

# An Opportunity for Stronger and Equal Partnerships:

The UN System-Wide Community-Engagement Guideline (CEG)  
on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace



**A Practical Resource for Local Peacebuilders**  
November 2020

# Critical opportunities for a stronger and equal partnership in peacebuilding and sustaining peace

How can the UN Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace support partnerships on peacebuilding and sustaining peace at the field level?



Provide an overview of the UN understanding of and expectations from civil society engagement



Encourage coalition- and network-building both within civil society and between civil society, the UN and other actors



Support systematic and mutually-beneficial partnerships



Remind the UN field presences about the UN system-wide commitment to civil society engagement



Encourage risk-sensitive civil society engagement

# Why is this practical resource useful?

This practical resource aims to support stronger and equal partnerships between civil society and the United Nations (UN) field presences<sup>2</sup> on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Developed through a consultative process with local peacebuilding practitioners, it provides an overview of some of the opportunities for building stronger partnerships offered by the UN Community Engagement Guidelines on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (hereafter, the Guidelines) and shares ideas, tips and examples for joint civil society-UN action on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

## After going through this practical resource, you will

-  **Have a deeper understanding** of the ways the UN field presences develop and carry out their civil society engagement strategies;
-  **Strengthen your understanding** of the roles that local peacebuilders and the UN field presences could play in building stronger and equal partnerships;
-  **Be familiar with the opportunities** the Guidelines offer towards building meaningful and strong partnerships between local peacebuilders and the UN field presences.

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<sup>1</sup>The Guidelines use the term civil society to incorporate a wide array of actors engaged in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. In the context of the UN's engagement in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, the scope of civil society is identified as, but not limited to: human rights defenders; independent media (online, off line); faith-based organisations and leaders; non-governmental organisations; community-based groups; professional groups or associations, including trade unions; women's groups; youth groups; religious, cultural, tribal, indigenous or other informal organisations and civic movements that self-recognise as civil society; groups representing marginalised or underrepresented communities; social media communities; and academic institutions (schools, universities, research bodies). Additionally, civil society can include informal gatherings or multi-stakeholder networks and coalitions. It is important to note the identity of local actors within civil society may be fluid and dependent on the context in conflict-affected situations. See more on page 1 of the Guidelines.

<sup>2</sup>For the purpose of this resource, the term "the UN field presences" includes all UN actors that operate at the regional, national, local levels.

# Where does the UN commitment to Community Engagement come from?

The UN has a long-standing commitment to the engagement with civil society (See Table 1) and recognises that civil society is a key and “indispensable” actor in peacebuilding and sustaining peace ([S/2020/773](#), para. 53).

Table 1 - The UN commitments to community engagement in peacebuilding and sustaining peace
<b>UN Sustaining Peace Resolutions:</b>
The twin UN General Assembly and UN Security Council resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282) commit the UN to “strengthen partnerships with civil society organisations.”
<b>UN Security Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security:</b>
Resolution 2242 (S/RES/2242) calls for “meaningful participation of civil society organisations at international and regional peace and security meetings.” Resolution 2493 (S/RES/2493) encourages Member States to “create safe and enabling environments for civil society.”
<b>UN Security Council Resolutions on Youth, Peace and Security:</b>
Resolution 2535 (S/RES/2535) encourages Member States, regional and sub-regional organisations to “meaningfully engage youth and youth-led organisations.”

## **The normative commitment has become a practical guidance for action:**

The UN has developed the **UN System-Wide Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace**.

The Guidelines aim to support UN field presences in developing context-specific community engagement strategies on peacebuilding and sustaining peace and provide operational guidance to UN field presences on how to effectively engage with local peacebuilders at the local, national and regional levels.

## **What does the commitment to Community Engagement mean?**

The UN Security Council resolutions constitute a legal obligation for the UN. The recognition and affirmation of the importance of civil society and the need to create safe and enabling environments provides **incentives for the UN Headquarters** to seek information from the UN actors in the field and for the *UN field presences* to increase their community engagement and include perspectives of civil society in their reports on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

# What are the Community Engagement Guidelines (CEG) on peacebuilding and sustaining peace?

The Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace are a crucial tool. If implemented, they have the potential to contribute to **stronger and equal partnerships** between the UN and local peacebuilders, including women, youth and communities in the most remote areas, on peacebuilding and sustaining peace at the local, national and regional levels.

