



---

# NINEVEH PATHS TOWARDS JUST AND LASTING PEACE

---



Empowered lives. Resilient nations.

Publication supported by:



Norwegian People's Aid

The views expressed in this publication are those of the NGOs promoting the Niniveh Paths to Peace Programme and do not necessarily represent the views of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations generally, or United Nations Member States.

Publication produced within the UNDP supported Programme "Niniveh Paths to Social Cohesion, Coexistence & Peace" coordinated by Un ponte per... (UPP) and the Department for Peace Operations (PATRIR).

Author: Kai Brand-Jacobsen.

Printed in Dohuk in April 2016.

**Building Peace and Coexistence in Nineveh**

The real battle is not what is being fought with guns and bullets and weapons, but the struggle to overcome and end war. The real front line isn't where soldiers are facing each other, but in the seeds of war and division – in the unresolved root causes and drivers that have given rise to violence, and in the demonization and creation of enemy images of the other that rests inside each one of us.

Wars don't begin with who attacks who, but with deep structures and problems built up over years and decades. Peace isn't built with the signing of an agreement or "defeat" of an enemy in a battle or liberation of a town or city, but with fostering respect and dignity for all people regardless of their ethnicity or religion, and creating real inclusion, good governance and a society in which all people's identities and needs are respected.

Peace is built not upon 'vanquishing' and defeating the other, but creating something better that gives hope, dignity and rights for all people. It is far, far more difficult than war to achieve, and takes far greater courage and commitment.

There isn't one road or one formula for peace or to heal from the impacts of war and displacement. The needs of a woman who's been raped, a mother or father whose child has been killed, or of a soldier who's been forced to fight and committed or seen atrocities may be different. Rebuilding trust, putting in place the mechanisms to resolve conflicts effectively, beginning the profound and difficult journey to reconciliation and healing, and ensuring violence never breaks out again in the future – these are eminently challenging tasks.

At the end of the day, it is only the people of Nineveh who can truly build peace, and who must own the peace that is built. It is their future – for all the sons and daughters, mothers and father, brothers and sisters of Nineveh.

**Table of Contents:**

**Building Peace and Coexistence in Nineveh ..... 2**

**Nineveh Paths to Social Cohesion, Coexistence and Peace..... 3**

**Building Peace Requires Peace Infrastructure & Real Ownership ..... 4**

**The Path to Peace, Social Cohesion and Coexistence in Nineveh: Recommendations ... 5**

**Critical Issues, Key Recommendations ... 5**

**About Nineveh Paths: People Building Peace ..... 9**

## Nineveh Paths to Social Cohesion, Coexistence and Peace

Nineveh is in the midst of one of the most difficult and painful periods in its history. Millions of people have been displaced, thousands killed, and thousands of women abducted and raped. Every citizen of Nineveh has been affected. The impacts of the war, of wide-spread rape and violence are clear. What can be done to build real and lasting peace and transcend both the legacy and root causes and drivers of violence remains more difficult to see.

It is in this context that a new and innovative peacebuilding effort building on the ownership and direct involvement of the people, communities and authorities of Nineveh was begun. The *Nineveh Paths to Social Cohesion, Coexistence and Peace* 'start-up' phase lasted from October 2015 to March 2016. It was the first step in long-term process working to support and empower the leadership and engagement of the citizens, communities and authorities in Nineveh to transcend violence and conflict and build foundations for just and lasting peace.

In the midst of war, *Nineveh Paths* created the space for survivors, civil society organisations, local authorities, tribal and religious leaders, and communities across Nineveh to come together and:

*The Partnership Nineveh Paths* was implemented through an alliance of civil society organisations, local authorities, and the Nineveh Provincial Council, with support from the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) of PATRIR, Un Ponte Per... (UPP) and UNDP in Iraq.

- ❑ Explore together the root causes and drivers of conflict and violence in Nineveh;
- ❑ Develop real skills and capacities to support mediation, reconciliation and peacebuilding in Nineveh;
- ❑ Identify key requirements for lasting peace, reconciliation, healing and stabilization;
- ❑ Begin the creation of *Nineveh Peace teams* and an *alliance* of the people of Nineveh committed to working for just and lasting peace for all people in Nineveh – and to guarantee the dignity, safety, respect and freedom for all of Nineveh's citizens

Their courage and commitment to overcoming the war and build a future beyond violence and hatred is powerful – and inspiring. They are the true “Heroes of Nineveh.”

