
- Addressing new and past conflicts in countries of origin, transit and destination is essential to social cohesion in migration contexts.

Entry-points & opportunities for peacebuilding

- Integrated conflict and migration analysis
- Research on social cohesion
- Human rights-based approaches
- Triple nexus
- Multilateral and multitrack processes
- Psycho-social approach
- Counter harmful narratives
- Documentation & archiving

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1. Overview

1.1 Background

Social cohesion has become a migration policy concern.¹ One of the objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) is to empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion. To reach this objective, the GCM calls for commitment to “strengthen the welfare of all members of societies by minimizing disparities, avoiding polarization and increasing public confidence in policies and institutions related to migration [...]” Further, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) recognizes the importance of good relations and peaceful coexistence, and highlights this as an area in need of support. Recognizing the importance of social cohesion for sustainable development and peace, development cooperation, humanitarian aid and peacebuilding actors have begun to address challenges and build on opportunities of migration for social cohesion in different contexts, such as in cities, refugee camps, or in protracted conflict situations. Yet, practical and policy challenges remain.

This case study, which was conducted in the framework of the [KOFF Joint Learning Process on Peacebuilding & Migration](#), draws on practical experiences in the refugee ‘crisis’ in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, and aims to identify challenges and opportunities for social cohesion and peacebuilding in this context.

Box 1: KOFF Joint Learning Process on Peacebuilding & Migration

This case study was conducted in the framework of the KOFF Joint Learning Process on Peacebuilding & Migration, which aims to assist better understanding of how to systematically and strategically integrate migration into peacebuilding policy and programming. The underlying assumption, based on a desk study on the peace-migration nexus, is that the strategic inclusion of migration phenomena into peacebuilding offers yet untapped potential for peacebuilding (i.e., conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and dealing with the past). The goal of the process was to contribute to bridging the gap between policy and practice, and move toward a more nuanced and conflict-sensitive discourse on migration.

To this end, over 15 months, KOFF facilitated exchanges and learning among actors from the peacebuilding, development cooperation, human rights, humanitarian aid, migration governance, and security sector governance fields. At the same time, KOFF conducted research and developed case studies on issues that are relevant to the peace-migration nexus, that is, social cohesion, migration governance, and inclusion/participation. The insights from the process were used to create a migration toolbox for peacebuilding policy-makers and practitioners.

¹ See Glossary in the Toolbox on Migration & Peacebuilding and ‘a note on language’ for more information on terminology used in this case study

1.2 Methodology and scope

This case study builds on the analysis of information gathered through key informant interviews (KII), focus group discussions (FGD), participant observation, literature, and learning meetings held in Switzerland and Bangladesh. The focus is on Rohingya refugees who fled Myanmar and reside in Bangladesh. Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB), a Bangladeshi nonprofit organization that specializes in participatory action research with marginalized communities, facilitated the field visit for this case study. To cover a broad range of perspectives, 25 KIIs and 2 FGDs were conducted with international and national organizations and experts in the fields of humanitarian aid, migration, peacebuilding, and development, as well as with civil society actors and Bangladeshi citizens living in the area of Cox's Bazar. Unfortunately, it was not possible to conduct interviews or FGDs with Rohingya refugees because of governmental restrictions on entering the refugee camps. Therefore, their perspective is considered based on interviews and information provided by our local partner organization, RIB, who has been collecting testimonies and stories of Rohingya people living in Bangladesh for many years. KIIs were also conducted in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh.

