



A Network of People
Building Peace

Learning Paper

Emergency Response Funding Mechanism

Supporting Local Peacebuilders in
Times of Growing Uncertainty



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Introduction

Why does peacebuilding need an emergency response funding mechanism?

Local peacebuilders are best equipped to predict, prevent, and address emerging violent conflicts, however they face many persistent challenges, not least of all as regards [funding](#). Limited accessibility, challenging power dynamics, short-term support, geographic, topical, and other types of limitations negatively impact their peacebuilding ability. These challenges are further exacerbated by the realities of changing and highly unpredictable situations at the local level and the growing uncertainties caused by global shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate changes, and wars in the middle of Europe and MENA, drawing in other actors and affecting stability in many parts of the world. Such external shocks force local peacebuilders to change their plans and global donors to change their priorities, often in non-synchronised or asymmetric ways.

GPPAC has consistently recognised the need to support members in emerging conflict situations and has previously provided ad-hoc funding for that aim. But in this particular recent context of growing uncertainty in 2022, GPPAC created the Emergency Response Funding mechanism (ERF) to support local peacebuilders to respond urgently to emerging or escalating conflict situations and to work to prevent such situations. The ERF organised this previous one-off support into a systematic, participatory, and network-led process. It offered timely support to local peacebuilders in conflict situations, adapting to evolving conflict dynamics and yielding valuable lessons on network coordination and the importance of agility in peacebuilding efforts. And, as a work-around to donor constraints limiting or even barring the flexibility and quick accessibility of funding, the mechanism proved to be a strategic investment in preventing conflicts, saving lives, and safeguarding global peace and stability.

This paper describes **the key features and results of the 2022-2023 GPPAC emergency funding mechanism**. It aims to reflect on the **GPPAC experience with its implementation and the lessons learned**, offering the donor community and all interested parties **recommendations when adapting a similar mechanism**.

Key principles of GPPAC's Emergency Response Funding – ERF

With its grantmaking principles, GPPAC aims to strengthen its network approach, which is grounded in long-term relationships, existing through stable structures and connections, learning exchanges, and experience-sharing, enabling the improvement of practice and cooperation at the regional and cross-regional levels. Some of the principles are similar for all small grants, and others are specific to the nature of a particular funding scheme.

▶ GPPAC's General Small Grants Principles

As with all of GPPAC's small grant funding schemes (see f.e. [Youth by Youth](#)), the ERF is grounded in the principles of **participatory grantmaking, authentic partnership, and holistic support provision**, which are worth considering by every donor.

GPPAC network members **participated** at all stages of the grantmaking process, from initiation (co-creating the concept and co-developing the application form) to evaluation (including joint reflection on the results and peer-to-peer learning exchanges). The consultative process involved a broad number of interested members. A cross-regional Ad Hoc Emergency Working Group was created, among others, to support GPPAC members throughout the application process and to provide peer-to-peer feedback on their project proposals. Through GPPAC's Regional Secretariats, local organisations best aware of the regional peacebuilding contexts provided feedback on the applications to best inform the selection process. These feedback rounds also fostered a deepening of existing regional and cross-regional connections and the creation of new links. The solidarity and willingness to help each other inherent to the network approach also ensured timely response and decision on emergency funding.

The Global Secretariat of the GPPAC network acted as a grantor, adhering to the **authentic partnership** principle. Once selected, funding recipients were invited to share their experiences and advice with each other on their respective project designs through a series of exchanges facilitated by the Global Secretariat. Not only did this enable open and critical feedback thanks to its non-competitive nature, it also proved to be particularly inspiring and useful for recipient members to strengthen their approaches. Similarly, following the implementation of the projects, new exchanges to reflect on results and to gather the learnings from the funding mechanism were organised. Other aspects of the authentic partnership between the grantor and grantees included flexibility regarding time frames – in light of changing realities on the ground – ; co-creation; and joint re-evaluation throughout the implementation of the project; all underpinned by a bottom-up approach while sharing the administrative burden.