## Building Peace Requires Peace Infrastructure & Real Ownership

*Nineveh Paths* is based on the fundamental recognition that only the people of Nineveh have the *right* to own and decide the path for peace in Nineveh. Together with this and in consultation with communities, authorities and civil society organisations in Nineveh the project recognized the need to build *real, sustainable* capacity for the myriad of tasks relating to peacebuilding, social cohesion, coexistence and peace consolidation in Nineveh, including:

- ❑ Conflict analysis and early warning;
- ❑ Mediation & Community-Based Dialogue, Reconciliation and Healing;
- ❑ Empowerment of Women, Youth and Key Communities
- ❑ Designing effective programmes to achieve impact

The project included both intensive training and capacity building components with direct support for projects and interventions by local civil society organisations and authorities. This included:

- ❑ Facilitating community-based dialogue and mediation
- ❑ Establishing a Youth Peace Centre in Zumar
- ❑ Creating a Nineveh Peace Council
- ❑ Empowerment of Women Peacemakers
- ❑ Supporting healing for survivors
- ❑ Supporting peace journalism through social media
- ❑ Creating the documentary film “*Heroes of Nineveh*”

“It’s up to us to work for peace in Nineveh. We are the ones who can and must do it. Local authorities have an important role to play. We need to be meeting together, supporting each other, learning from each other, and seeing how we can do more to strengthen social cohesion, coexistence and Peace in Nineveh. It’s up to us to do this.”

*Yousif Salim,  
Local Council Wana*

Through these initiatives, civil society organisations, local authorities in Wana, Rabia, Sinuni and Zumar, and the Nineveh Provincial Council took *ownership* of the process of peace consolidation and recovery.

*Nineveh Paths* wishes to thank all of the partners and participants who actively engaged in the first phase of the project, including: Al Tahrir, Dak, PFOK, Youth Peace Centre – Zumar, Odisa, Democracy and Human Rights Center University of Dohuk, Research Institute for Development, RID, Local Authorities in Sinuni, Wana, Rabia, Zumar, and the Nineveh Provincial Council.

## The Path to Peace, Social Cohesion and Coexistence in Nineveh: Recommendations

*Nineveh Paths* was based upon continual consultation and engagement – with partners, local and provincial authorities, local communities and national and international organisations working in recovery, stabilization, peacebuilding and social cohesion in Nineveh. On **March 30 & 31** this culminated in the *International Forum on Recovery, Stabilization and Peace in Nineveh* in which nearly 300 participants from local communities, tribes, local authorities, the Nineveh Provincial Council, the Governor's Office, and local, national and international civil society organisations participated. Both the 6-month project and the first *Nineveh International Peace Forum* identified key recommendations for all agencies and organisations engaged in peacebuilding, stabilization and recovery in Nineveh – including the people of Nineveh, Local Authorities, the Provincial Council and Governor's Office, National Authorities, and local, national and international organisations and donors.

### Critical Issues, Key Recommendations

#### 1. There is a strong desire for peace in Nineveh: it needs to be supported

The people and communities of Nineveh are tired of war. There is a strong desire for real, lasting peace and an end to violence and exclusion. This needs to be supported with (i) practical programmes to strengthen, real, lasting capabilities for peacebuilding, violence prevention, social cohesion and reconciliation and (ii) *practical action* and measures – not just 'words' and promises of support.

#### 2. Need for Increased and Sustained Focus on Peacebuilding

There is an *imbalance* in focus towards 'military operations' as well as the significant (and highly necessary) focus on the humanitarian and livelihoods pillars of emergency response. However, real stabilization and recovery required a far greater focus on peacebuilding, coexistence, social cohesion and peace consolidation, with effective coordination and short, medium and long-term planning. Without this "recovery" will be unsustainable and there will be real and concrete risk of future violence and instability.

#### 3. Plan for Long Term Support and Increase Immediate Humanitarian Support

Recovery, Stabilization and Peacebuilding will not happen in 6 – 12 months. There needs to be clear, coherent planning for short, medium and long-term response and

support for peacebuilding and peace consolidation. Planning and development of capacities to support social cohesion, recovery and coexistence in the ‘post-ISIS’ period should begin *immediately*. The scale of humanitarian support to displaced communities and those that may be displaced through ongoing and future military operations needs to be increased.