1.3 Why social cohesion in migration-affected contexts matters to peace

Social cohesion is an important element of peace.² A society that is characterized by mistrust, lack of accountability, and exclusion is less resilient to shocks such as violent conflict and is more likely to experience an outbreak of violence. There is a common assumption that migrants contribute to the breakdown of social cohesion. However, on the contrary, they can generate economic, social, and cultural benefits for societies in countries of origin, transit, and destination. Their pursuit of livelihood can increase human security because economic activities help to recreate social and economic interdependence within and between communities and can restore social networks based on the exchange of labor, assets, and food. In addition, while migratory movements can create challenges for security, they also push states toward cooperation, exchange of information, and coordination of policies at the regional and global levels. Nevertheless, while the presence of migrants can have positive effects on a society, it can also put a strain on the economy, political, and social order of a receiving country. It may cause anxiety among the host community about economic opportunities because of growing competition over scarce natural resources, jobs, and social services. This can lead to grievances and resentment by the receiving communities, especially when they feel that migrants receive preferential treatment by the government and humanitarian agencies. Moreover, changes in the ethnic, religious, and linguistic composition of the receiving country are sometimes perceived as a threat and can thus destabilize social and political balances. The presence of migrants might also shift the balance of power in a community and exacerbate previously existing intercommunal tensions. Finally, most migrants move within or from one fragile, conflict-affected or developing country to another. Often, these countries lack the financial and administrative means to cope with the resulting challenges. Situations of fragility can arise around vulnerable groups such as migrants, including in supposedly 'stable' and wealthy countries. Hence, migratory movements can have destabilizing effects on countries, and even on entire regions. Moreover, de-cohesion in migration contexts can create new or escalate preexisting tensions in a society and thereby add to the existing trauma in host or migrant communities.

² Social cohesion, in most definitions, includes the following characteristics (1) reciprocal loyalty and solidarity, (2) strength of social relations and shared values, (3) sense of belonging, (4) trust among individuals of the society (the community), and (5) reduction of inequalities and exclusion. For more information, see Fonseca X. et al. (2018) Social cohesion revisited: a new definition and how to characterize it. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13511610.2018.1497480?af=R>.

Yet, experience has also shown that the positive or negative impact of migration on social cohesion largely depends on the policies that are in place to deal with migration. In this context, migration's positive or negative effects depend on multiple factors, such as the number of people arriving in a new country, the level of trauma in the migrant and host community, the policies in place, the services and opportunities available to migrants and host communities, the natural environment, socioeconomic and political conditions of the sending and receiving countries, the public discourse on migrants in the hosting society, etc. Consequently, policies, funding, and programming are increasingly directed toward enhancing "cohesion". In most contexts, this comes with a shift in policy and practice, i.e., moving beyond 'only' providing humanitarian assistance toward addressing the relationships between host and migrant communities.

Hence, a focus on social cohesion in migration contexts provides an opportunity to transform relationships in a society and contribute to preventing conflict. Peacebuilding initiatives can work on issues such as trust, sense of belonging, shared values, solidarity, accountability, equality, and inclusion. However, it is important to ensure that approaches adopted to address social cohesion in migration contexts are comprehensive and conflict sensitive, and contribute toward sustaining peace in the long term.

2. Regional context

Since the late 1970s, Bangladesh has been a host country for Rohingya refugees fleeing from systematic repression and violence in Myanmar. Today, there are over a million Rohingya in Bangladesh. In 2017, incidents of extreme violence committed against the Rohingya, a stateless Muslim minority in Myanmar, forced hundreds of thousands of Rohingya women, men, boys, and girls to flee to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, creating one of the largest refugee crises in decades. At the peak of the crisis, thousands were crossing into Bangladesh daily, seeking international protection and humanitarian assistance. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of July 31, 2019, over 711,364 refugees had fled to Bangladesh since August 25, 2017, of which most arrived in the first three months.³ Most of the refugees have sought shelter in and around the refugee settlements of Kutupalong and Nayapara in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district, while some joined relatives in the area. In the first months, local Bangladeshi communities offered protection, food, and shelter to the newly arrived Rohingya refugees, straining their already limited resources. Moreover, the Bangladeshi government responded generously. Since 2017, the humanitarian response has been focused on "preventing an emergency within an emergency."⁴ The greatest challenge to refugee protection is the physical environment of the settlements, that is, the congestion, access challenges, high rates of water contamination, and significant risks of epidemics. In addition, the focus has been on mitigating the impact of the seasonal monsoon rains, and more recently, of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the UNHCR, the Kutupalong refugee settlement has become the largest of its kind in the world, with more than 600,000 people living in an area of just 13 sq. kilometers.⁵ While there remain massive humanitarian needs, there is also a growing recognition that additional support is needed to step up assistance from purely humanitarian to addressing medium-term challenges, including resilience and social cohesion. The recent tensions between Rohingya refugees and local Bangladeshis in the area of Cox's Bazar indicate a need for a comprehensive approach to the situation that takes into account the impact of the humanitarian crisis on the context and relationships between people. While the emergency response has included support to the Bangladeshi communities most directly affected, conflict and social tension is rising gradually, among different groups and at different levels.