Through the **holistic partnership** principle, funding recipients were supported beyond the financial aspect both during and after the implementation of their projects through capacity-building in financial management and outcome harvesting; the promotion of their initiatives (for example, the results of Sri Lanka’s project were presented at CSW in New York); the provision of advocacy advice and support; assisting recipients to apply for other funding possibilities (for example, the funding recipients from DRC and Azerbaijan leveraged their ERF project to apply to the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF)); and strengthening organisational capacities and roles at the regional level (for example, the Nigerian funding recipient became the West African Regional Secretariat).

▶ Principles of Quickly Accessible, Inclusive and Flexible

A key characteristic of an emerging violent conflict is time-bound: the situation has changed suddenly, and there is momentum to respond to that can be seized upon to mitigate the risk of violence breaking out, intensifying, or broadening (and therefore an opportune moment to engage in direct conflict prevention). By its very nature, it is unpredictable. GPPAC’s emergency response funding mechanism has offered the best possibility to seize on such momentums, so it was important for this funding to be **quickly accessible**.

Since emerging violent conflicts are often not limited to geographic borders nor tied to concrete themes, the key distinctive feature of the ERF is that it was sourced from otherwise **un-earmarked funding set aside in the annual budget. While the distribution of funding was always subject to a consultative process, this meant that it could be disbursed according to emerging needs, enabling a high degree of flexibility.** This is particularly crucial in the contexts of growing uncertainty in which local peacebuilders find themselves.

At the beginning of 2022, in the days leading up to Russian troops’ massive attacks on Ukraine, locals in Kyiv, Odessa, and Dnipro did not expect a war of such magnitude to erupt. Having already set aside funding for emergency situations, GPPAC was among the fastest to react to the situation, supporting local peacebuilders when neither donors nor local communities knew how to deal with the new reality. A part of the funds was directed to support Ukrainian members, among others, to establish a cross-regional dialogue platform that offered time and space to reflect, support each other, and build resilience during the times of highest uncertainty.

The un-earmarked nature of GPPAC’s Emergency Response Fund provides space to innovate, to approach building peace from a large variety of perspectives, and to target a broad range of stakeholders.

In DRC and Sri Lanka, local peacebuilders approached building peace through the provision of economic incentives for local women and young ex-combatants, teaching them to establish small businesses to overcome economic hardship. While the conflict situations, contexts, and target communities differed, this innovative approach to peace through concerted efforts to improve the livelihood of local communities has brought great results in both countries.

In South Caucasian communities and Nigeria, Fund recipients focused on preventing violence by building the capacities of local women and youth to monitor local community dynamics and to build trust. In South Caucasus, these efforts bolstered the momentum for dialogue and reconciliation in the aftermath of the Nagorno-Karabakh war and contributed to the prevention of further escalation of violence in the region. In Nigeria, this approach led to a decrease in election-related violence: the 2023 general elections were among the most peaceful ones in the country since 1999. *(See Annex 1 for more information about the impact of these projects.)*

While inclusivity was not an explicit requirement in the 2022 GPPAC ERF application, of the 4 projects selected for support, two focused on youth inclusion, and two focused on women’s empowerment. It is worth noting that the funding was distributed to GPPAC members only, which meant adherence to the network’s values was a built-in pre-requisite. This naturally impacted the choices made by the members for the topics and approaches of their projects.

What it takes to manage ERF

A **consultative process takes time**, which means it needs to **be built into the planning**. It took months for the GPPAC member-led decision-making bodies and consultative groups to provide feedback on the initial concept and then on its implementation, including the application form, the assessment process, and final decision-making. To avoid any conflict of interest, the selection of ERF recipients and the administration of ERF funding was led by the GPPAC Global Secretariat, the body charged with supporting the network as a whole and facilitating the distribution of general funding among its members.

