Advancing Change towards Sustainable Peace: Financing Locally-Led Peacebuilding Action

GPPAC's Key Messages ahead of the High-Level Meeting on Financing for Peacebuilding

A Network of People Building Peace

As the largest global network of local peacebuilders, GPPAC recognises local peacebuilders in all their diversities as leaders, partners, and agents for peace. Sustainable peace can only be achieved if and when local stakeholders are included in the design and implementation of peacebuilding processes. This is a consistent cross-cutting priority of our network, from its inception in 2005 until the most recent formulation of our 2021-2025 Strategic Plan. At all levels, we aim to support local organisations, networks and initiatives in their vital role as peacebuilders, while simultaneously working to advance the inclusivity of funding mechanisms, resources and infrastructures for peace.

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BACKGROUND: WHY LOCALLY-LED PEACEBUILDING?

Global peacebuilding policy widely recognises that sustainable peace requires meaningful engagement of local stakeholders[1]. Indeed, peacebuilding and sustaining peace is meaningless, if it exists only within the global policy arena. Thus, They need to be operationalised at the local level to generate real impact for those affected by conflict. To achieve this, we need local peacebuilders to be enabled to lead root-cause analysis, crisis response and long-term resilience building. However, only 12% of the tiny envelope of funding available for peacebuilding reaches local peacebuilders.[2] A compounding factor making access to this limited amount of funding difficult for local peacebuilders lies in the restricted administrative requirements put forward by donors. The global support *in policy* for the participation of local peacebuilders is yet to become operationalised in practice through three avenues of change in the global action aimed at supporting peacebuilders: 1) change in mindset, 2) change in practice, and 3) change of expectations.

Only when local peacebuilders become *in practice* a meaningful partner in action on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, peacebuilding gains can be sustained in the long-term.

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[1] See for instance the 2020 dual UN Resolutions on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/RES/75/201-S/RES/2558) that recognise local peacebuilders as critical partners in peacebuilding; and the 2020 UN Secretary-General's Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/74/976-S/2020/773) which states that peace is more sustainable when peacebuilding efforts are locally owned, led and implemented (Box 4, p. 13).
[2] PeaceDirect, "The Radical Flexibility: Strategic Funding for the Age of Local Activism", 2020, p. 4, Accessed at: https://www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/PD-Radical-Flexibility-Report-v2.pdf

The opportunity for change does exist, as the funding landscape has changed in the last two decades. First, the international-pooled funds, including the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), have offered some flexibility to international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) in their implementation and reporting processes, signaling that similar trust levels can be established with local peacebuilders.[3] Also, the increased donor flexibility in the times of COVID-19 - for example, by allowing budgetary changes of up to 20% and amendments of project outputs without prior approval - demonstrates that more flexible approaches to funding are possible.[4]

The international donor community can intentionally invest in mechanisms and processes that get funding to local peacebuilders in participatory and sustainable ways. Consequently, the donor community can ensure decisions on resource allocation are made more democratically and inclusively and that local peacebuilders can sustain their work in the long term.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS: WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO SUPPORT LOCALLY-LED PEACEBUILDING?

- CHANGING THE MINDSET: MEANINGFULLY INCLUDE LOCAL PEACEBUILDERS IN DECISION-MAKING ON FINANCING

It is critical to create clear opportunities and channels for the meaningful participation of local peacebuilders in defining financing for peacebuilding priorities. The donor community rarely consults with local peacebuilders when developing their funding mechanisms and often perceives funding local peacebuilders directly as "risky."[5] As a result, local expertise and understanding of early warning signs and drivers of conflict is not captured in the donors' strategies and programming, making peacebuilding financing less effective and impactful.

Example 1: GPPAC's Youth-by-Youth Approach

The Youth-by-Youth Approach developed by GPPAC entails enabling young people to be in the lead of designing and allocating small grants to their peers. This approach prioritises the ownership of youth, amplifies the capacities of its recipients, and is based on the following principles:

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[3] GPPAC, "Best Practices in Financing for Peacebuilding: Ensuring Local Ownership in Kyrgyzstan", 2020, Accessed at: https://www.gppac.net/news/ best-practices-financing-peacebuilding-ensuring-local-ownership-kyrgyzstan

[4] GNWP, GPPAC, ICAN, Kvinna Till Kvinna, MADRE, WILPF, "FUND US LIKE YOU WANT US TO WIN: Feminist Solutions for more Impactful Financing for Peacebuilding", 2021, Accessed at: https://www.gppac.net/resources/fund-us-you-want-us-win-feminist-solutions-more-impactful-financing-peacebuilding

[5] GPPAC and DHF's conversations with a number of funders or funding intermediates for their research indicated that "the level of fraud amongst local NGO grantees was limited to nominal." See: GPPAC, DHF "Designing Efficient Financing for Peacebuilding: Financing Mechanisms to Support Local Peacebuilders", 2021

1. **The principle of participatory grant-making** is employed to ensure that young peacebuilders, who are the most affected by fund disbursement, are granted decision-making power.