³ UNHCR The Refugee Agency (n.d.) Operational Report. Refugee Situations. Refugee Response in Bangladesh. https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/myanmar_refugees#_ga=2.11837878.322539815.1594899011-1441729854.1585060871.

⁴ UNHCR The Refugee Agency (2018) Rohingya Refugee Emergency at a Glance. <https://unhcr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=5fdca0f47f1a46498002f39894fcd26f>.

⁵ UNHCR The Refugee Agency (2020) Emergencies. Rohingya Emergency. <https://www.unhcr.org/rohingya-emergency.html>.

3. Social cohesion in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

In a crisis everyone is needed, every helping hand and every critical mind.⁶

3.1 Social de-cohesion and disrupting factor in a migration context

Key messages:

- Local, national, regional, and global power dynamics and interests shape responses to migration and play a role in social (de-)cohesion and conflict dynamics.
- A good understanding of factors that disrupt the cohesion in a migration context, including in host and migrant communities, is essential to prevent conflicts and sustain peace.

Box 2: Disrupting factors

To address social cohesion in a refugee crisis it is important to identify factors that contribute and disrupt social cohesion. In the context of the Rohingya refugee crisis, there are multiple factors that can impact negatively on social cohesion, including the informal drug trade, domestic violence, human trafficking, mental health issues, poverty, lack of accountability, etc. When analyzing social cohesion, the factors contributing to and those disrupting the cohesiveness of a society must always be contextualized. To get a comprehensive understanding, it is helpful to differentiate between different types of violence that occur along a spectrum, including discrimination and structural inequality, domestic violence, gender-based and sexual violence, human trafficking, prostitution, radicalization, and others. In Cox's bazar, for instance, a disrupting factor is gender-based sexual and domestic violence. Women were particularly affected by the sexual violence perpetrated by the Myanmar military. In addition, they continue to face challenges in the refugee camps, including being stigmatized by their own communities and experiencing violence at the domestic level. The state of Bangladesh seems to remove itself from these problems by providing humanitarian aid, "but not getting involved in the personal matter."⁷ Another example is the trafficking and disappearing of children, tearing families apart and contributing to the trauma of both the children and their families. Addressing these issues should be part of comprehensive efforts to enhance social cohesion in the area.

⁶ From a conversation with a representative of a national civil society organization, Dhaka, November 2019.

⁷ From a KII with a representative of a national nongovernmental peacebuilding organization, Dhaka, October 28, 2019.

In the context of Cox's Bazar, the relationship between host communities and Rohingya refugees, especially the older generation of refugees, has historically been one of mutual respect and tolerance. Despite cultural differences, they share a similar language, ethnicity, and the same religion. Similarly, when the first refugees started arriving in 2017, the people in the area were the first ones to respond and to help Rohingya refugees by offering protection, food and shelter for months.

