

## Improving natural resource management for better peacebuilding

Global trends with regard to natural resources (NR) show an increasing demand in combination with changing patterns of trade and of exploitation. Oli Brown, UNEP consultant and Associate of Chatham House described those trends for Energy, Food, Metals and Water and elaborated on the link to conflict. Analytical data show increasing demand for these resources also from emerging economies, large-scale production remains concentrated whereas patterns of trade changed fast. Climate change threatens essential infrastructure and global transport. Environmental stress, especially water scarcity, forms a major challenge. Price volatility and commodity markets play a significant conflictive role. Limited availability of NR combined with the increasing demand cause new frontiers of exploration in the cold, deep and insecure environments like in the Arctic, in the deep sea and off-shore as well as in fragile states. Management and mismanagement of NR can massively contribute to conflict; in resource-rich and conflict prone environments conflict parties benefit of the revenues from NR feeding into the war economy and thus seek to prolong violence and instability. Reflecting on examples from Afghanistan showed that mismanagement of NR as well as environmental damages spoiled peace processes and increase the risk of relapsing into conflict again. Within these conditions the role of international actors needs to be looked at quite attentively.

Lancedell Mathews, Director of the New Action Research for Development Action/NARDA, Liberia, reflected on current trends in peacebuilding debates which meanwhile also include NRM. But the NRM thinking tends to focus mainly on the economic value and potential of NR rather than focussing on its meaning for livelihood and equity. Considering NR and especially land and water as basis for livelihood and in its historical, cultural and social meaning shows that it is key for constructive peacebuilding. One of the entry points could be seen in the increasing respect and security of land rights and especially of legitimate tenure rights of marginalized groups, indigenous people and women. For this the relationship between society and its government is relevant to be looked at. Actors need to become more engaged in those relationships, increasing trust in the competences and potential of all sides. Accountability and the clear implementation of constituted rules and regulations have to be followed thoroughly. Another challenge is the continuously changing international development agenda, which gives only little space to reach sustainable and positive impact on the ground. Inclusive participation needs enough time for local people and communities to get prepared.

The subsequent discussion centred around the following aspects:

- How to make use of opportunities for peacebuilding through NRM and engagement with different actors along investments was a controversial issue. It was stated that evidence shows that NRM bears various opportunities for peacebuilding when engaging actively with the private sector having also an interest in safe environment and risk mitigation. Other participants raised doubts towards generalized statements on peace-interests of the business sector and argued that not only the engagement with the private sector but also the political will of the government and anti-corruption mechanisms are necessary. Examples from large investments into the oil sector e.g. in South Sudan and also in Tchad caused massive human rights violations, environmental and social damage and increased tensions although civil society actors engaged actively with private investors and international donors over years. Ex-

amples from country contexts like Sierra Leone, Indonesia or Papua show, that in the context of large-scale investments affected population and civil society actors can become criminalized and threatened;

- NRM as opportunity for peacebuilding depends on specific frameworks, the context and the political environment. Peace potentials can be enhanced in environments where governmental actors, private sector and civil society engage with each other and build up constructive relations. The inclusion of the private sector into national frameworks for NRM needs to be considered more carefully. The OECD Guidelines for Business and Human Rights and Ruggie Principles were highlighted as references for private sector engagement. Experience from specific investments in different countries where described, where the inclusion of the private sector into national frameworks of NRM had shown positive results. Constructive engagement with actors from the private sector also requires a deeper understanding of the different perspectives. Increase in understanding of specific interests, potentials and limitations as well as terminology matters;
- Good governance and institution-building are important aspects for proper NRM. In many contexts especially informal and traditional structures are the only functioning structures that persist/remain. Those institutions have high legitimacy, are respected and influential and should rather be maintained and engaged with than demolished. Local knowledge and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are major assets for peacebuilding through NRM;
- Constructive state-society relations and an enabling environment for civil society engagement are core for the enhancement of opportunities for peacebuilding through NRM.

Concluding from the exchange how linkages between peacebuilding and natural resources sector should be strengthened the following common messages were brought forward by Achim Wennmann, Coordinator of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform:

- 1) Natural resources bear an opportunity for peace, but for that further confidence building and engagement on the relationships between state and society and also between civil society and the business sector is necessary. A multitude of organizations and actors need to be taken on board to create 'inclusive processes'. The entry points for those engagements are places for dialogue on the local level;
- 2) More emphasis needs to be put on vertical and horizontal connections for NRM and peacebuilding to build up on mutual interests and on drivers for peace. Silo thinking and disregard of the complexity lead to disconnections and need to be actively overcome;
- 3) A constructive engagement between Civil society and business could also start with better understanding of the different terminology/language and concepts of different stakeholders;
- 4) Within inclusive processes for decision making and multi-stakeholder frameworks the fundamental right of the affected population to say NO has to be uphold, secured and respected.

*Caroline Kruckow*

*FriEnt-Team, Bread for the World - Protestant Development Service*