Since 2018, the UN–Civil Society Joint Working Group has led the development of the Guidelines through an inclusive process of numerous consultations with local peacebuilders, including the February 2019 online survey, VTC consultations and the August 2019 online consultation. Through this process, the Guidelines have become:

- **a unique resource for the UN to build stronger and sustainable partnerships with civil society, and**
- **a resource for civil society to reflect on the way the UN develops and carries out its engagement strategies and use it to build meaningful and strong partnerships between the UN and local peacebuilders.**

## Turning words into action: the opportunities the Guidelines offer for stronger and equal civil society–United Nations partnerships

Every local context is unique. However, the Guidelines offer some opportunities that every local peacebuilder in every region can consider to develop meaningful and strong partnerships between local peacebuilders and the UN.





# Opportunity 1

**The Guidelines provide an overview of the UN understanding of and expectations from civil society engagement.**

*The perspectives of the UN and local peacebuilders on what a strong and equal partnership means, and what the most effective ways are to build such partnerships often differ. The Guidelines outline some key entry points, opportunities and limitations within the UN System for further advocacy and partnerships.*

There are **seven strategic priority areas for the UN field presences outlined in the Guidelines** that create the space to reflect on the ways the UN field presences develop and carry out civil society engagement strategies:

## Seven strategic priority areas of the Guidelines



## Reviewing these priority areas can be a useful and strategic exercise to

- 1) identify or re-assess **areas of mutual interest**;
- 2) provide insights into the UN **planning processes and implementation procedures** and strengthen local peacebuilders' ability to inform and participate in those processes;
- 3) challenge **unreasonable expectations and approaches of the UN** when it comes to community engagement. Below you can find some selected ideas.

## Why could local peacebuilders refer to the Guidelines?

The Guidelines reinforce advocacy efforts and encourage UN actors to fulfil their institutional commitments.



**Have you had concerns on the ways partnerships with various stakeholders, including the UN can affect your safety and the safety of your community?**



You can work with the UN field presences to advance their commitment to preserve safety and security!



*See Section 3 of the Guidelines.*

Risk-averse engagement with local peacebuilders means ensuring a conflict-sensitive “do-no-harm” approach before, during and after community engagement by making all possible efforts not to expose local peacebuilders to risks and danger, use the UN position to advocate for positive action to protect peacebuilders, and support preventative measures.

It is important to remind and support the UN partners in consulting with local peacebuilders on the most effective ways to ensure risk-averse engagement.



## The Guidelines encourage the UN field presences to:



**Promote, protect and expand civic space by discussing with local peacebuilders the detailed elements of the UN's community engagement in advance of engagement.**

**The Guidelines invite special efforts to consult with women, youth and other groups to ensure that specific risks are taken into account.**

*Ask questions about the participation in the consultation, who your data will be shared with and who will the information from the meeting be shared with. This will help you to ensure you have a comprehensive understanding of the process.*



**Establish regular risk assessments and early-warning mechanisms in consultation with local peacebuilders and their communities, as well as relevant regional and subregional organisations.**

*Inquire to UN actors about the ways information on early-signs of violence are determined and offer an opportunity to work together to deliver an independent civil society data gathering method.*



**Devise appropriate protection measures to address attacks, threats, intimidation and reprisals against local civil society actors for engaging with the UN, including in cases of credible threats of physical violence.**

*Ask the UN field presences about the progress in developing and advocating for appropriate protection measures as well as safety and protection of local peacebuilders. Provide examples of protection measures that would be appropriate and necessary from your perspective.*

*Start the conversation about very specific needs that peacebuilders are facing in the context of their work that are different from the experiences of human rights defenders. Reiterate specific experiences that women and young peacebuilders are facing and encourage the UN field presences to provide critical nuanced protections for these actors.*







## Do you find some UN processes unclear and difficult to engage with?



You can work with the UN field presences to reflect on the ways and impact of their engagement with local peacebuilders!