Even before the local administration stepped in, it was the local people who fed them [Rohingya refugees].⁸

Global influence and political economy in a protracted displacement situation

The situation has changed in the past two years as grievances on the side of the host communities began to grow. Some point to negative side effects of a political economy - referred to as a war economy - that has resulted in a loss of social capital. One of many examples mentioned in conversations with local NGOs in Cox's Bazar is that the best teachers are employed by international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) to work in the refugee camps, leaving schools in the host communities with less capacity and fewer resources. The refugee crisis has also influenced local politics, with local politicians taking advantage of the crisis to either advocate against or in favor of the presence of international and national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In addition, following several failed attempts to return Rohingya refugees to Myanmar, there have been accusations at the level of local media and politics against the international community, which is perceived to be unwilling to repatriate the refugees and, therefore, is to blame for the failed return.

In this context, there is a widespread perception among Bangladeshis, particularly the local community in Cox's Bazar, that they are being punished for their initial generosity, as they feel the negative consequences of the growing political economy of displacement. In their view, the international community is focused on dealing with the refugee 'crisis' in Bangladesh instead of focusing on holding Myanmar accountable.

Share, share, then you can lessen the burden.⁹

The refugee 'crisis' in Bangladesh, and the domestic sentiments toward Rohingya refugees, must be understood in the context of global and regional politics and power sharing. On the one hand, Bangladesh stands out as a country that has positioned itself as a refugee-welcoming country. On the other hand, Bangladesh is shouldering a large share of the burden of the global refugee crisis. Arguably, the crisis that is unfolding in Bangladesh—with an immensely underfunded refugee response—is linked to geopolitical interests, as UN Security Council member states such as India, Japan and Russia fail to hold Myanmar accountable.¹⁰ China, which has been mediating between Myanmar and Bangladesh, in turn, has largely focused on early repatriation of Rohingya refugees to Rakhine State and seems to be in it for its own political and economic gain, rather than for humanitarian reasons.¹¹ On the other hand, the international community focuses on providing humanitarian aid rather than talking about reparations, compensation, or justice for the Rohingya.

If I am shouting, isn't it easier to give me two bags of rice and keep me quiet for three days, than

⁸ From a FGD with host community members in Ukhia Upazila, Cox's Bazar, October 30, 2019.

⁹ From a KII with a representative of a national nongovernmental peacebuilding organization, October 28, 2019.

listen to my complaint about why I'm shouting?¹⁰

The Bangladeshi government is faced with the challenge of deciding whether to continue providing shelter for so many refugees, or to expel them and risk receiving criticism by the Muslim world, western governments and aid and human rights organizations.¹² The pressure on the government of Bangladesh to provide refugees with the right to education and work, and a refugee status, is increasing. To move toward constructive solutions, it is important to work with the Bangladeshi government and listen to its concerns.

People need to come to the table to discuss the issues.¹¹

Government restrictions

Since 2017, the government of Bangladesh has been leading the humanitarian response jointly with the UNHCR. While this enabled a coordinated response, gradually, the space to work with Rohingya refugees began to shrink due to government restrictions, such as the prohibition of mid- to long-term oriented projects, restrictions on cash-based work in the camps, and restrictions on cooperating with Rohingya volunteers. The more recent restrictions must be understood against the background of the abovementioned dynamics and as a reaction to two disruptive events. The first one was the most recent of many failed attempts to return Rohingya refugees, in August 2019, which sparked protests in some parts of the Rohingya camps as community leaders emphasized that they will not return to Myanmar until their citizenship rights are guaranteed. This incident impacted negatively on the relationship between Bangladesh and Myanmar, and earned Bangladesh some criticism from international and national human rights organizations for pushing for early repatriation.¹⁵ The second was a Rohingya commemoration of the second anniversary of the exodus following the Myanmar crackdown, which was attended by thousands of people.¹⁶ The intention was to highlight the Rohingya's plight and demands vis à vis Myanmar; however, it was perceived by the Bangladeshi government as a threat. Since then, NGOs and INGOs have come under attack as they are suspected to have intentionally obstructed the return process. This perception and the narrative that was built around it has been taken up by local and national media and led to fear and insecurity, and a widespread negative perception of the Rohingya refugees and the international and national NGO community. In this context, it is increasingly challenging for national and international NGOs to work in the area. The dilemma arises whether to engage, take a stance, or withdraw. As a result of these dynamics, the government of Bangladesh is increasingly adopting a hard security approach, as they plan to build fences and position military personnel around the camps. As levels of insecurity rise, the government sees itself confronted with the question of how to ensure security and stability in the area. However, the presence of the military could potentially lead to new tensions and re-traumatization of Rohingya who are living in the camps and who experienced atrocities committed by the military in Myanmar.