Centralised administration of ERF-related processes by the Global Secretariat allowed for a **simplification of the procedures and their acceleration**: the whole process, from the application to the signature of the grant agreements, took about one month. The quick and simple application and administration process was crucial given the fast-changing nature of emerging conflict situations. It was particularly appreciated by the local peacebuilders, who cited the simplicity of the application process and quick disbursement as the key distinctive and most impactful features of this funding scheme. At the same time, it was just as important to maintain the consultative nature of the decision-making process, so network members with context-specific knowledge were invited to contribute to assessing the relevance of the proposed projects.

In just a few weeks after the network-wide application process was launched, the number of applications surpassed the number of projects that could be funded by threefold (all applicants met the basic eligibility criteria). This underscores the great need for such a funding mechanism among local peacebuilders. It also means that it is important to plan for **dedicated staff** capacity to process applications quickly, administer the funding, and support recipients holistically, including with timely follow-up and the facilitation of learning exchanges. Such staff should, among others, understand project management and administration processes; be responsive; have intercultural sensitivity, knowledge of relevant languages; and the ability to work and learn quickly and efficiently.

► Recommendations to Ensure Sustainability

1. Combine Long-Term Peacebuilding with Urgent Interventions

Peacebuilding is a long-term undertaking, but urgent interventions or direct conflict prevention initiatives are also needed. If a holistic approach is applied to grantmaking, there is no contradiction between the strive for sustainable and continuous support of local peacebuilding efforts and emergency support funding. The effective combination of both ensures that local peacebuilders experience solidarity and support in moments of crisis, and can build resilience and learn how best to deal with similar crises in the future. The need to work further on preventing similar situations (even after successful and timely emergency response) stems from the fact that the roots of these conflicts are usually long-standing (e.g. frozen or protracted conflicts, periodically recurring violence, or economic struggles).

2. Strengthen Cross-Regional Collaboration Through Emergency Response Funding

The emergency response funding of up to 10,000 EUR also functioned as “seed funding” for building longer-term relationships through the network approach, with learning exchanges and experience-sharing accelerated, and cooperation expanded, both at the regional and cross-regional levels. For example, thanks to this funding, the ERF recipient from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) built a long-standing relationship with the GPPAC member from neighbouring Burundi. Similarly, since the end of the ERF-funded project in the deeply divided South Caucasus region, recipient members continue to work together to build trust among representatives of the conflicting parties.

3. Empower Local Peacebuilders to Access Future Funding

This quasi “seed funding” empowered the local peacebuilders to build a successful track record and increase the visibility of their actions to successfully pursue other funding opportunities. For example, the visibility resulting from the ERF-funded project led by the Nigerian organisation, Building Blocks for Peace Foundation (BBPF), led to it receiving funding from the US embassy in Abuja to organise a stakeholder dialogue. Similarly, the ERF recipient from DRC to apply for UN Women’s funding.

4. Scale Up Community Impact and Encourage Ongoing Engagement

Recipients of the ERF grants are motivated to continue their efforts well after the implementation of their emergency response projects – to share the knowledge and skills gained within their communities, thus multiplying the impact of their activities and leading to a scaling up of the successful approaches. For example, in Nigeria, 10 participants of the ERF-funded training program subsequently organised education programs in their respective communities from states around the country. In Sri Lanka, according to a local peacebuilder from ERF recipient, the Association for War Affected Women (AWAW), women beneficiaries are still engaged in their entrepreneurial activities a year after the project’s conclusion. Their continued efforts Showing the power of resilience, innovation, and collective effort, they give hope and have inspired others to work together to create positive change. They. The team at AWAW remain determined to further support them by, among other initiatives, creating a platform to market their produce and scale up their businesses.

5. Foster Peer Learning and Collaborative Peacebuilding Engagement Across Regions

From a grant management perspective, follow-up and continued reflection with the funding recipients after the end of their projects paved the way for further recognition and support of their efforts to achieve sustainability of their emergency response projects. The collaborative nature of GPPAC's ERF assessment process also enabled the building of linkages across different contexts and served as inspiration for further actions. For example, during one joint reflection session, the Sri Lankan recipient AWAW shared that she was inspired by the experience of BBFP from Nigeria of empowering youth for collective action to see how it can be incorporated in AWAW's work. Similarly, local Nigerian peacebuilders were inspired by the collaborative approaches of recipients from other regions and committed to ensuring that future activities and programs echo those approaches and foster collaborative engagement among local peacebuilders.

