



## **Advancing local peacebuilding impact through quality financing: Learning and exchange of best practices in meaningfully supporting local organisations**

Summary findings from interviews conducted by GPPAC in Colombia

*This summary note provides an overview of the good practices and lessons learned on financing for local peacebuilding in Colombia. It is based on interviews conducted with embassies and UN representatives in June 2023.*

**The definition of 'peacebuilding' and 'local peacebuilders' varies among donors:** The definition of who is a peacebuilder is unclear to the donor community in Colombia, as they see it extending further than actors who apply dialogue and conflict sensitivity to their work. From the perspective of some donors, the term peacebuilder can include civil society, including human rights defenders, government representatives, and the private sector: virtually anyone who works on the implementation of various elements of the peace agreement in Colombia.

**The Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Sustaining Peace (MPTF Colombia) is a cost-effective participatory funding mechanism accessible to diverse civil society:** The [MPTF Colombia](#) was established in 2016 for the implementation of [the peace agreement](#) and aligns its objectives with [the national development plan](#). It is managed through a tripartite structure, where the government, the UN, and Member States are represented on the steering/strategic committee. The Fund looks closely at sustainability and does not allow for the same work to be supported through several cycles. The Fund is cost-effective: Only 1% goes to the UNHQ, and 2,5% goes to the UN Secretariat (including the costs of the mission and external evaluation, etc.). The rest, 96.5% goes directly to the projects.

Below are three main key characteristics of the Fund when it comes to financing civil society:

- *The MPTF Colombia is designed based on participatory decision-making:* There is one civil society represented in the steering committee - a church institution with a presence across Colombia. It was selected because it is considered an independent and country-wide institution with the most extensive and inclusive reach. The role of civil society in the Steering Committee is to help identify priority areas for the Fund. It is not eligible for funding because they are represented in the Steering Committee.
- *The MPTF Colombia supports smaller and emerging civil society organisations:* To ensure awareness of the grant availability, the Fund applies various outreach efforts accessible to local peacebuilders, including through Facebook, in Spanish, and the form of short two-pagers. The application process does not include any results framework. First, each organisation is invited to share their stories, and if the story is promising and accepted, the Technical Secretariat hosted by UNDP works with civil society to develop results frameworks.
- *The MPTF Colombia supports capacity- and partnership-building for civil society:* To support capacity building, the Fund organises thematic meetings for civil society to facilitate learning and exchange. The engagement with the Fund allows civil society to get exposure to bilateral donors, the UN, and the government to get additional support<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> At the end of the proposal cycle, each civil society project is presented to the donors and the technical committee, allowing them to build relationships with the donor community and get further exposure for their work.

**Bilateral support from the embassies requires an intermediary model:** Many embassies do not provide direct funding to local actors and instead use intermediary organisations or UN entities to fund local peacebuilders. Direct engagement is hard for embassies because many local organisations do not have systems required for embassies to fund local peacebuilders directly. Further, many embassies do not have the capacity to process several applications and sign many agreements; therefore, the method of engaging intermediaries is the preferred modality to reach as many organisations as possible. For the same reason, donors do not usually directly consult with local peacebuilders. Donors generally assume that intermediary organisations communicate perspectives from the territories. To connect to local civil society, they allow for travel budget in proposals to come to the capital for engagement opportunities and often themselves travel to the territories to better understand the work of its partners. The embassies also recognise that a lot of Colombian activists are supported through the funding channelled in their capitals through global intermediary organisations. For this reason, for example, the Swedish embassy in Colombia is constantly in contact with SIDA in Stockholm to avoid duplication of support.

**The localisation agenda in Colombia allows donors to input into inclusive national priorities:** Localisation is at the heart of government peacebuilding efforts as indicated in [the national development plan \(NDP\)](#), as many government representatives in the current settings came from civil society. The government has a practice to rotate among different territories to lead from different states. This ensures that no territory feels left behind on the list of government priorities and that consultations with people can directly inform national priorities. The essence of the peace agreement is that international donors cannot set the peace agenda, but instead needs to be set up by urban and rural actors within Colombia, and the donor community must be able to identify areas where they could support the agenda set up by the government. In this manner, the people have determined the entire peace agenda in Colombia. Therefore, when donors support its implementation, it is already a result of a consultative process.

**Convening platforms should be differentiated from coordination platforms.** The word 'coordination' is often misinterpreted to fit in all types of efforts to bring people together. However, existing donor coordination mechanisms should be understood as convening platforms. For example, *Grupo de Cooperantes Colombia – GruC* is a convening donor platform organised around several subgroups (peace and transition, human rights, gender, environment). GruC's mission is to have coordinated, cohesive, informed and active international cooperation in Colombia in its dialogue with the Government of Colombia, Colombian civil society and the private sector. It does not have a coordination mandate<sup>2</sup>. Currently, embassies share information with each other, but they generally do not want to be coordinated. The best way of coordination so far is the establishment of a pooled fund, where donors can choose to invest based on their priorities. Some of the subgroups can (technically - not often in reality) invite civil society partners to present their projects, which would allow for their exposure to other donors. As the Colombian government is not part of this coordination mechanism, it is hard for the government to ensure that the most pressing national priorities are taken into consideration. Priorities of different donors must be coordinated with those of the government to be strategic for the purposes of building peace.

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<sup>2</sup> Guido, Ashoff. "Donor Coordination: A Basic Requirement for More Efficient and Effective Development Cooperation." Briefing Paper, (2004): 1. Available at: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/27605/2004-07e.pdf>.