Civil society influence and shrinking space

Social de-cohesion at a grassroots level affects decisions made at higher levels in a society, as the example of Bangladesh shows. Intra- and intercommunal tensions at the level of Cox's Bazar, that is, between and among refugees and host communities living in and around the camps, led to increased insecurity and fear. This put pressure on the national government to respond. Thereafter, the government began imposing more restrictive and securitized policies and the media began building a negative narrative about Rohingya in Bangladesh and the role of INGOs and national NGOs in the crisis, which further

10 Albert & Maizland (2020) *The Rohingya Crisis*. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/background/rohingya-crisis>.
11 From a KII with a representative of a national nongovernmental peacebuilding organization, October 28, 2019.

limited the space for civil society, NGOs and INGOs to address challenges related to the refugee 'crisis'. This, in turn, has had negative consequences for people's lives and relationships in Cox's Bazar as grievances on both sides continue growing and positions harden. This dynamic creates a cycle of violence that must be disrupted to prevent conflicts and sustain peace. In this context, peacebuilding actors can play an important role in breaking the cycle of violence by addressing disrupting factors at various levels, from the local, national, regional to global level and through different tracks. Initiatives might include transforming interpersonal and intercommunal relationships, influencing narratives, building trust in public institutions, enhancing accountability of local and national authorities and institutions, engaging in diplomatic negotiations, or facilitating dialogue between governmental and nongovernmental organizations, as well as security and military actors.

3.2 Social cohesion, resilience and peacebuilding: when, where and for whom?

You need to look in between the lines.¹²

Key messages:

- Building on factors that strengthen social cohesion in a migration context can contribute to peacebuilding.
- Peacebuilding programming on social cohesion in migration contexts requires defining what is meant by social cohesion, whom it will address, in which time frame, and at what level.
- Addressing new and past conflicts in countries of origin, transit and destination is essential to social cohesion in migration contexts.

Social cohesion is about a sense of belonging, trust in persons and institutions, and mutual respect. Hence, to address conflicts between different groups it is necessary to ensure a certain level of social cohesion among the different groups. A project aimed at building the capacities of host and refugee communities to deal with challenges resulting from the refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar illustrates this well. The initial idea was to conduct joint dialogue sessions with Rohingya and host community members; however, because of the increased tensions and lack of trust between the groups in 2019, the implementing organization decided to work with each group separately. In fact, their experience working with marginalized communities has shown that confidence building, and cohesiveness of a society are prerequisites for people to be able to express needs and articulate demands. This indicates a need to focus on factors that strengthen social cohesion before, during, and after conflict.

It is important to look at the strength within communities to overcome certain fractures that disrupt the unity and peace within the community.¹³

Why is social cohesion important?

The presence of social cohesion in a community reinforces resilience to conflict by encouraging

¹² From a conversation with a representative of a national civil society organization, Dhaka, November 2019.

¹³ From a KII with a representative of a national nongovernmental peacebuilding organization, Dhaka, October 28, 2019.

relationships and areas of cooperation across fracture lines. At the same time, conflict resilience—defined as the ability to resist or recover from conflict—is believed to support social cohesion by preserving institutions, relationships, and patterns of behavior that form the foundation of cohesion.¹⁹ However, social cohesion is a broad term that has positive and negative connotations. An emphasis on cohesion in a society can also be used to maintain the status quo, and to create in and out groups. Nationalism, for instance, strengthens social cohesion within one group. However, it plays out as an exclusive and exclusionary kind of social cohesion. The question, therefore, is what kind of social cohesion is needed to prevent conflict and sustain peace.