Summary:

What can we learn from GPPAC's ERF

GPPAC's approach to ERF is key to strengthening local peacebuilding and the multiplier effect of the network approach in times of urgent crisis:

- Authentic partnership with a bottom-up approach, participatory nature, designed by the network, and consultative at all stages is vital for supporting local peacebuilding.
- Holistic support (increased capacity of organisations, not only to act in cases of emergency, but also, among others, to reflect upon the results of the actions etc.) ensures sustainability.
- Small grants increase members' motivation; they get inspired, and the level of engagement at the global and regional levels increases; network strengthening happens through relationship building.

Every donor can incorporate elements of GPPAC's ERF model into their funding approaches by taking the following into account:

- In the fast-changing peacebuilding environment, it is important to have a dedicated pool of funding and the capacity to administer its distribution according to emerging needs and in a consultative manner.
- Un-earmarked funding allows for innovation and coverage of a broad range of topics and regions, and widens the range of eligible recipients and potential results;
- Procedures need to be simple, fast, and flexible;
- Leaving the final decision-making to an external actor (for example, by an intermediary such as the GPPAC Secretariat) helps avoid conflicts of interests, and provides for new and different learning streams and can be mobilised to better foster experience exchange between funding recipients and other stakeholders.

ANNEX 1 – Results of the Projects Funded through ERF Mechanism

► Sri Lanka – Resilience through innovation and creativity – Women taking leadership

When a severe economic crisis hit Sri Lanka in 2023, the Association for War Affected Women (AWAW) saw an opportunity to mitigate its effects by enhancing the resilience of local women facing economic hardship. Through GPPAC's Emergency Response Fund, AWAW was supported to bring women from different ethnic and religious backgrounds together, grounded in the belief of the importance of connecting the livelihood component with peacebuilding aims.

Through the project, sixty-nine women from seven different national districts were supported and trained in livelihood activities such as handloom weaving, food preparation, and medicinal herbs. The women who participated in the project acquired knowledge and skills that enabled them to start small businesses to support themselves, their families, and their communities. Thanks to attending trainings and workshops on marketing and business management, the participants have since expanded their activities and reaped the fruits of their talent and hard work:

“

Being a school teacher for all my life and also helping my husband who was a politician, and engaging with women through my organisation, this is the first time I am doing a business [...]. Very grateful to all for giving us this opportunity to earn a very satisfactory living by producing Moringa leaves with a big medicinal value [...]. I am so happy because this is a very good product with great demand. Especially at a time when Sri Lanka has economic issues, we as women can now support not only our families but also the community we live in [...].

”

This project transformed challenges into opportunities, securing a better future for women and their families: women gained financial independence, which allowed them to support their families, and the subsequent recognition from the wider community reinforced the impact of their efforts. In December 2022, some of the women displayed their products during a Unity Symposium in the country. In March 2023, they could present their craft, including weaving, during an exhibition at CSW 67, hosted by Sri Lanka Mission in New York, which provided them with exposure and recognition on a global scale, drawing attention to the situation in the country and to this innovative approach linking economic empowerment to peace & stability.

Indeed, one of the local peacebuilders implementing the project concluded:

“

The support we gave to the women will enable them not only to come out of this crisis, together with their families and community, but also to lay a solid economic foundation through their livelihoods for their future.