#### 4. Improve Coordination: Military Operations and Humanitarian Assistance

There is an **urgent need** to improve communication and coordination between military operations in Nineveh and provision of humanitarian assistance and civilian protection for communities affected and displaced as a result of fighting. Guarantees for protection of civilian communities and concrete measures to prevent new displacements should be sought. Non-aggression and prevention of revenge attacks on civilian populations is vital.

#### 5. Peacebuilding and Coexistence Need to be *Owned Locally*

Peacebuilding and coexistence cannot be imported or imposed. They need to be *owned*, driven and implemented by the people, civil society and structures of Nineveh and the country more broadly. For this, support needs to focus on strengthening real capabilities and ‘infrastructure for peace, social cohesion and reconciliation’, ensuring strong, robust, inclusive and effective capacities embedded from local communities to the Provincial level.

#### 6. Local Peace Committees & the Nineveh Peace Council

Development of Local Peace Committees at the community and district levels can put in place mediation and conflict resolution capabilities critical to preventing outbreaks of violence and revenge killings and to improving relations between communities at a grassroots level. The Nineveh Peace Council can provide key *leadership* and *messages* for peace at a societal level, as well as practical engagement to facilitate inter-community and societal trust, social cohesion and peacebuilding.

#### 7. Women are key to Recovery, Stabilization and Peacebuilding

Women have key and *essential* contributions they can bring to leadership, participation and implementation of recovery, stabilization and peacebuilding. Participation, engagement and *leadership* of women at all phases and levels – from needs identification and assessments to goal-setting, programme planning, implementation, and evaluation and learning – is essential. A practical plan for implementing UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820 in peace consolidation in Nineveh is essential.

## 8. Youth are Key Actors: A Powerful Force for Peace

Youth from across *all* communities in Nineveh have shown a powerful and profound desire to be involved and develop active contributions and engagement to support recovery, stabilization, peacebuilding and improving social cohesion, coexistence and peace within and between communities. A strategy for implementing UN Res 2250 in Nineveh should be developed with active participation, leadership and engagement of youth, civil society, local authorities and the United Nations and donors / international community. Support for Youth Peace Centers, youth participation in governance and decision making, and a youth platform linking efforts across Nineveh are important.

## 9. Recovery, Livelihoods, Development and Governance Programmes should support peace, coexistence and social cohesion: Not just conflict sensitive but *peace supporting*

Local, national and international agencies and authorities should develop and provide humanitarian, development and recovery assistance, programming and services that are not only *conflict sensitive* but *peace supporting*. Humanitarian, development and recovery assistance should as far as possible *support, strengthen and contribute to* peace consolidation, coexistence and social cohesion, and strengthening local capacities.

## 10. Reconciliation and Restorative Justice Processes

Speaking about 'reconciliation' in Nineveh today is difficult. It is also essential. There is clear, urgent and real need and potential for community-based processes in liberated areas. Support for reconciliation, restorative justice and healing processes should be well implemented, coordinated, and *planned* and not 'ad hoc' or short-term engagements. This is an important issue to address with tact and sensitivity.

## 11. Importance of Trauma Recovery: Empowering Survivors

Direct and indirect, primary and secondary trauma amongst almost *all* the populations and citizens of Nineveh is extensive. There is a need to identify, map and assess *what is being done*, learn lessons from what works and what isn't working, identify challenges and opportunities, and see how to *scale up* trauma recovery programmes.

## 12. Critical Risk Mapping: Improve Planning & Measures for **Prevention**

There are real and potential risks – from micro to macro – that could sustain, continue or escalate incidents of violence and conflict between communities in



Nineveh even after fighting with ISIS ends. These should be clearly mapped out and identified in a joint risk mapping and scenario development process to improve capacity for prevention.

### 13. Explore the role of Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping & Local Peace Teams

The potential for these tools in liberated and newly liberated areas to contribute to stabilization, confidence and trust building, empowerment of local peace capacities and violence prevention should be explored.