Be careful about social integration as a buzzword; there are so many layers to it¹⁴

Different understandings and approaches to social cohesion

Development cooperation, humanitarian aid, human rights, and migration actors involved in the humanitarian response in Cox's Bazar work with different understandings and approaches to social cohesion (as well as different terms to describe the same or similar phenomena, including “social integration”). Social cohesion activities range from organizing soccer games, strengthening local governance, promoting economic empowerment of host communities, to providing psychosocial support to refugees. Most of the social cohesion initiatives labeled as such are focused on relationships between host and refugee communities. Yet, a closer look at the refugee ‘crisis’ in Cox's Bazar indicates a need to analyze and address different relationships and conflict lines. A comprehensive approach would include a focus on relationships within the refugee and host communities, between refugee and host communities, between the host communities and INGOs, host communities and local government, local Bangladeshis in Cox's Bazar and Bangladeshis from other parts of Bangladesh, between rural and urban parts of Cox's Bazar, between international and national NGOs, the international community and the government of Bangladesh, between older and newer generations of Rohingya refugees, and between Rohingya refugees and the Myanmar state. Clearly, social (de-)cohesion in a migration context is a complex phenomenon; therefore programming requires a good understanding of the context, a definition of what is meant by social cohesion, whom it will address, in which time frame, and at what level.

No one is seriously thinking about peacebuilding at the moment because everybody believes that sooner or later the Rohingya community will be repatriated to their own land¹⁵

Interrelationship between the migration and preexisting and new tensions

Moreover, a comprehensive understanding of social cohesion must consider the interrelationship between the migration and—preexisting and new—tensions in countries of origin, transit, and destination. Hence, programming on social cohesion in a refugee crisis should not only focus on addressing tensions in the host country, but also address the conflict at the origin and potential conflicts in transit countries. This can be done by working separately in countries of origin, transit, and destination, or by linking activities. People who were forced to flee from violence have experienced multiple traumas by the time they arrive at the country of destination, and continue to feel stress, anxiety, and experience new traumas in their new home. Hence, a focus on dealing with the past and healing is needed. Activities might include providing mental health support to survivors, collecting personal stories and documenting atrocities committed against them, setting up informal truth and reconciliation processes within the

14 Aall & Crocker (2019) *Building Resilience and Social Cohesion in Conflict*. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1758-5899.12681>.
15 From a KII with a local representative of a national nongovernmental organization providing legal aid, Cox's Bazar, October 31, 2019.

4. Entry points and opportunities for peacebuilding

community, providing legal support, or mediating between community leaders and the state. Such activities can contribute to broader conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and dealing with the past goals, especially if they are linked to formal processes. They create knowledge that can eventually be used to inform inclusive peace processes that take into account the voices and experiences of refugees, and other migrants

Based on the insights from this case study on the challenges and opportunities of social cohesion for peacebuilding in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, the following entry points and opportunities for peacebuilding engagement arise.

Box 3: The definition of “conflict” in migration-affected contexts

Conflict is commonly understood as interstate or armed conflict between state and nonstate actors. Therefore, the situation of the Rohingya in Bangladesh is not seen as a peacebuilding issue. Indeed, the government of Bangladesh is not involved in an armed conflict with Myanmar. However, the realities of increased tensions in and around the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar clearly point to a need for peacebuilding efforts to address conflicts at various levels and between different groups, including across the Myanmar-Bangladesh border. The case of the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh shows that peacebuilding must be part of humanitarian responses to displacement that either was a result of violence or might lead to more violence. In these contexts, peacebuilding actors and initiatives can play a key role in preventing an escalation of conflicts into violence and contributing to sustaining peace.