See Section 5 of the Guidelines.

What makes the UN inaccessible? Due to the lack of transparency, complicated channels of engagement, highly technical language of processes and the absence of outreach to local communities in local languages, the role of the UN at the field level is often misinterpreted or misunderstood in its full scope.



### The Guidelines encourage the UN field presences to:



**Conduct a mapping of local peacebuilders' activities, including the work of women and youth-led organisations, to advance partnerships, avoid duplication and encourage complementarity.**

*Approach the UN actors and offer to facilitate meetings with diverse local peacebuilders to ensure that various perspectives, including those of peacebuilders in rural areas, women and youth, are represented.*



**Allocate resources and time to build partnerships with a diverse range of local peacebuilding actors.**

*Keep in mind that partnerships do not grow overnight!  
See Opportunity 3 below for more details!*



**Where possible, introduce innovative, predictable, flexible and risk-tolerant funding modalities, simple and user-friendly grant application templates and selection/reporting criteria that allow local initiatives to build measurable impact towards longer-term and structural change.**

*Offer an opportunity to work together on developing easier instructions for local peacebuilders to access grants from the UN to make them more accessible.*



**Develop regular conflict-sensitive guidance, tools and capacity-**



### building opportunities for local peacebuilding actors.

*Inquire about resources and long-term plans available to mitigate capacity constraints. You could propose integrating the training of trainers methodologies to support sustainability of efforts.*



## Have you been working to increase the participation of women and young peacebuilders in UN-related action?



You can work with the UN field presences to ensure meaningful engagement with local women and young peacebuilders!



*See Section 6 and 7 of the Guidelines.*

With the established agendas on Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security, the UN, its membership and staff have recognised that women and youth are essential actors for peacebuilding and sustaining peace. However, there are still gaps in the implementation of these agendas. Particularly, the meaningful participation of women and youth in peacebuilding and sustaining peace is lacking behind. The Guidelines could contribute to addressing this.



## The Guidelines encourage the UN field presences to:



**Refrain from limiting the engagement with diverse women and youth to limited political opportunities (such as the signing of peace agreements) and continue to support meaningful participation of women and youth in the implementation of peace agreements after they are signed, as well as in all peacebuilding activities.**

*Youth peace tracks, women advisory boards, and other processes clearly do not meet the threshold of meaningful participation. Ask about the efforts to meaningfully integrate local women and young peacebuilders in all peacebuilding activities. Request for women and youth to be included in all discussions and processes related to peacebuilding, not only in women-specific or youth-specific fora.*



**Ensure that UN peacebuilding priorities at the regional, national and local levels are gender-sensitive and reflect the core values of global frameworks and policies to promote gender equality and strengthen women's participation, protection and rights across the conflict cycle.**

*Keep in mind that partnerships do not grow overnight!  
See [Opportunity 3](#) below for more details!*



**Acknowledge the unique risks and challenges faced by diverse young people, including young women peacebuilders, in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.**

*Prioritise sharing information about the unique risks and challenges (i.e., inaccessibility of grants for women and youth local peacebuilders, etc.) faced by young people and outline some of the root causes of specific challenges.*



**Provide and protect a platform and space for young people and women to share their ideas, expertise and needs, amplify their voices, and advance their engagement.**

*If you are a part of an existing network of youth or women peacebuilders, reach out to UN actors to inform them about your network and offer to facilitate engagement.*

*If you are not a part of an existing network of youth or women peacebuilders, but you are aware of some, reach out to them and propose building coalitions to jointly advocate for more meaningful engagement with the UN.*

*The UN actors could consider hosting consultations and policy dialogues with young peacebuilders and women to develop practical steps of supporting their priorities.*





## Opportunity 2

**The Guidelines encourage coalition- and network-building both within civil society and between civil society, the UN and other actors.**

*Our voice is always stronger when we act together! The UN is more likely to engage with a civil society coalition or a network as opposed to individual organisations. It is more affordable for the UN and civil society to engage as a group of organisations rather than individuals.*

Moreover, it is an opportunity to exchange and understand each other's most critical priorities. Therefore, civil society can prioritise forming diverse coalitions and networks that include women, young people and peacebuilders from the most remote areas to jointly engage and amplify each other's voices on the UN-related priorities.