2. **The principle of authentic partnership** which seeks to reduce the risk of perpetuating a top-down approach to identifying priorities by utilising local knowledge and supporting capacity building and knowledge exchange.

3. **The principle of holistic support provision** emphasises support beyond money and encourages the process of co-creation and capacity building between the donor and the grantee and mutual responsibility of outcomes.

<u>**Example 2:**</u> **The Board of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF)**

The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) was designed to increase women's participation and leadership in conflict contexts through pooling and channeling flexible funding directly to local women's groups and civil society organisations working in local communities directly affected by conflict. Civil society is included in the Fund's global board and country level steering committees, demonstrating meaningful participation of local peacebuilders in defining priorities and decision making at all levels.[6] GPPAC has previously served on the board and, after leaving the board, is currently working as an INGO in charge of distributing the funds.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

The donor community should directly engage local peacebuilders, especially women and youth-led organisations, in decision- and grant-making to ensure they have ownership over priorities for funding allocation, with a grantor and grantee relationship deciding on shared priorities together and operating under funding instruments that work for local peacebuilders – instruments that are highly flexible, simple and unearmarked.

Acknowledging that donors' rules and regulations often require them to work through intermediaries, the donor community should practice and promote authentic partnerships[7] towards the grantee by ensuring grantors/intermediaries take on a supportive rather than controlling role, dedicating efforts to assess and address unequal power dynamics, breaking with the presumption of an inherent risk when engaging with local peacebuilders, and communicating information in a coherent

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[6] GPPAC,"Implementation of Sustaining Peace: Recommendations on Financing for Peacebuilding", 2020, Accessible at: https://www.gppac.net/files/2020-11/2020%20Review_Financing%20Recommendations_GPPAC%20%281%29%20%282%29.pdf

[7] **The principle of authentic partnership is based on:** 1) designing and managing participatory resource allocation processes with local organisations as primary implementers and with INGOs providing administrative oversight; 2) working with local organisations and their networks to conduct capacity-building needs assessments and then helping them meet those needs; 3) exchanging knowledge and facilitating access to global, regional and cross-border expertise for local organisations; and, 4) prioritising long-term, trusting partnerships, rather than short term collaborations between INGOs and local organisations for a specific grant process.

and transparent manner. Donors should also prioritise intermediary organisations that have existing local networks and a strong track record of working with diverse local civil society organisations.

The donor community should include diverse local peacebuilders and their networks on governance, advisory, funding and review boards and committees. This enables fund managers to better understand the experiences of civil society with the fund and adjust the requirements accordingly. It also allows for the reciprocal sharing of information and non-financial resources to ensure shared learning between partners. Donors and local peacebuilders should discuss together through substantive consultations specific financial and programmatic risks for the donor, as well as security and other risks local peacebuilders may face through their work.

- **CHANGING THE PRACTICE: SUPPORTING LOCAL PEACEBUILDERS DIRECTLY**

The current mechanisms and models of funding local peacebuilding contain numerous steps before the money reaches the local level. As a result, most funds are exhausted before they reach local peacebuilders. To decrease the links in the aid chain and counteract the loss of money before it reaches the local level, and subsequently break the cycle of dependence on larger organisations, donors should consider other avenues to allocate part of their funding directly to local peacebuilders, their coalitions and networks. Then, intermediaries can play a different role by working with local partners to reinforce capacities missing at the local level and support cross-border and cross-regional learning and experience exchanges, as well as policy engagement.

Example 1: **Direct funding to women peacebuilders through embassies**

Embassies of several bilateral donors (e.g., Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK and the US) provide direct, flexible funding for women peacebuilders through a dedicated instrument. Directly engaging with embassies has contributed to local organisations' increased societal credibility and access to other donors. Local organisations may be invited by embassies to submit project proposals, or they may do so proactively as open calls for proposals are rare. Often, local organisations and embassies jointly refine proposals in a process of co-creation. The embassies' role during project implementation in this type of donor-recipient relationship is characterised by women peacebuilders as a form of support rather than control.[8]

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[8] Government of Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Useful Patchwork: Direct Funding of Local NGOs by Netherlands Embassies: 2006-2012", 2014, Accessed at:
https://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/Useful-Patchwork-Direct-Funding-of-Local-NGOs.pdf

Example 2: **Pooled funds that support local priority-setting and flexible grantmaking**

The European Endowment for Democracy (EED) is a multi-partner trust fund established by the European Union (EU) and EU Member states in 2013 and supported by 15 government donors. The mission of the EED is to provide flexible, 'demand-driven' support to a range of democracy efforts and activists. The Fund's model expressly supports activities – short-term such as a campaign or long-term such as a media training program – through a rolling application process that does not dictate technical categories or priority areas. The EED is also able to provide cash, fund unregistered organisations, and take action that may be expressly considered 'risky' by other funders.[9]

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

The donor community should strengthen the possibilities of using in-country pooled funds as a key instrument for directly supporting local peacebuilders. These funds provide donors with an opportunity to pool capacities to manage smaller grants, pool risks, and strengthen coherence with larger bilateral and multilateral programming.