4.1 Conduct conflict context analysis

An analysis that considers the impact of the migration on preexisting and new tensions at different levels in the countries of origin, transit and destination can help to identify disrupting factors and build on the potential for peace within the affected communities. It can help to understand different conflict lines, types of violence (i.e., structural, cultural, and direct), and roles and relationships between different actors. This understanding is needed to understand interests, needs, and values. Building on the integrated analysis, peacebuilders can design conflict-sensitive social cohesion programs that minimize negative impacts, allow for continuous adaption to the context, and build on existing capacities for peace. Questions that can be relevant to such an analysis can be found here.

- What kind of tensions exist among/between whom?
- Where are the conflicts taking place?
- What is driving tensions? How have they evolved?
- How are tensions/conflicts affecting relationships in society (horizontally and vertically)?

- How are tensions/conflicts dealt with?
- What connects conflict parties?
- Which conflicts are being addressed by governmental and/or nongovernmental actors (i.e., old or new conflicts; in countries of origin or host country)? How and by whom?

4.2 Research on social cohesion

Furthermore, it is important to define what is meant by social cohesion. The understanding of social cohesion must be shaped by the needs, concerns, and perceptions of the people whom the project intends to work with. Research might help to determine what kind of initiatives are needed and appropriate. Research in this area should build on or work toward a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of social cohesion, including vertical and horizontal relationships. A critical perspective on the predominant narrative on migration in public discourse might be helpful to gain a better understanding of underlying issues that drive tensions and contribute to de-cohesion. Most importantly, research addressing social (de-)cohesion should build on the voices of different groups of migrants and host community members, including marginalized groups.

4.3 Human rights-based approaches

A focus on human rights in migration situations is key to protection and, hence, is important in terms of creating peaceful conditions. It enables an understanding of individual needs and restores dignity, as it opens the possibility for the creation of different solutions for different people. A human rights lens is also important at the level of intergovernmental relationships, as it is fundamental to solidarity and accountability. Hence, peacebuilding actors could leverage the potential of human rights-based approaches in migration contexts to understand individual and collective needs and interests. This might also provide an opportunity to engage with actors beyond the peacebuilding field, e.g., with human rights organizations and human rights defenders.

4.4 Triple nexus

Working on social cohesion in a humanitarian displacement crisis requires cooperation between peacebuilding, humanitarian aid, and development actors. Hence, such contexts provide an opportunity for peacebuilding actors to complement the work of humanitarian aid and development actors by, for instance, focusing on mid- to long-term transformation of relationships.

4.5 Multilateral and multitrack processes

To avoid doing harm, it is important to align policies with practical experiences of international and national organizations, migrants, and citizens of the host country. Yet, often, there is a gap between migration policies, practice, and experiences. Peacebuilding can contribute to bridging this gap by facilitating multilateral and multitrack processes that include meaningful participation of civil society, working across different levels and contexts (e.g., host country and country of origin) and ensuring the transfer of knowledge from one to the other.

4.6 Psycho-social approach

Peacebuilding actors that have the necessary experience and expertise are uniquely suited to work with psycho-social approaches, for instance by providing psychosocial support to people and capacitating local organizations to work with psycho-social approaches on trauma healing in migration contexts. In this context, it is important to build on existing traditional practices and knowledge, from both the host and migrant communities.

4.7 Documentation & archiving

Peacebuilding actors are equipped to facilitate processes at different levels that contribute to formal and informal dealing with the past processes or prepare the ground for an inclusive process in the future. For instance, they can collect witness testimonies and stories, document atrocities committed against certain groups before and during the migration and archive them.

4.8 Counter harmful narratives

Peacebuilding actors can support and implement initiatives that aim to counter harmful narratives and prejudice, create new narratives, and build trust between different groups in a society, to prevent escalation of tensions and break cycles of violence.