

## **Peacebuilding amidst violence**

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An increasing share of in the internationally available development aid resources is spent in post/violent countries, and a growing portfolio of project and programmes are directed towards conflict prevention, reconciliation, reconstruction and/or peacebuilding. Of the countries that did not meet the millennium goals, there was a vast over-representation of countries experiencing (or recently having experienced) large scale violence. Violent conflicts are widely seen as one of the most fundamental impediments for sustainable development. Much of the development resources targeting conflict are channelled through the idea of “peacebuilding”. However, aid directed towards reducing violence is different than many other forms of aid, and it is not always successful.

Peacebuilding has an inherent temporality. Ideally, peacebuilding is to occur when violence has ended. Peacebuilding, so the prevailing story goes, shall build a lasting peace starting from a suspended moment of limbo between war and peace. However, as critics have convincingly pointed out, peaceful relations often collapse and usher in a return to renewed violence. *Peacebuilding ostensibly fails*. The failure or success of peacebuilding in the current global conjuncture, however, defies such simple parameters. Often, even when peacebuilding is “working”, violence continues; Peacebuilding occurs amidst, parallel to, despite, and even often thanks to continuing violence in a multitude of shapes and forms. We take this observation as the starting point for a collective inquiry into the conceptual, methodological and empirical puzzles this insight generates.

The context in which peacebuilding occurs has experienced a paradigmatic shift the last two decades. Following the end of the cold war – which were formative years for the industry – civil wars/conflicts typically ended with a peace agreement, reconstruction began, and peacebuilding took place in reasonably controlled environments on a more or less predictable path towards (some sort of) peace. Cases such as Cambodia, Haiti, Mozambique, East Timor, Guatemala, El Salvador, Liberia, Bosnia, etc. remind us of this pattern. In contrast, the last decade has been marked by cases where neither “peace” is established, nor open “war” resumes, producing violent-laden environments with deep instability and massive human suffering. This prevents the crafting of a trajectory leading from (in-)security to development—traditionally understood (see Stern and Öjendal, 2010). Currently, this latter trend has become almost the norm; peacebuilding is pursued amidst violence in Somalia, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, DRC, Mali, Yemen, South Sudan, Syria etc.

This panel aims to get a grasp on the emerging situation for peacebuilding and, indirectly, for sustainability of aid and development. The panel is put forward by a minor research project at SGS named “Peacebuilding amidst violence” It is jointly ran by Maria Stern, Jan Bachman, Manuela Nilsson (Linné University), and Joakim Öjendal. We welcome papers especially reflecting on violence in various forms in the midst of peacebuilding, which may or may not include a focus on security-development nexus’.