The donor community should track, and report on, funding disbursed directly to locally-based peacebuilding organisations and their networks. The funding dashboard should collect this data, and the Secretary-General should include this data in his annual reporting procedures to 1) build an evidence-base on the success rate of funding local peacebuilders directly and to 2) debunk the perceived risk of funding local organisations directly.

The donor community should direct their embassies to provide funding and other support to local peacebuilding networks, initiatives and organisations working on peacebuilding, especially those led by women and youth, and proactively encourage them to apply for existing funding opportunities. Embassies could be key convenors to bring local activists and peacebuilders, as well as their coalitions and networks, together with other donors and embassies in a risk-informed way.

- **CHANGING THE EXPECTATIONS: COMMITTING TO LOCALLY-LED DETERMINATION OF IMPACT**

Measuring the impact of peacebuilding activities is fundamental to shape future programming, policies and strategies. Yet, the focus on short-term outputs over

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[9] GPPAC, DHF "Designing Efficient Financing for Peacebuilding: Financing Mechanisms to Support Local Peacebuilders", 2021, Accessed at:
https://www.gppac.net/files/2021-10/Working-paper-Financing-Mechanism-Rapport-v1%5B37%5D.pdf

long-term transformation leads to the "projectisation" of peacebuilding work and creates unreasonably high expectations for short-term results. Understanding of impact needs to be context-specific to unpack how peacebuilding interacts with a variety of non-traditional peace and security challenges, such as climate change and health emergencies; economic, political, and social risk and resilience factors among others. Impact assessment and measurement should be based on the needs and priorities of local communities rather than the understanding of what external actors and experts believe are important indicators of peace. Thus, the impact measurement needs to be locally-led and locally-driven. This requires the use of indicators based on community knowledge - the body of knowledge accumulated by local communities and that people use in their daily lives to determine whether they are at peace.[10]

Example 1: **Trusting community-led early warning and early response systems:**

During COVID-19, early warning and early response systems and conflict and resilience monitors in Africa have adjusted their methodologies to include COVID-19 -specific indicators. In Papua New Guinea, the Community Engagement Working Group set up a Community Response Map to track communities' needs and their perceptions of the humanitarian response. Another good practice is the development of representative community monitoring mechanisms, such as the early warning and early response systems in West Africa and Southern Africa.[11] Locally-led tools to gather and report on data can make a significant difference for areas that are off the radar and for marginalised groups who otherwise remain invisible.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Donors should allocate sufficient funding to support adaptive monitoring and evaluation processes, including community-led determination of impact and encourage developing clear and realistic goals. This includes basing measures of success for peacebuilding programmes on the local expertise of funding recipients, using non-indicator-based monitoring and evaluation methodologies, prioritising and investing in programmes that have a structured way of learning by doing, and conducting "ripple-effect" evaluations, which involve returning to understand long-term impacts. Inclusive indicators need to be developed on the basis of context-specific drivers of instability and sources of resilience, in consultation with local communities. The donor community and policymakers should publicly support story-telling and other methods of conveying data to be an adequate measurement of the impact. Systematic

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[10] IPI, "Measuring Peace Through Locally Driven Everyday Peace Indicators", 13 December 2018, Accessed at: https://www.ipinst.org/2018/12/locally-driven-indicators-developing-participatory-approach-for-measuring-peace#5
[11] More information about the strategic partnership between the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the implementation of a regional early warning and response system referred to as ECOWARN (as well as other successful examples of regional partnerships) is available at: https://gppac.net/resources/spirit-partnership-operationalisation-sustaining-peace-regional-level

documentation and analyses of lessons learned within the last 10-5 years can be used to project the efficacy of future peacebuilding activities.

Donors should dedicate specific funding to ensure that peacebuilding action across all sectors and institutions is informed with locally-led and inclusive data collection methods. Given local actors' comparative advantage in accessing information within communities, support is needed for local peacebuilding actors, including women's networks, to develop and lead comprehensive and inclusive data collection, such as establishing networks of community monitors. This requires significant network- and capacity building to ensure data collection is adequate. These data collection methods need to be complemented by streamlined channels of rapid analysis. Finally, peacebuilding and development experts at the national and regional levels should engage with these practices to ensure that information adequately feeds into decision-making processes.