Different local peacebuilders may represent different needs and experiences in a specific context. But it is difficult for individual organisations and experts to make their voices and demands heard at UN offices. Therefore, we encourage collaboration, setting up and strengthening formal and informal networks and coalitions. Together, they can outline common priorities and work with the UN to build a joint and multi-stakeholder effort to address their common priorities.

## How can the UN better navigate community engagement through working with networks and coalitions?



### Reach out to your existing coalitions and networks and, where these do not exist, form one:

Networks and coalitions help amplify each other's priorities and build stronger support for joint messaging at the UN and establish connections that individual peacebuilders may not have. The engagement by networks and coalitions needs to be rooted in inclusive, diverse and representative data and concentrate on limited but common areas of focus.

*Work with networks and coalitions to reflect on the Guidelines and jointly strategise on how to use them most effectively in action.*



### Understand joint capacities and added value:

Each partner in a coalition or a network brings a unique perspective and expertise, focuses on specific priorities and engages with the UN at different levels. Bringing these experiences together and developing joint strategies is a mutually-beneficial process.

*Outline critical capacities that each organisation can offer to support the coalition engagement (i.e., monitoring of local developments, innovative projects to build resilience and advance risks, expertise in remote and rural areas, etc.).*

*Diversity is our strength! Keep this in mind when forging coalitions. Organisations led by youth, rural women, people with disabilities, or other historically vulnerable groups are often smaller and less visible – but all of us build a complete picture of priorities and needs in a relevant context.*



### Formulate your engagement strategies around the most critical opportunities to engage:

Develop a joint strategic plan with joint priorities and action. Joint strategies will help each member of the coalition to gain from the engagement. While it is possible that not all of your priorities could be supported through a coalition, you can make progress on some.

*Take advantage of the relevant opportunities for joint action (i.e., elections, the launch of a new peacebuilding framework, global policy changes, the launch of the Guidelines, etc.)*

*Focus on 2-3 key priorities and be as specific as possible. Your messages should be framed inclusively and be rooted in data in order to generate the broadest support possible for your work.*





## Opportunity 3

### The Guidelines remind the UN field presences about the UN system-wide commitment to civil society engagement.

*Recognising that the goal of sustaining peace is not achievable without the support, knowledge and expertise of local peacebuilders, the UN is interested and committed to building partnerships. However, it is up to local peacebuilders to determine what actors are most relevant for their work.*

You know best who the most relevant UN actors to engage with are. However, please keep in mind that the UN Country Teams, UN Women, UN Development Programme (UNDP), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs), and other UN actors are all encouraged by the UN Secretary-General to use the Guidelines to engage with civil society. Use this opportunity to advance your priorities and support the UN actors in implementing the Guidelines!

Knowing and referencing UN commitments to better community engagement in peacebuilding can be an instrument for civil society to hold UN actors accountable to these commitments.

### What do the Guidelines offer to local peacebuilders?

#### **Be mindful of the mandates of respective UN actors:**

Depending on your goals and priorities, different actors within the UN System will be relevant to you. Many peacebuilders are already in touch with UN actors. However, you can find a brief mapping of selected UN actors in Table 2 in case it is useful.