### 14. Ensure Release of all Captured Yezidi

There is urgent need to bring about the release of all captured Yezidi women, to use all channels possible to prevent ongoing rape, sexual abuse and violation of all captured and affected women by ISIS / Daesh and to prevent any further violence, rape and sexual abuse against women. Support for trauma recovery, healing and wellbeing, security, safety and overall recovery of affected women should be prioritized.

### 15. Improve Joint Needs Assessments & Integrated Planning

The scale of needs for recovery, stabilization, peacebuilding, reconciliation and peace consolidation are significant. There is need to move from 'sharing plans' of programmes and projects to better **joint / integrated development and planning** of programming – in which communities, local authorities and local civil society organisations are directly involved – which could bring about significant improvements in quality, coverage, and impact of programming and support.

### 16. Coordination is Essential and Can Be Implemented at Several Levels

Coordination – particularly around peacebuilding, social cohesion and coexistence programming, planning and interventions – is essential. Coordination can also take place in local communities / districts to connect all stakeholders *doing* social cohesion, coexistence and peace consolidation programmes directly in communities.

### 17. Reform the Education System: Introduce Peace Education into Schools

There was *broad based* recognition of the need to reform the school / education system, introduce peace education, and overcome elements which foster division and lack of social cohesion and coexistence. There was also recognition and calls for the need for *peace education* in society – to improve understanding of and capacities to handle conflicts constructively, to foster social cohesion and coexistence, and promote peace, reconciliation and healing within and between communities.

These are only some of the key recommendations developed through the project. Overall, however, there was a recognition that:

1. Years of support for ‘peacebuilding’ and reconciliation from 2003 – 2011 had often had little or limited impact;
2. There is a need to learn the lessons from this period and ensure that further work is more strategic, better coordinated, and better implemented;
3. International organisations, agencies and donors have a responsibility to ensure their programmes contribute to supporting, strengthening and building *real*, lasting capacity amongst local partners, civil society organisations and authorities;
4. Ultimately, the power to build real and lasting peace, to overcome the legacy and impact of war, and to prevent future violence and revenge killings, lies with the people of Nineveh. Their engagement, their courage, their recovery, is essential to support.

## About Nineveh Paths: People Building Peace

### Combination: Capacity Building & Direct Implementation

One of the most important ‘successes’ of the *Nineveh Paths* project was the success of the ‘model’ itself. The *strong* engagement on capacity building, *consistent* engagement with a group of committed organizations / stakeholders over time and their own direct implementation (‘being the leaders and drivers’) of initiatives ‘on the ground’ / in communities helped to build, create and consolidate:

- ☐ *individuals* own self-confidence, capabilities and commitment
- ☐ *institutional* commitment and engagement of their organizations
- ☐ *shared* trust, confidence and a sense of ‘solidarity’ and shared engagement as “Nineveh Peace Teams”

### Joint Analysis, Design, and Learning: Collaborative Practice

*Nineveh Paths* was the first project any of the organizations / stakeholder had participated in which included **joint analysis, joint planning, development and design**, and **joint learning and evaluation** of projects by participation organizations and institutions. *Joint* engagement in each of these pillars built a *practice* and *feeling* of trust, mutual respect and ‘being in it together’ which participants described as

“fundamentally different than just a project based approach where we all compete against each other and search for funding.”.

### Working to Achieve Impact

The project was most successful in beginning to put in place the culture and practice of coordination amongst different organizations in Nineveh and with Local and Provincial Authorities and building a consensus and shared recognition of the importance of coordination, coherence and working to achieve *actual impact*, as well as helping to bring forward the Nineveh Provincial Council's clear and consistent message on the need to improve coordination across all sectors, learn the lessons of past failures, and ensure work is more strategic and effective. For many organizations the concept of ‘strategic impact’ and designing interventions to actually *effect and change the dynamics and drivers of conflict* was fundamentally new.

### Heroes of Nineveh

One of the most important and significant achievements of the project was creating the culture/sense of ‘Heroes of Nineveh’ amongst participants – that what they were doing was ‘much more’ than just projects or activities: it is working as the *citizens* and the only ones who truly have ownership and right to build the future of Nineveh. This created a sense of confidence and pride in their engagement and being part of this work.