”

► Nigeria – 2023 Elections: Enhancing Youth Political Participation for Peaceful and Inclusive Societies

“Elections in Nigeria usually bring fear and panic due to experience we’ve had with all previous elections since 1999: they all turned violent with a huge number of casualties (including young people, women, personnel of the electoral commissions). As we approached the 2023 general elections, we already saw some triggers which we felt would not be ignored, including issues around religion and ethnicity, youth uprising with the death of about 100 young people, etc.” – Founder and Executive Director of Building Blocks for Peace Foundation (BBFP)

To mitigate the risk of rising violence, BBFP set out to create a safe environment for young people to meaningfully participate in democratic processes, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. By organising training sessions on mediation and conflict prevention, they provided several young peacebuilders with practical tools to respond to situations of emergency and electoral violence in their communities. The trainings also fostered collaboration, with participants remaining in touch afterwards, and joining the Nigeria Youth 4 Peace Initiative, a national network for peacebuilders to engage in dialogues with key stakeholders on electoral violence and youth exclusion in peace processes. They continue to be actively engaged in preventing violence after the project: as one of the participants shared:

“

I am planning to organise a training and a campaign for young people, especially the actors who are being used by the politicians to cause election violence i.e. thugs and uninformed young people. I am also currently planning a campaign of ‘Vote not Fight’ in Katsina State and all these will be done by the experience and knowledge gained from the training.

”

The experience of the ERF grant confirmed the BBPF’s starting thesis:

“

Young people indeed have the capacity and are actively engaged in building peace across their different areas of influence. What they need is just a little support (which can come in different forms) to scale up the work that they are already doing on the ground.

”

Since the end of the project, the Building Blocks for Peace Foundation has continued its efforts through, among others, institutionalised partnerships with local decision-makers. This led to Building Blocks for Peace Foundation being accredited as a civil society partner of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

► Democratic Republic of Congo – Support for young peacemakers’ clubs to strengthen social cohesion and reinforce the socio-economic reintegration of young ex-combatants

The territory of Uvira is an area characterised by inter-community conflict, with intermittent escalation of tensions between different armed groups creating situations of major emergency. When such violence erupts, ex-combatants risk discrimination and unemployment, often resulting in their return to fighting with the armed groups. The GPPAC ERF-funded project by Solidarité avec les Victimes et pour la Paix (SOVIP) focused on countering this, by aiming to re-integrate young ex-combatants into society through vocational training, capacity building, and the creation of savings and credit associations. Participants gained the knowledge and resources necessary to become self-sufficient; they found jobs and increasingly gained a sense of community and belonging. The two savings and credit associations and the youth peace clubs established through the project continue to operate, paving the way for a long-term avenue towards peace and stability in the territory of Uvira. The project implementers said:

“

We are proud of the testimonies of the ex-combatants who are beginning to take charge of their lives thanks to this project, improving their living conditions and no longer being tempted to return to the armed groups.

”

As a result of this project, during a meeting in October 2022, Mr. Jean Marie Bibonge, Head of the Kalungwe agglomeration in South Kivu Province, denounced the stigmatisation of displaced ex-combatants. He subsequently asked his population to end this unfavourable practice and promote behaviours and attitudes that encourage young ex-combatants to no longer resort to rejoining armed groups.

South Caucasus – Network of Women-Mediators of South Caucasus for sincerity, truth and trust

In the aftermath of the second Nagorno-Karabakh war, which had a major impact on the South Caucasus region, causing many casualties, deepening the divisions between communities, and causing periodic clashes and violent confrontations, there was an urgent need to restore the relationships and partnerships between the representatives of the conflicting parties, and to prevent further re-escalation of the situation.

The project, implemented by the Azerbaijan National Committee of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, was successful in revitalising the Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus (NWMSC) and mobilising its members, representing all sides of the conflict, to conduct a study, which captured the perspectives and stories of at least 130 locals from the South Caucasus region, such as civil society activists, journalists, public figures, scientists, and other types of experts dealing with peacebuilding. The study provided insight into how 'the other' is perceived; the barriers to communication and trust-building across the dividing lines; perceptions of state policies and their impact on their communities; the fears related to the geopolitical situation and the possibility of renewed military tensions; as well as into visions of what a peaceful future in the South Caucasus region could look like, including recommendations on how to achieve it.

Through the revitalisation of the network of women mediators and the organisation of discussions of the study's conclusions with different communities in the region, new ground for dialogue and understanding was created. The project successfully strengthened the collaboration between network members across all sides of the conflict including those from the secessionist regions, and increased the resilience of the network and of its members in working to prevent the escalation of violence.