*If you haven't done so yet, it can be helpful to map out the UN actors operating in your context to understand their respective mandates, advantages and limitations. Ask yourself: Which of these UN actors are best positioned to support each of our priorities? Which of these would be the most challenging to engage, and why? Is it worth pursuing engagement with them, despite the limitations? If so, what are the entry points to begin a conversation and collaboration?*



*The UN could be seen not only as a donor but also as a partner in your peacebuilding engagement. It can support you in your advocacy, provide a platform for raising awareness, and help navigate complex contexts and political dynamics.*



*When unclear, ask the UN field presences to better clarify their role and mandate on peacebuilding, and not only in the meeting but also on their web-site and other outreach materials.*

**Table 2**  
**Selected UN Field Presences**

*Please note that depending on the context, priorities of different regional and national offices could vary. Therefore, check web-sites of respective offices to map out their specific priorities.*

**Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPO)** provides political and executive direction to UN peacekeeping operations and maintains contact with the Security Council, troop and financial contributors, and parties to the conflict in the implementation of Security Council mandates.

[Find DPO offices](#)

**Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA)** regional offices focus primarily on 1) ensuring adequate analysis and early warning; 2) preventing conflict and engaging in peacemaking; 3) managing political crises and violent conflicts; 4) sustaining peace; 5) enhancing partnerships. [Find DPPA offices](#)

**Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)** is the leading UN entity on human rights. Its mandate is to promote and protect the enjoyment and full realisation, by all people, of all human rights. [Find OHCHR offices](#)

**UN Development Programme (UNDP)** works to support national actors to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions, accelerate structural transformations, and build resilience to shocks and crises.

[Find UNDP offices](#)

**UN Population Fund (UNFPA)** addresses a number of issues that directly affect youth, especially young girls, including providing resources for HIV infection and unintended pregnancies, ending female genital mutilation and child marriage, and supporting access to comprehensive sexual education.

[Find UNFPA offices](#)

**UN Women** is a UN organisation dedicated to the empowerment of women. Its headquarters are in New York and has regional, country, and liaison offices. [Find UN Women offices](#)

**UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF)** works in 190 countries and is dedicated to protecting and promoting the rights of children through adolescence. [Find UNICEF offices](#)

**UN High Commissioner for Refugees** works to protect the rights and provide resources for refugees, displaced persons, and stateless persons. [Find UNHCR offices](#)

**UN Country Team (UNCT)**’s main purpose is to coordinate the work of the individual agencies to plan and work together to ensure the delivery of tangible results in support of the national development agenda. Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs) are the dedicated UN staff at UNCTs who support the UN and national stakeholders in preventing violent conflict and responding to complex political situations. [Find UNCT offices](#)

**World Food Programme** is the UN organisation that is focusing on food security and is one of the world’s largest humanitarian organisations with regional offices in 80 countries (with the headquarters in Rome). [Find WFP offices](#)

**Special Advisors and Representatives of the Secretary-General** are appointed by the Secretary General to represent him and/or head a Security Council mandated operation.

[Find Special Advisors and Representatives](#)



### **Remember to continue setting clear goals for engagement:**

Based on the priorities of your network or coalition, be prepared to outline the key priorities (i.e., supporting women's engagement in peace processes, establishing the national peacebuilding strategy, encouraging local mediation and dialogue, promoting innovative peacebuilding approaches, etc.) and make sure that these are clear for UN actors.

*Plan ahead, decide on an agenda and your meeting objectives, divide roles between participants, and follow a plan.*

*When reaching out to the UN actors, it is always useful to share the purpose of the meeting with them in advance (i.e., exchange priorities, discuss recent political development and opportunities, etc.).*

*During the meeting, make a reference to the Guidelines as a starting point and the incentive to follow through on the engagement effort.*



### **Always follow-up!**

Recognizing each other's busy schedules and limited capacities. It is good to finish the meetings by reiterating the next steps for both parties. Keep communicating on how the agreed on steps are being implemented by each party.

*Make sure that you leave the meeting with clear steps to follow-up on and reiterate these points via email.*





## How to get in contact, present key projects and highlight priorities, and develop a partnership

Following an online discussion, the Global Advocacy Team at the GPPAC Global Secretariat was approached by one of the Peace and Development Advisors to get in contact with a GPPAC member in a specific country.

Here is how the GPPAC member took advantage of this opportunity:

**Note:** It is always easier to establish contact if you are the one being approached by UN actors. However, you can also take the initiative. If you participate in meetings or online roundtable discussions where UN actors from your country are present, make sure to

### I. Getting in contact with UN actor

The Global Advocacy Team introduced the Executive Director of the GPPAC member organisation as follows:

Dear [Name],

Thank you for your message and interest in working with GPPAC.