### Youth Empowerment and Participation

The project had a *proactive* commitment to supporting youth participation and empowerment and implementation of UNSC Resolution 2250. This was done through inclusion of youth in *all* project-organized trainings and events; support for youth-implemented projects through micro-grants; organization of a *youth specific* training; support for the creation of the Youth Peace Centre in Zumar; and ensuring strong participation of youth in the Nineveh International Forum, and engaging Local Authorities and the Provincial Council to encourage inclusion and support for youth participation.

### Empowerment and Participation of Women

From the outset *Nineveh Paths* had a strong commitment to strengthening and supporting the empowerment, participation and leadership of women in social cohesion, coexistence, peacebuilding and reconciliation in Nineveh. The project worked to ensure participation by women in all NPSC projects; encouraged partners to ensure strong inclusion of women in community projects; funded projects

specifically by women-led organizations and targeting women as participants / stakeholders; organized the women-specific training for Women Peacemakers; organized an inter-agency meeting with authorities and national and international organizations in Erbil in January on women's participation in healing and peacebuilding; and organized 2-sessions in the Nineveh International Forum – which was opened and closed by women peace activists – on women's participation, leadership and engagement in peace and recovery in Nineveh. The *self-creation* by women peace activists from Nineveh in the Women Peacemakers Training of the *Women's Peace Alliance* of Nineveh was also an important achievement.

### Applying to Actual Conflicts & Difficult Discussions

One of the key approaches in *Nineveh Paths* was to engage with the *exact* issues and actual conflicts and difficult discussions affecting relations between communities and participants, creating a safe, trusted space in which to engage. Participants themselves *enacted* dialogues and community mediation processes on many issues that may not otherwise have addressed or taken up publicly. Doing this was an important step to supporting and empowering stakeholders to later address these issues and difficult conversations in communities.

### Nineveh Peace Council & Local Peace Committees

Creation of the *Nineveh Peace Council* by the Nineveh Provincial Council and the expressed desire to create Local Peace Committees by Local Authorities and civil society organizations in Wana, Rabia, Sinuni and Zumar; development of understanding of how they function and their specific relevance and value to the situation and needs in Nineveh and the liberated areas were important steps. Significant further work, training, capacity building and technical assistance will be needed to support these to become effective and functioning.

### Social Media: Journalism for Peace

The creation by PFOK of the *peace journalism* project through social media was an important *positive step* to empower civil society, journalists and activists of Nineveh to use social media to promote and make visible stories on social cohesion, coexistence and peacebuilding. Much more needs to be done to properly train journalists and civil society on 1. how to effectively use social media as a tool for promoting these messages and awareness raising; and 2. understanding what *peace journalism* really is and how to practice it effectively.

## Reconciliation, Healing & Restorative Justice

As the project emphasized again and again, truly and effectively dealing with ‘what has happened’ during the war – and *before* that gave rise to the conditions in which the war could happen – and assisting healing, reconciliation and restorative justice **is one of the most important tasks in order to build real and sustainable peace** and prevent future war and conflict between communities.

In *Nineveh Paths* we worked to build understanding and engagement amongst key constituencies – from survivors to Local Authorities, civil society, and tribal and religious leaders – on how reconciliation, recovery and healing can be addressed. The current ‘approach’ dominant in thinking and discussions in Nineveh on how to address ‘what has happened’ and crimes carried out during the war has significant potential and actual risks, limitations and dangers. *Nineveh Paths* worked to begin deepening realistic understanding of what is involved and how difficult it is, identifying possible steps, and learning from other experiences. The project also facilitated exchange with survivors from other areas. Key emphasis throughout was on the need to:

- ☐ develop approaches customized for the needs in Nineveh and in each part of Nineveh, and embedded in people’s own culture and values;
- ☐ develop *different* approaches at different levels to address different needs;
- ☐ develop *community-based* approaches and citizen and civic reconciliation initiatives and not being dependent only on national level, top-down or externally driven processes

## We Must Continue, This Must Continue: Long-Term Commitment and Engagement

Perhaps the strongest success of all in the project has been participants’ expression of commitment that *they* will continue doing this work, and that the project must continue to help truly build effective capacities *embedded in organizations, institutions* and the *society itself*, and the recognition that real healing, violence prevention, and building social cohesion, coexistence and peace is *long-term* work that needs to be sustained.