It is our pleasure to introduce you to the GPPAC member, [NAME OF THE ORGANISATION] and its Executive Director, [NAME]. [PROVIDE ASHORT OVERVIEW OF CREDENTIALS]

Some of the key priorities of [NAME OF THE ORGANISATION] include:

- [OUTLINE NO MORE THAN 4 CRITICAL PRIORITIES DESCRIBING THE ACTIVITIES PURSUED TO ACHIEVE A GOAL. YOU CAN CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLE]
- *“Building open spaces to prevent youth re-radicalisation and recruitment into radical groups”*: In 2020, [NAME OF THE ORGANISATION] started working on a project that aims to ensure that young people are actively involved in peace processes.
- *“Strengthening the implementation of SDG16+”* In 2019, [NAME OF THE ORGANISATION] carried out a civil society-led review of progress towards SDG16+.

It would be great if we can schedule an introductory call from which you can follow-up directly. How does it sound to you? If you are interested, please let us know what are some of the times and dates that work for you.

Otherwise, please let us know what is your preferred method to connect.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Best,  
[Name]



Keep the email short and use bullet points and insert hyperlinks when possible.  
Based on the key projects presented in the email, the GPPAC member was easily able to present her key priorities in the call.

## II. Presenting priorities in a call

The GPPAC member was able to build on the information shared with the Peace and Development Advisor on their key projects and could present their priorities linked to their work. The GPPAC member presented 2 key priorities that she would like to seek UN support and collaboration on:

- **Priority 1: Youth engagement**



↓  
linked to the ["Building open spaces to prevent youth re-radicalisation and recruitment into radical groups"](#) project

- **Priority 2: Peacebuilding**



↓  
linked to the ["Strengthening the implementation of SDG16+"](#) project

## III. Moving forward in partnership

The GPPAC member and the Peace and Development Advisor now collaborate closely together. The GPPAC member has supported the Peace and Development Advisor in conducting a mapping of local peacebuilding action and facilitated the connection with their coalitions and networks.

This engagement has also led to the Peace and Development Advisor to be one of the facilitators during the conference organised by the GPPAC regional network.

The partnership continues.



## Opportunity 4

### The Guidelines encourage risk-sensitive civil society engagement.

*It is the responsibility of the UN to make sure that local peacebuilders do not face risks as a result of the UN-civil society joint efforts to build strong and operational partnerships. You can play an important role in ensuring such risk-informed engagement, by sharing information about the risks you face, and how the UN can help address them.*

In order for the work of local peacebuilders to be adequately supported, the UN should understand the unique security challenges faced by local peacebuilders and promote, protect and expand a safe and enabling environment for civil society. Where security allows, this can be done through increased visibility of the contribution of local peacebuilders in formal processes, working with the government to encourage the recognition of the value of community engagement, and engage with diverse peacebuilders including peacebuilders in rural areas.

### What does a risk-informed partnership mean?

The Guidelines define a risk-informed engagement as ensuring a conflict-sensitive “do-no-harm” approach before, during and after the engagement between the UN and civil society. The Guidelines provide recommendations to UN actors on how to act in a risk-informed way. Civil society can help by recognising and communicating the risks on their part.



#### Recognise the risks:

Are any members of your organisation, network or coalition facing specific risks and dangers? What are the potential risks that may appear as a result of the partnership with the UN?

*Map out potential risks and ensure that all members of the coalition, where relevant, have an opportunity to share their perspectives.*



#### Be transparent:

Due to political opportunity that the UN possesses, there may not always be space in having local peacebuilders engage in finding solutions to their security challenges. However, it is important to inform the UN from the outset, or as the need arises, of the partnerships about your concerns.

*It is important to make it clear that in building partnerships both parties (civil society and the UN) are taking risks into account. They should develop an informed strategy on how to address these risks together based on mutual advantages.*





## Opportunity 5

### The Guidelines support systematic and mutually-beneficial partnerships.

*Strong and meaningful partnerships should be mutually-beneficial and systematic! This requires both parties to assess their capacities, resources and mutuality of goals to make a decision on partnerships. If this decision is made, the UN and local peacebuilders should plan together a systematic long-term engagement with regular assessment processes to ensure that the partnerships continue to be meaningful and equal.*

A meaningful partnership should give civil society an opportunity to systematically and regularly share their priorities and have these priorities reflected in the regional, national and local peacebuilding strategies, activities and programming. It should also mean that civil society has a seat at the table from the development to implementation to monitoring and evaluation.

### What does a systematic and mutually-beneficial partnership entail?



#### **Focus on trust-building:**

It is important to invest in building good relationships before moving to systematic engagement. Partnerships do not grow over night and require work on trust-building. You may not see immediate results after your first meeting; however, it sets the stage and initiates a relationship. See examples from Mali and Somalia below.

*In advance of the meeting, think about your immediate, mid-term and final goals. Make sure that each engagement with the UN is a building block towards your final goal.*

*Prioritize monitoring work: attend meetings, where possible to connect with UN actors. The relationships are best built in person. If you do not have enough resources to afford participation in relevant meetings, voice your concerns and challenges. It is important to speak up!*



## case study

### A Case-study from Mali

A local civil society organisation worked with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to establish a Community Watch group which engaged the entire community in collectively advancing the situation of local women. This initiative was deemed effective as the Mission, through multiple consultations and mappings, was well-informed of the complex realities on the ground, including the dynamics among the relevant actors, prior to designing and planning the project. Today, the Ministry of Civil Defense has replicated this project in communities with similar contexts.

### A Case-study from Somalia

The UN in Somalia has promoted community-based planning (CBP) to strengthen engagement with local actors in development and peacebuilding processes in response to the country's mass displacement crisis. CBP is defined as a process which empowers communities, including vulnerable socio-economic groups and their leaders, to demand and actively participate in development interventions that are relevant to them. The project provided the basis for community action plans that became the local reference point to which development action can align their support.



#### Localize the Guidelines:

The UN field presences need to localise the Guidelines for each specific context by developing a concrete implementation and monitoring plan. This should entail a clear understanding of the roles on both sides. Therefore, the participation of civil society in this process is critical.

*Reach out to your UN contacts and encourage joint action on the development of a concrete implementation and monitoring plan for the Guidelines. This is not only an opportunity for you. It is also an opportunity for the UN actors to demonstrate their leadership on institutional commitments.*



#### Encourage systematic engagement:

The Guidelines encourage the establishment of systematic partnerships between local peacebuilders and the UN field presences, including civil society advisory group, civil society committee, etc.

*An informal joint UN-CSO working group that developed the Guidelines is an example of already existing engagement modality within the UN. Building on the value of the Guidelines, encourage similar partnerships in your context. See more in Table 3.*





### **Regularly assess the outcomes of the engagement:**

Develop a mechanism to consistently re-assess your engagement with UN actors against your priority list identified in the action plan and encourage space for joint reflection. Ask yourself regularly: are the priorities we identified still relevant? Are the partnerships meaningfully contributing to achieving them?

*The partnerships must be regularly evaluated between the parties and adjustments may be done so that it remains meaningful and beneficial.*



## **case study**

Table 3

### **A case-study of the joint Civil Society-UN Working Group**

The setup of the joint Civil-Society-UN Working Group has been a truly innovative and groundbreaking undertaking that allowed for unprecedented avenues for civil society inclusion in the development of an internal UN document. Developed from a long process of establishing relationships and trust, the creation of the Working Group and its work represents a good practice that can be implemented by other parts of the UN System at all levels to ensure an inclusive, impartial and representative process and greater support of and greater collaboration between broader range of peacebuilding actors. Under the leadership of PBSO, responsible for logistics and coordination, the members of the Joint Working Group worked together on the planning, consultation, evaluation and analysis process for the Guidelines.

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The UN System-Wide Community-Engagement Guideline (CEG) on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

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